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CURRICULUM REFORM AND CLASSROOM REALITIES: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY OF THE REVISED K–10 CURRICULUM IN PHILIPPINE SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the transition to the Revised K–10 (MATATAG) Curriculum and its implications for Araling Panlipunan instruction in secondary schools in Tago District, Surigao del Sur, Philippines, during the Academic Year 2025-2026. Employing a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, the study gathered quantitative data from 22 teachers and 351 students and qualitative data from 13 teachers and 72 students through questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. Findings revealed substantial differences between teachers' perceptions of curriculum implementation and students' classroom experiences. Teachers positively assessed curriculum decongestion, instructional delivery, assessment practices, and professional preparedness, whereas students reported persistent difficulties in comprehension, motivation, and competency mastery. Students rated the reduction of language barriers very low (M = 1.95), while mastery-oriented learning received a similarly low rating (M = 2.51). District-level assessment results further indicated that most grade-level cohorts remained nearly proficient. Qualitative findings identified linguistic complexity, information overload, conceptual confusion, and transcription fatigue as barriers to meaningful learning. The study concluded that curriculum decongestion alone was insufficient to ensure instructional effectiveness. It proposed the Foundational Recovery Project to strengthen language-responsive pedagogy, instructional scaffolding, and conceptual understanding.

Keywords: *Araling Panlipunan, curriculum reform, MATATAG Curriculum, mixed-methods research, student learning experiences, teacher perceptions*

INTRODUCTION

Curriculum reform remains a central strategy for improving educational quality, addressing learning inequalities, and strengthening students' foundational competencies. Across educational systems, policymakers have introduced curriculum revisions to respond to declining academic performance, changing societal demands, and persistent gaps between intended learning outcomes and actual classroom experiences. However, the effectiveness of curriculum reform depends not merely on the revision of learning standards but also on how teachers interpret curricular expectations and how students experience instructional changes. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023) emphasized that educational quality and equity require sustained attention to learning outcomes, instructional support, and the distribution of educational opportunities. Its Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022 results revealed substantial learning challenges across participating education systems, reinforcing the importance of reforms that prioritize meaningful learning rather than curriculum coverage alone. These concerns highlight the need to evaluate curriculum transitions through both institutional implementation and learners' actual educational experiences.

The implementation of educational reforms also requires responsive teaching practices that accommodate differences in learners' abilities, linguistic backgrounds, and access to learning resources. The Universal Design for Learning Guidelines developed by CAST (2024) emphasized reducing barriers to learning through multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression. These principles suggest that curriculum effectiveness depends on the accessibility of instructional content and the availability of appropriate learning support. Similarly, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2023) emphasized that educational technologies and learning resources should respond to learners' needs and contextual conditions rather than function as isolated solutions to educational problems. Together, these perspectives indicate that curricular simplification must be accompanied by instructional strategies that promote comprehension, participation, and equitable learning opportunities. Without adequate attention to students' readiness and learning difficulties, even a carefully structured curriculum may fail to achieve its intended educational outcomes.

In the Philippines, curriculum reform has gained renewed importance following persistent concerns regarding foundational learning, curriculum congestion, and uneven educational outcomes. The Department of Education (DepEd, 2024) institutionalized the MATATAG Curriculum through Department Order No. 010, series of 2024, establishing policy guidelines for its phased implementation from Kindergarten to Grade 10. The revised curriculum seeks to address weaknesses in the previous K to 12 framework by prioritizing essential competencies, improving curricular coherence, and strengthening the relevance of classroom instruction. Nevertheless, curriculum decongestion does not necessarily eliminate difficulties associated with language complexity, instructional preparation, learning resources, and assessment practices. Schools and teachers must translate revised competencies into meaningful classroom experiences while responding to diverse learner characteristics and institutional conditions. Consequently, evaluating

the transition requires an examination of both teachers' implementation experiences and students' perceptions of the learning process.

The transition presents particular implications for Araling Panlipunan, the Philippine social studies learning area responsible for developing historical understanding, geographical awareness, civic responsibility, and critical engagement with social issues. Unlike subjects that primarily emphasize procedural competencies, Araling Panlipunan requires learners to interpret historical narratives, understand abstract social concepts, analyze relationships among events, and apply civic principles to contemporary situations. These learning demands make language accessibility, contextualized instruction, and conceptual scaffolding especially important. Although reducing the number of competencies may provide teachers with greater instructional flexibility, students may continue to experience difficulties when lessons contain unfamiliar academic vocabulary, extensive factual information, or complex explanations. The principles of accessible and inclusive learning design therefore remain relevant to evaluating the curriculum transition (CAST, 2024). Understanding how these challenges emerge in actual classrooms is essential for determining whether the revised curriculum supports meaningful learning and competency mastery.

Another critical dimension of curriculum reform concerns teacher preparedness and institutional support. Teachers serve as the primary implementers of curriculum policies, translating prescribed competencies into instructional activities, assessments, and learning experiences. Their capacity to implement curricular changes depends on professional development, instructional resources, collaborative planning, and school leadership. UNESCO (2024), in its *Global Education Monitoring Report 2024/5*, emphasized the importance of educational leadership in establishing learning priorities, strengthening professional collaboration, and developing teachers' instructional capacities. These considerations are particularly relevant to geographically diverse school districts, where access to updated instructional materials and professional learning opportunities may vary. In such settings, teachers may perceive curriculum revisions as manageable while students continue to encounter difficulties understanding lessons. This possibility underscores the importance of examining curriculum implementation from multiple perspectives rather than relying exclusively on teachers' assessments of readiness and instructional delivery.

Within Tago District, Surigao del Sur, the transition to the Revised K–10 Curriculum provides an important context for investigating the relationship between curriculum implementation and classroom learning experiences. Secondary schools in the district serve learners from communities with varied geographical, socioeconomic, and educational circumstances. These conditions may influence the availability of instructional resources, the contextualization of Araling Panlipunan lessons, and students' opportunities to develop foundational competencies. Although the revised curriculum aims to improve instructional relevance and reduce content congestion, its implementation raises questions concerning teachers' preparedness, assessment practices, learning support, and students' actual understanding of the subject. The distinction between curriculum implementation as perceived by teachers and curriculum

effectiveness as experienced by students is especially important in determining whether reform objectives are being realized at the classroom level.

Despite growing attention to the MATATAG Curriculum, a significant research need remains in understanding how teachers' perceptions of curriculum implementation correspond with students' learning experiences and academic outcomes during the transition. Policy documents establish the intended direction of reform, but they do not independently demonstrate whether revised competencies are accessible to learners or whether classroom instruction addresses persistent comprehension difficulties. Moreover, studies that examine curriculum readiness or implementation alone may overlook discrepancies between teachers' assessments of instructional improvements and students' experiences of linguistic complexity, information overload, and limited conceptual understanding. Examining these dimensions together is consistent with international calls for evidence-informed educational improvement that considers learning quality, equity, and institutional support (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2024). A mixed-methods investigation is therefore necessary to capture both measurable perceptions and the contextual experiences underlying curriculum implementation.

Accordingly, the present study assessed the transition to the Revised K–10 Curriculum and its implications for Araling Panlipunan instruction among secondary schools in Tago District, Surigao del Sur, Philippines, during School Year 2025–2026. Specifically, it examined teachers' and students' perceptions of curriculum content, instructional delivery, assessment practices, teacher preparedness, and learning resources and support. It also investigated the implications of the transition for academic performance, reduced competencies, conventional skills, peace education competencies, and civic values; determined the relationships between perceived curriculum transition and teaching-and-learning implications; and explored participants' experiences through qualitative inquiry. Employing a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, the study integrated quantitative and qualitative findings to identify areas of convergence and divergence between policy implementation and classroom realities. Its contribution lies in providing context-specific evidence on whether curriculum decongestion translates into meaningful learning experiences and in identifying instructional and institutional priorities for strengthening social studies education. The findings also informed the proposed Foundational Recovery Project, which emphasizes language-responsive instruction, conceptual scaffolding, and targeted learning support during curriculum transition.

Research Questions

This study aimed to assess the transition to the Revised K–10 (MATATAG) Curriculum and its implications for Araling Panlipunan instruction among secondary schools in Tago District, Surigao del Sur, Philippines, during School Year 2025–2026. Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the demographic and professional characteristics of the respondents in terms of age, gender, educational attainment, teaching position, years of service, and participation in Araling Panlipunan-related seminars and training?

2. To what extent do respondents perceive the implementation of the Revised K–10 Curriculum in Araling Panlipunan in terms of curriculum content, instructional delivery, assessment practices, teacher preparedness, and learning resources and support?
3. What are the perceived implications of the Revised K–10 Curriculum for Araling Panlipunan teaching and learning in terms of third-quarter academic performance, reduced competencies, emphasis on conventional skills, peace education competencies, and strengthening civic values?
4. Is there a significant relationship between respondents' participation in Araling Panlipunan-related seminars and training and the perceived implications of the Revised K–10 Curriculum for teaching and learning?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the perceived extent of curriculum implementation and its implications for Araling Panlipunan teaching and learning?
6. How do teachers and students describe their lived experiences of teaching and learning Araling Panlipunan during the transition to the Revised K–10 Curriculum?
7. To what extent do the qualitative findings explain, support, or contradict the quantitative findings regarding curriculum implementation and its implications for teaching and learning?
8. What evidence-based intervention program may be proposed to strengthen the implementation of the Revised K–10 Curriculum and address identified instructional and learning challenges in Araling Panlipunan?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods research design to examine the transition to the Revised K–10 (MATATAG) Curriculum and its implications for Araling Panlipunan instruction. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected during the same research phase, analyzed separately, and integrated during interpretation. The quantitative component utilized a descriptive-correlational approach to assess perceptions of curriculum implementation and their relationships with teaching-and-learning implications. The qualitative component explored teachers' and students' experiences, challenges, and adaptive practices during curriculum transition. Integrating both approaches provided a comprehensive understanding of the differences between perceived curriculum implementation and classroom learning experiences.

The study was conducted during School Year 2025–2026 in eight public secondary schools in Tago District, Surigao del Sur, Philippines: Gamut National High School, Clarence T. Pimentel National High School, Alba Integrated School, Purisima National High School, Himat-e Integrated School, Victoria Integrated School, Badong National High School, and Bangsud Integrated School. The quantitative component involved 22 Araling Panlipunan teachers and 353 students. Teachers were included through complete enumeration, while students were selected using proportional stratified random sampling to ensure representation across participating schools. The qualitative component involved 13 teachers and 72 students selected through criterion-based purposive

sampling based on their direct experiences with the revised curriculum and willingness to participate.

Data were collected using a researcher-developed survey questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide. The questionnaire covered respondents' demographic characteristics; perceptions of curriculum content, instructional delivery, assessment practices, teacher preparedness, and learning resources and support; and the implications of curriculum transition for academic performance, reduced competencies, conventional skills, peace education competencies, and civic values. Responses were measured using five-point Likert-type scales appropriate to the constructs being assessed. The instruments underwent expert validation and pilot testing involving 40 respondents from a school outside the study area. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with the thesis reporting excellent reliability classifications for the questionnaire's three quantitative subscales.

Permission to conduct the study was sought from the appropriate educational authorities and participating school administrators. Following approval, the researcher coordinated with school personnel to administer questionnaires to the selected teachers and students. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with purposively selected participants to obtain detailed accounts of curriculum implementation, instructional challenges, learning experiences, and adaptation strategies. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected within the same research period to facilitate comparison and integration. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality measures were observed throughout the data collection process.

Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, and weighted means to describe respondent characteristics and assess curriculum implementation and teaching-and-learning implications. Pearson product–moment correlation was employed to examine relationships between the study variables, with statistical significance evaluated at the .05 level. Qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis involving familiarization with participants' responses, coding, identification and refinement of themes, and interpretation of recurring patterns. The quantitative and qualitative findings were subsequently integrated to identify convergent, complementary, and divergent results.

RESULTS

Table 1

Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of Revised K–10 Curriculum Implementation in Araling Panlipunan

Dimension	Teachers' M	Students' M	Combined M
Curriculum content	4.40	3.58	3.99
Instructional delivery	4.36	3.91	4.14
Assessment practices	4.47	4.22	4.34

Teacher preparedness	4.42	4.37	4.39
Learning resources and support	4.15	3.87	4.01
Overall	4.36	3.99	4.18

Note. M = mean. Interpretation scale: 4.20–5.00 = Strongly Perceived; 3.40–4.19 = Perceived; 2.60–3.39 = Less Perceived; 1.80–2.59 = Least Perceived; 1.00–1.79 = Not Perceived.

Table 2

Perceived Implications of the Revised K–10 Curriculum for Teaching and Learning

Dimension	Teachers' M	Students' M	Combined M
Academic performance (third quarter)	4.27	3.52	3.89
Reduced competencies	4.27	3.44	3.86
Emphasis on conventional skills	4.25	3.45	3.85
Peace education competency	4.43	3.93	4.18
Strengthening civic values	4.43	3.93	4.18
Overall	4.33	3.66	3.99

Note. M = mean. Interpretation scale: 4.20–5.00 = Very High; 3.40–4.19 = High; 2.60–3.39 = Low; 1.80–2.59 = Very Low; 1.00–1.79 = No Implication at All.

Table 3

Selected Indicators Revealing Differences Between Teachers' and Students' Perceptions

Indicator	Teachers' M	Students' M
Curriculum minimizes language barriers	4.14	1.95
Lessons emphasize comprehension rather than memorization	4.27	1.96
Curriculum emphasizes mastery rather than coverage	4.14	2.51
Simplified competencies reduce cognitive overload	4.14	2.57
Curriculum increases motivation to study	4.23	2.30
Learners exert greater effort because lessons are clearer	4.18	2.19
Lessons integrate local history and culture	4.41	4.72
Teaching strategies increase engagement	4.36	4.72

Note. M = mean.

Table 4

Third-Quarter Mean Percentage Scores in Araling Panlipunan Across Participating Schools

School	Grade 7 MPS (%)	Grade 8 MPS (%)
Alba Integrated School	62.47	75.18
Badong National High School	71.92	63.92

Bangsud Integrated School	53.76	58.00
Clarence T. Pimentel National High School	60.21	76.36
Gamut National High School	56.44	51.62
Himat-e Integrated School	60.57	60.06
Purisima National High School	61.65	57.84
Victoria Integrated School	73.73	77.78

Note. MPS = mean percentage score.

Table 5

Pearson Correlation Between Araling Panlipunan-Related Training and Perceived Curriculum Implications

Variables	Respondents	r	p	Decision
Seminars and training attended × perceived teaching-and-learning implications	Teachers	.8524	< .001	Reject H_0

Note. r = Pearson correlation coefficient; p = statistical significance. Significance level was set at α = .05.

Table 6

Pearson Correlations Between Perceived Curriculum Transition and Teaching-and-Learning Implications

Respondent group	r	p	Decision
Teachers	.5389	.010	Reject H_0
Students	.8595	< .001	Reject H_0

Note. r = Pearson correlation coefficient. Significance level was set at α = .05.

Table 7

Themes and Subthemes Identified From Participants' Experiences With the Revised K–10 Curriculum

Participants	Major themes	Subthemes
Teachers	Curricular Vertigo	Policy nomenclature fatigue; resource–policy disconnect; learning while teaching
Teachers	Pedagogy on Life Support	Instructional CPR; collaborative survivalism; localization artisan
Teachers	Assessment Paradox	Literacy–competency collision; rubric equity struggle; assessment bottleneck
Students	Linguistic Labyrinth	Bilingual wall; lexical exhaustion; transcription fatigue
Students	Goldfish Effect	Numerical saturation; multimedia dependency; conceptual fog
Students	Academic Survivalism	Perfection trap; participation avoidance; point-centric validation

Table 8

Joint Display of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Quantitative finding	Related qualitative theme	Integrated interpretation
Teachers rated reduced language barriers highly (M = 4.14), while students rated them very low (M = 1.95).	Linguistic Labyrinth	Divergence between teacher perceptions and student experiences; qualitative accounts support student-reported language difficulties
Teachers favored comprehension over memorization (M = 4.27), whereas students reported a very low rating (M = 1.96).	Goldfish Effect	Students' descriptions of information overload and conceptual confusion complement their low quantitative ratings
Teachers rated mastery-oriented learning highly (M = 4.14), while students reported a low rating (M = 2.51).	Goldfish Effect	Qualitative evidence suggests that reduced content coverage did not necessarily translate into perceived mastery
Teachers rated reduced cognitive overload highly (M = 4.14), while students reported a low rating (M = 2.57).	Goldfish Effect	Student accounts of numerical saturation and fragmented retention support the reported learning difficulties
Teachers reported strong implementation of the curriculum (M = 4.36).	Curricular Vertigo; Pedagogy on Life Support	Positive implementation ratings coexist with reported preparation demands and resource constraints
Students rated curriculum implementation lower than teachers (M = 3.99 versus 4.36).	Linguistic Labyrinth; Academic Survivalism	Qualitative findings provide explanations for the less favorable student ratings

Table 9

Foundational Recovery Project: Proposed Intervention Priorities

Intervention priority	Identified learning concern	Proposed instructional response
Linguistic decoding	Unfamiliar Filipino academic vocabulary and comprehension barriers	Language-responsive explanations, vocabulary support, and guided decoding
Cognitive anchoring	Numerical saturation, information overload, and conceptual confusion	Sequenced instruction, concept mapping, and structured review

Synthesis training	Mechanical copying and difficulty integrating historical concepts	Guided summarization, synthesis activities, and comprehension-based tasks
Teacher collaboration	Preparation demands and limited instructional resources	Learning Action Cell sessions, collaborative planning, and resource sharing
Assessment support	Performance anxiety and emphasis on grades rather than mastery	Scaffolded assessment activities and formative feedback

Note. The Foundational Recovery Project (FRP) is a proposed intervention, not an evaluated program.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide important insights into the transition to the Revised K–10 (MATATAG) Curriculum and its implications for Araling Panlipunan instruction in Philippine secondary education. The results revealed a significant difference between teachers' favorable perceptions of curriculum implementation and students' reported difficulties in comprehension, motivation, and competency mastery. Although the revised curriculum was generally perceived as effectively implemented, students continued to experience linguistic complexity, cognitive overload, and difficulties translating classroom activities into meaningful understanding. These findings suggest that curriculum reform should be evaluated not only through teachers' implementation practices but also through students' experiences and demonstrated learning outcomes. The integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence further illustrates that curriculum decongestion does not automatically eliminate instructional barriers.

The perceived implementation of the Revised K–10 Curriculum was generally favorable, with teachers reporting a higher overall mean (M = 4.36) than students (M = 3.99). Teacher preparedness and assessment practices obtained relatively high ratings, suggesting that teachers recognized the curriculum's intended improvements and demonstrated readiness to adapt their instructional approaches. However, students' comparatively lower ratings indicate that favorable implementation assessments may not fully reflect the accessibility of classroom instruction. Herrera (2025), in a scoping review of 11 studies on MATATAG implementation, identified teacher perspectives, school leadership, professional training, implementation challenges, and resilience as major factors influencing curriculum reform. The present findings extend this understanding by demonstrating that implementation readiness must also be examined alongside students' experiences. Thus, the effectiveness of curricular transition depends not only on teachers' ability to implement prescribed competencies but also on learners' capacity to understand and meaningfully engage with instructional content.

The findings further revealed that teachers perceived the implications of curriculum reform more positively (M = 4.33) than students (M = 3.66). Peace education and the strengthening of civic values received the highest combined ratings (M = 4.18 each), suggesting that the revised curriculum was perceived as relevant to the development of

social awareness, responsible citizenship, and values formation. These findings are particularly important in Araling Panlipunan, where historical understanding, civic responsibility, and critical engagement with social issues constitute essential learning outcomes. Nevertheless, students' lower ratings regarding conventional skills and reduced competencies suggest that improvements in curricular organization may not consistently translate into stronger foundational understanding. This distinction is consistent with recent research emphasizing that curriculum implementation requires instructional alignment, contextualization, and continuous support rather than policy compliance alone (Feble, 2026).

One of the most significant findings concerned the differences between teachers' and students' perceptions of language accessibility and comprehension. Teachers rated the reduction of language barriers favorably (M = 4.14), whereas students reported a substantially lower rating (M = 1.95). Similarly, teachers positively assessed the emphasis on comprehension rather than memorization (M = 4.27), while students provided a low rating (M = 1.96). These discrepancies suggest that teachers may perceive revised instructional materials as simplified even when students continue to encounter unfamiliar academic vocabulary and difficulties interpreting complex historical and social concepts. The qualitative theme *Linguistic Labyrinth* provided further explanation, revealing that students experienced lexical exhaustion, language-related barriers, and transcription fatigue. Such experiences suggest that reducing the number of learning competencies is insufficient when the linguistic demands of instruction remain difficult for students to manage.

The findings are particularly relevant when compared with the national mixed-methods evaluation conducted by Abrigo et al. (2025). Their evaluation of the MATATAG Curriculum's first-year pilot implementation identified encouraging learning gains, particularly among Grade 2 students, while also documenting uneven improvements across grade levels and persistent challenges involving instructional materials, teacher training, and competency alignment. The present study provides a complementary perspective by examining students' experiences in Araling Panlipunan during curriculum transition. Whereas national-level evaluation demonstrated the potential benefits of curriculum decongestion, the current findings indicate that learners may continue to experience substantial comprehension difficulties despite favorable perceptions of implementation. This comparison suggests that curriculum reform can produce promising outcomes while requiring additional subject-specific and learner-responsive interventions.

The results also revealed persistent difficulties associated with information processing and competency mastery. Students rated mastery-oriented learning relatively low (M = 2.51), while the reduction of cognitive overload received a similarly low rating (M = 2.57). These findings were reinforced by the qualitative theme *Goldfish Effect*, which described numerical saturation, conceptual confusion, and difficulties retaining instructional information. In Araling Panlipunan, students are expected to understand historical sequences, interpret geographical information, analyze economic concepts, and explain relationships among social events. When these learning demands are presented without adequate instructional scaffolding, students may complete classroom activities without developing a coherent understanding of the underlying concepts. The

findings therefore suggest that curriculum decongestion should be accompanied by systematic vocabulary instruction, structured explanations, guided synthesis, and opportunities to consolidate learning.

The academic performance findings provide additional evidence of uneven learning outcomes. Third-quarter mean percentage scores varied across participating schools, with several grade-level cohorts remaining within the Nearly Proficient classification. Although some schools demonstrated comparatively stronger performance, the variation indicates that favorable perceptions of curriculum implementation did not uniformly correspond with high assessment results. This finding highlights the importance of examining actual learning outcomes when evaluating curricular reforms. It also suggests that differences in instructional resources, learner preparedness, and school conditions may be relevant to understanding variations in performance. However, these possible explanations require further investigation because the present study did not establish their independent effects on academic achievement.

Professional development emerged as another important consideration. The study reported a strong positive relationship between participation in Araling Panlipunan-related seminars and training and perceived teaching-and-learning implications ($r = .8524$, $p < .001$). This finding suggests that teachers who participated more extensively in professional learning activities tended to report more favorable perceptions of curriculum implications. Lorono (2025) similarly identified teacher readiness, instructional resources, and implementation challenges as important considerations in the MATATAG Curriculum transition. The present results support the relevance of professional development while extending the discussion to subject-specific instructional demands. For Araling Panlipunan teachers, professional learning should therefore move beyond general curriculum orientation to include language-responsive teaching, contextualized historical instruction, competency-based assessment, and strategies for addressing foundational learning difficulties. Nevertheless, the observed correlation should not be interpreted as evidence that training directly caused more favorable curriculum outcomes.

The relationship between perceived curriculum implementation and teaching-and-learning implications was also statistically significant among teachers ($r = .5389$, $p = .010$) and students ($r = .8595$, $p < .001$). The positive associations indicate that respondents who evaluated curriculum implementation more favorably also tended to report more favorable teaching-and-learning implications. The stronger correlation among students suggests a particularly close association between their perceptions of curriculum implementation and their classroom experiences. However, the difference between the correlation coefficients was not formally tested, and the findings do not establish a causal relationship. Furthermore, because the variables were measured through perceptions, the observed associations may partly reflect shared response tendencies. These considerations emphasize the need for cautious interpretation and the inclusion of independent learning measures in future investigations.

The qualitative findings also revealed substantial implementation challenges among teachers. The themes *Curricular Vertigo*, *Pedagogy on Life Support*, and *Assessment Paradox* reflected difficulties associated with changing curricular requirements, inadequate instructional resources, preparation demands, and the

challenge of aligning assessment expectations with students' foundational competencies. Colango et al. (2026) similarly found that teachers implementing the MATATAG Curriculum experienced difficulties involving lesson pacing, limited curriculum-aligned resources, contextualization, and insufficient practical training. Their study also highlighted teachers' adaptive strategies and reliance on professional collaboration. The consistency between these findings and the present study suggests that curriculum transition requires sustained institutional support rather than dependence on individual teachers' resourcefulness. In particular, collaborative planning, mentoring, and accessible instructional materials may help teachers translate revised competencies into manageable classroom practices.

Students' qualitative experiences provided an additional perspective through the theme *Academic Survivalism*, which described participation avoidance, performance-related pressure, and an emphasis on obtaining grades rather than demonstrating conceptual mastery. These findings suggest that assessment practices may unintentionally reinforce task completion when students lack the foundational understanding required for meaningful participation. The qualitative evidence therefore complements the quantitative findings by explaining why students may report favorable experiences with contextualized activities while continuing to struggle with academic language and conceptual understanding. This interpretation reinforces the importance of formative assessment, scaffolded learning tasks, and feedback that identifies misconceptions before students progress to more demanding competencies.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings revealed both convergence and divergence. Teachers' favorable implementation ratings were consistent with their descriptions of professional adaptability and efforts to contextualize instruction. However, students' low ratings for language accessibility, comprehension, and mastery were reinforced by qualitative accounts of linguistic difficulty, information overload, and mechanical copying. These findings indicate that the central challenge is not necessarily resistance to curriculum reform but the difficulty of translating intended curricular improvements into accessible learning experiences. The mixed-methods approach therefore contributed a more comprehensive understanding of curriculum transition than either quantitative or qualitative evidence could provide independently.

The findings have practical implications for educational leadership, curriculum implementation, and instructional improvement. Schools should strengthen subject-specific professional development, collaborative lesson planning, and the development of contextualized learning resources. Particular attention should be given to academic vocabulary, comprehension monitoring, concept mapping, guided summarization, and assessment practices that prioritize understanding over mechanical task completion. These priorities are consistent with recent evidence emphasizing the importance of teacher collaboration, instructional adaptation, resource provision, and sustained professional support in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum (Feble, 2026; Herrera, 2025).

The proposed Foundational Recovery Project (FRP) responds to the identified learning challenges through language-responsive instruction, cognitive scaffolding, synthesis activities, teacher collaboration, and formative assessment support. Its

emphasis on foundational learning is particularly relevant to Araling Panlipunan, where students must integrate historical, geographical, economic, and civic concepts. The program represents a contextually grounded instructional response to the discrepancies identified between teachers' perceptions and students' learning experiences. However, its effectiveness remains to be established through systematic implementation and evaluation.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The study was conducted within one school district, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts. The cross-sectional, descriptive-correlational design does not permit causal conclusions regarding the relationships among curriculum implementation, professional development, and perceived teaching-and-learning implications. The use of self-reported questionnaires may also have introduced response biases. Additionally, differences in school resources, instructional practices, and students' prior academic preparation were not independently examined as explanatory variables. Future research should consider longitudinal, quasi-experimental, and multisite designs, supported by classroom observations and direct assessments of conceptual understanding, to determine whether curriculum reforms produce sustained improvements in student learning.

Overall, the study contributes to the literature on curriculum reform by demonstrating the importance of examining implementation through both teacher and student perspectives. Its central contribution lies in identifying the discrepancy between perceived curriculum decongestion and students' continuing difficulties with language accessibility, information processing, and competency mastery. While the Revised K–10 Curriculum offers opportunities to strengthen Araling Panlipunan instruction, its educational value depends on the extent to which curricular improvements are translated into comprehensible, contextualized, and developmentally appropriate learning experiences. The findings therefore underscore that meaningful curriculum reform requires not only streamlined competencies but also sustained instructional support that enables students to understand, retain, and apply what they learn.

Conclusions

The study concluded that the transition to the Revised K–10 (MATATAG) Curriculum presented both opportunities and challenges for Araling Panlipunan instruction in secondary schools in Tago District, Surigao del Sur, Philippines. Teachers generally perceived curriculum implementation favorably, particularly in terms of preparedness, assessment practices, and instructional delivery. However, students reported comparatively lower perceptions and continued difficulties in language comprehension, cognitive processing, motivation, and competency mastery. Although the curriculum was perceived to support peace education and civic values, academic performance varied across participating schools, indicating that favorable implementation perceptions did not consistently correspond with stronger learning outcomes. Significant positive relationships were established between teachers' participation in professional development and perceived curriculum implications, as well as between perceived curriculum implementation and teaching-and-learning implications among teachers and students. Qualitative findings further revealed instructional resource limitations,

assessment challenges, linguistic barriers, and difficulties retaining complex concepts. The integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence demonstrated that curriculum decongestion alone was insufficient to address students' foundational learning needs. Consequently, the study concluded that effective curriculum reform requires sustained professional development, language-responsive instruction, contextualized learning resources, and systematic instructional support. The proposed Foundational Recovery Project provides a contextually grounded intervention framework for addressing these challenges, although its effectiveness requires further evaluation. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of aligning curriculum implementation with students' actual learning experiences to achieve meaningful and sustainable improvements in Araling Panlipunan education.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that the Department of Education and school administrators strengthen the implementation of the Revised K–10 Curriculum through sustained professional development, adequate instructional resources, and continuous monitoring of students' learning outcomes. Professional learning activities should prioritize subject-specific strategies for Araling Panlipunan, particularly language-responsive instruction, contextualization of historical and social concepts, differentiated teaching, formative assessment, and instructional scaffolding. School administrators should also strengthen collaborative lesson planning, mentoring, and Learning Action Cell sessions to help teachers address implementation challenges and share effective classroom practices.

Araling Panlipunan teachers are encouraged to employ learner-centered instructional approaches that promote comprehension, critical thinking, and conceptual mastery rather than mechanical memorization and task completion. Particular attention should be given to academic vocabulary development, concept mapping, guided summarization, localized instructional materials, and assessment activities that identify and address learning gaps. Regular diagnostic and formative assessments should be conducted to monitor students' progress and provide timely instructional interventions. Schools are further encouraged to pilot the proposed Foundational Recovery Project, with systematic monitoring and evaluation to determine its feasibility and effectiveness in improving language comprehension, information retention, and competency mastery. Future researchers may conduct longitudinal, quasi-experimental, or multisite investigations to examine the sustained effects of curriculum reform on academic performance and determine the effectiveness of targeted interventions across different educational contexts.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The study adhered to established ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice as outlined in the Belmont Report. Before data collection, formal research clearance was obtained from the Dean of the Graduate School of Saint Theresa College of Tandag, Inc., the Schools Division Superintendent, and the Public Schools District Supervisor of Tago District. Coordination with participating school administrators

was undertaken to ensure institutional accountability and compliance with research procedures. The study incorporated informed consent procedures, and participation was voluntary, with respondents informed of the research objectives, data collection procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their right to withdraw without adverse consequences. Confidentiality and privacy were protected through coded identifiers, restricted access to research data, and the exclusion of personally identifying information from published findings. The researcher sought to minimize potential discomfort during questionnaire administration, interviews, and focus group discussions while ensuring fair and equitable participant selection. All information collected was intended exclusively for legitimate academic and research purposes. These ethical safeguards were designed to protect participants' rights, dignity, privacy, and well-being throughout the research process.

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