

REFORM AGAIN: COMPARING THE KEY FEATURES OF K-12 AND MATATAG CURRICULUM

by:

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For years, the K-12 curriculum shaped the way Filipino students learned, with the goal of producing globally competitive graduates. However, while it had good intentions, it didn't always deliver. Students ended up overloaded with subjects, struggling with learning gaps, and sometimes even graduating without the necessary skills for work or further studies. Enter the MATATAG Curriculum, a new attempt to fix what wasn't working. But is the reform a fix or a solution?

One of the biggest changes in the MATATAG Curriculum is its focus on streamlining subjects. The old K-12 curriculum packed too much into the school day, making it hard for students to master key concepts (Herrera, 2025). It was like stuffing too much food onto a plate—everything spills over, and you don't really get to enjoy or understand what's in front of you.

The MATATAG Curriculum, on the other hand, aims to simplify this by reducing the number of subjects, particularly in the early grades (Osias et al., 2024). This could result in less clutter and more mastery. By cutting down on unnecessary topics and focusing on essential skills like reading, math, and critical thinking, students are supposed to have a stronger foundation before moving on to more complex lessons.

Another important change concerns the way in which subjects are taught. In the old system, students memorized a lot of information, but how much of it was actually useful in real life? The MATATAG curriculum aims to change this by focusing on practical applications. Instead of just learning theories, students are encouraged to

develop problem-solving and life skills. Instead of just memorizing scientific concepts, they apply them in practical projects. The idea is that by making learning more interactive and relevant, students will retain the knowledge better and be able to apply it outside the classroom.

And then there is the issue of literacy and numeracy. One of the bitter truths about the old K-12 system is that many students advanced to higher grades without mastering basic literacy and math skills. The MATATAG curriculum promises to change this by strengthening first-grade reading, writing and math skills before introducing more complex topics. In theory, this should prevent students from falling behind. But whether it actually works depends, of course, on how well teachers and schools implement these changes. A great curriculum means nothing if it is not implemented properly.

Another important point of comparison is the treatment of senior high school. When the K-12 curriculum introduced senior high school, it was marketed as a means to make graduates “job-ready.” And the reality? Many students still had difficulty finding jobs after graduation because companies preferred college graduates. The MATATAG curriculum is designed to remedy this by strengthening technical-vocational education and ensuring that students acquire truly employable skills before graduation. But again, effectiveness depends on implementation – do we have enough resources, qualified teachers and partnerships with industry to achieve this?

Teacher workload is another issue that needs to be considered. The old K-12 curriculum burdened teachers with so many administrative tasks that the actual teaching sometimes took a back seat. The MATATAG curriculum claims to reduce this by simplifying lesson plans and reducing non-instructional tasks. If done correctly, this could be a game changer. A teacher who has more time for teaching than for paperwork can better teach and support their students.

Of course, no curriculum is perfect. The MATATAG curriculum sounds promising, but change always comes with challenges. Are schools prepared for the change? Are teachers sufficiently trained? Are there enough materials and resources to support the new approach? These are questions that need real answers, not just promises from the government.

Ultimately, the success of a curriculum depends on how well it is implemented. The old K-12 system had its flaws, but so will the MATATAG curriculum if the same mistakes are repeated. It's not just about changing subjects or reducing the workload – it's about making sure students actually learn in a way that prepares them for real life. The goal should always be the quality of education, not just another reform that looks good on paper. Whether MATATAG will be a real improvement or just another cycle of trial and error remains to be seen.

References:

The Official Website of DepED Division of Bataan