

# **MATATAG IN MOTION: OPTIMIZING EDUCATIONAL COMPONENTS AND INNOVATING TEACHING STRATEGIES IN MUSIC, ARTS, PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH FOR GRADE 7 STUDENTS**

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## **Abstract**

Music, art, physical education, and health help students grow by boosting creativity, learning, social skills, and well-being. They improved motor skills, decision-making, cultural awareness, and focus. This study examined the optimization of the Grade 7 MAPEH curriculum under the MATATAG framework in Sarangani Province, focusing on innovative teaching strategies that enhanced student engagement and learning outcomes. Using thematic analysis of interviews with eight teachers from selected schools, the research explored the curriculum's evolution, teacher preparedness, and instructional innovations. The findings revealed several key themes regarding the contextual evolution of MAPEH in the curriculum, including curricular structure and content simplification, teaching and assessment approaches, and alignment with holistic and student-centered goals. Teachers' preparation for implementing MAPEH 7 was categorized into five emerging themes: teacher preparedness and training, strengths and weaknesses of the current curriculum, impact on student engagement and learning outcomes, strategies to overcome delivery challenges, and use of student feedback for teaching improvement. Teachers' innovations in delivering lessons were grouped into four emerging themes: technology integration and digital tools, interactive hands-on and collaborative learning, student involvement and feedback in the innovation process, and tailoring lessons for diverse learning styles and needs. The MATATAG curriculum transformed MAPEH instruction by simplifying content, fostering holistic and student-centered learning, and promoting innovation through technology, collaboration, and adaptable teaching strategies. The successful implementation of the curriculum relied on school administrators providing support and resources, policymakers refining education policies, educators embracing innovative teaching strategies, students actively participating in their learning, and future researchers examining its impact on diverse educational contexts.

**Keywords:** MAPEH, MATATAG Curriculum, Innovative Teaching Strategies, Student Engagement, Teacher Preparedness.

## **Introduction**

Innovative MAPEH teaching, such as arts integration and technology use, boosted engagement. However, challenges such as limited resources and teacher training highlighted the need for better support. Globally, MAPEH educators play a vital role in students' holistic development by integrating creativity, physical well-being, and cultural awareness. Innovative teaching strategies, including technology integration, student-centered learning, and music-based instruction, enhanced MAPEH education for Grade 7 students. In Canada, educators integrated technology and student-centered strategies such as cooperative learning and game-based methods to improve physical education. Singapore emphasized flipped classrooms, project-based learning, and gamification for holistic student development (Zone of Education, 2024). These approaches aligned with global efforts to optimize MAPEH education for Grade 7 students.

In Parañaque, Philippines, MAPEH teachers were role models, instilling resilience, empathy, and integrity while fostering self-confidence and identity (Bontuyan, 2024). Beyond teaching, they provided academic, emotional, and career guidance, shaping well-rounded students. The MATATAG curriculum, launched in August 2023, enhanced Grade 7 MAPEH education by addressing overloaded curricula and ineffective teaching (MasterSoft ERP Solutions Pvt. Ltd., 2024). It aimed to support teachers, promote inclusivity, and build foundational skills but faced challenges such as teacher readiness and continuous assessment (Kilag et al., 2024; Villaver et al., 2024).

Research gaps remained in optimizing MAPEH education for Grade 7 students. First, while gamification enhanced learning, its impact on MAPEH remained underexplored (Deterding et al., 2021). Second, studies on culturally responsive teaching in MAPEH were lacking, especially in diverse settings such as Canada, Singapore, and Malaysia (Chitpin & Karoui, 2024). Lastly, most research focused on short-term outcomes, with little insight into MAPEH's long-term effects on critical thinking, creativity, and well-being (Espinosa et al.,

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2023). Addressing these gaps could improve MAPEH education through targeted research and innovative teaching strategies. Conducting this study was urgent to address the gaps in innovative teaching strategies for MAPEH, ensuring that Grade 7 students received engaging, culturally responsive, and effective instruction.

The study answered the following questions: (1) What is the contextual development of MAPEH in the MATATAG Curriculum? (2) What is the current preparation of the teachers in the implementation of MAPEH 7? and (3) How did the teachers innovate to deliver the discipline?

## Methodology

The study utilized a transcendental phenomenological research design. Qualitative research is a systematic approach that seeks to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups assign to a social or human phenomenon. It typically occurs in natural settings and involves data collection methods such as observations, interviews, and document reviews to develop a deep understanding of participants' lived experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The study used this approach to explore how MAPEH teachers and students experienced innovative teaching strategies.

The study purposely selected participants from different schools in the Division of Sarangani. Following Creswell's (2018) recommendation for phenomenological studies, at least eight participants were chosen for in-depth interviews (IDI). Additionally, three teachers participated in a focus group discussion (FGD) to cross-validate findings. Participants were chosen based on specific criteria: They must specialize in MAPEH, currently teach MAPEH 7 under the MATATAG curriculum, and have at least five years of experience. Teachers with less than five years of experience or those on extended leave were excluded.

Three distinguished doctorate holders with in-depth knowledge of their respective professions carefully examined the interview guide to guarantee its accuracy. Their combined experience validated the instrument's reliability and efficiency for the study. A data analyst was also consulted to verify key themes and findings.

The researcher used a semi-structured interview guide made by the researcher validated by the content validity experts. Additionally, an in-depth interview was used to get the phenomenon under investigation. Interviews often provide context to other data, offering a more complete picture of what happened in the program and why (Boyce et al., 2018; Dela Cruz et al., 2023). In addition to the primary tool, the researcher also used instruments

such as a questionnaire validation tool, interview protocols, and a transcription writing guide.

Data are facts gathered through systematic scientific techniques. This study's data collection process was carefully structured to ensure thorough and reliable data gathering. The researcher sent official letters to the Schools Division Superintendent and the School Principals of the selected schools of DepEd Sarangani. Additionally, the researcher sought permission from the participants to ensure their voluntary participation.

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with an interview guide and probing questions to gather in-depth data. The responses were recorded and transcribed. The transcription followed a guide adapted from Protacio (2021). To ensure accuracy, the interview transcripts were validated by the participants, allowing them to review and confirm their responses. The transcription conventions were adapted from Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) and Silverman (2016). The finalized transcripts were then reprinted and used for thematic analysis.

The researcher employed thematic analysis in conducting data analysis for this study. According to Moustakas (1994), thematic analysis emphasizes identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns and themes within the data. This was also employed in various studies in the Philippines (Barroga & Tampus, 2023; Dela Cruz et al., 2023; Felongco et al., 2022; Protacio, 2022; Sonza et al., 2022; Tacogue et al., 2022; Alfaro & Protacio, 2025; Dela Cruz & Amarillo, 2022). It organizes and describes all data in detail. Thematic analysis has six (6) steps. First, the researcher reads and re-reads the data to become familiar with what the data needs and to pay attention to the patterns that occur. Second, it generated the initial codes by documenting where and how patterns occurred. Third, codes were combined into overarching themes that accurately depict the data. Next, it examined how the themes support the data and the overarching theoretical perspective - then it represented each theme, which aspects of data were being captured, and what was interesting about the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Lastly, I wrote the report and decided which themes made meaningful contributions to understanding what was going on within the data.

## Results and Discussion

The following themes emerged after a rigorous process of thematic analysis, which included identifying significant statements, formulating initial themes, clustering themes, and determining the emerging themes.

### ET 1: Structure and Content Simplification

The shift from the traditional K–12 curriculum to the streamlined MATATAG framework marks a significant transformation in content organization and instructional design. Teachers emphasize that the curriculum decongests learning materials by reducing competencies and integrating related subjects, such as combining Music with Arts and PE with Health. This integration aligns with global trends in curriculum reform, where simplification enhances subject coherence and learning efficiency (Zhao, 2021). The participants shared:

*...So, in MATATAG curriculum naman it simplifies content na magfocus siya on core competencies... [..MATATAG curriculum simplifies content by focusing more on core competencies...], also noting the combination of subject grades...]* – P1

*...natutunan ko or nalaman sa MATATAG curriculum ang aim nito is to reduce the number of competencies ah to allow deeper mastery of skills potentially leading to adjustments and teaching hours... [..reduce the number of competencies to allow deeper mastery of skills...]* – P2

## ET 2: Teaching and Assessment Approaches

The MATATAG curriculum significantly shifts from traditional, teacher-centered instruction toward student-centered, performance-based, and flexible teaching methodologies. According to Uy et al. (2024), the curriculum now emphasizes child-friendly, project-based learning and adopts simplified grading systems, moving away from conventional lecture-based teaching and standardized written assessments. This transformation aligns with contemporary educational practices that promote active learning, engagement, and continuous assessment for student mastery. The participants shared:

*...So sa MATATAG curriculum, it emphasizes a child-friendly, child-centered, and flexible approach... [..emphasizes a child-friendly, child-centered, and flexible approach to teaching...]* – P1

*...Sa grading system, ganahan ko ma'am kasi okay ang grading system... Teacher favorite siya. Itong i-solve nalang, dalawa nalang kasi add nalang to get the average. Mas okay siya ma'am... And ...hindi kasi ideal sa atin yung time na 45 minutes lang... [..the grading system is now simpler as we just add the grades and get the average...]* and *“...45-minute period is not realistic...]* – P3

## ET 3: Alignment with Holistic and Student-Centered Goals

The MATATAG curriculum took a holistic approach to education, emphasizing literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional development alongside traditional subjects and integrating values-based education and practical skills to nurture well-rounded individuals. According to the Department of Education (DepEd, 2023), the curriculum enhanced foundational skills while incorporating socio-emotional learning components. Teachers observed that while the curriculum simplified content, it fostered an inclusive and engaging learning environment. This approach equipped students with essential life skills, promoting a student-centered methodology. The participants shared:

*Matatag focuses on holistic development, promoting values-based education and practical ... [..MATATAG focuses on holistic development, incorporating values-based education and practical skills...]* -P5

*Matatag curriculum emphasizes foundational skills, particularly literacy and numeracy, especially in the early grades, like in kindergarten to grade 5 ... [..emphasizes foundational skills like literacy and numeracy...]* – P8

## ET 4: Teacher Preparedness and Training

The theme highlighted MAPEH teachers' challenges in adapting to the new curriculum, especially those lacking specialization in certain areas. While many felt prepared, gaps remained, emphasizing the need for continuous professional development such as School-Based Teacher Training (SBTT) seminars. In support of this, research confirmed that professional development enhanced teacher readiness (Ogunyemi & Oyetunde, 2017). SBTT equipped educators with skills to manage curriculum changes, but specialized training was crucial for those unfamiliar with all MAPEH subjects. The participants shared:

*...Siguro sa akin ang first para sa teacher na maging handa first dapat sa professional development pa lamang... kaya importante sa akin yung pagkakaroon ng professional development programs and mga training sessions to empower teachers tulad ng seminar sa SBTT before... Grabe 5 days lang yun pero ang dami nating natutunan doon na strategies and approaches... [..the first step for teachers to be prepared is through professional development... the SBTT seminar we attended...]* – P2

*So ako personally and professionally as a teacher nakuratan pod ko nga ani, na ayos siya, and then thinking of also the changes when it comes to content...Unlike dati natudlo na niyo for how many years, dala*

*kasi ng comfort so familiar na kahit sa mga content topic at performance standard... familiarize na ako, may edges... [I was caught off guard... I had been teaching the same curriculum for many years and now... it is all new...] – P3*

#### **ET 5: Ups and Downs of the Current MAPEH Curriculum**

The theme highlights both positive aspects and areas for improvement. On the positive side, teachers appreciated the curriculum's clear structure, organized guidelines, and efficient grading systems, making it easy to follow and implement. Darling-Hammond (2016) states that well-structured curricula support teachers and ensure consistent learning outcomes. On the other hand, teachers also pointed out several weaknesses. The content was often too general, making it difficult to cover specific student needs. Teachers also mentioned insufficient teaching hours for MAPEH, limiting the time for in-depth instruction. Resource limitations further hindered effective teaching, particularly in subjects like Arts and Physical Education (Korkmaz, 2016). The participants shared:

*...Sa strength niya ahm Ang improvement niya siguro yung sa structure niya. The curriculum especially in matatag, well-organized kasi provided na mayroon na tayo mag-organize. ... Well-organized kasi provided na meron tayong DLP, meron ng lesson plan, meron ng learning activity sheet. I-deliver na lang natin siya pero yon lang kasi ang mahirap lang doon paano mo integration across the 4 areas, siyempre sa MAPE, Music, Arts, P.E. and Health... So it can be challenging din and leading to potential imbalances in delivery... [...improved structure... teaching materials such as DLPs and activity sheets are provided; however, integrating the four areas can be challenging...] –P2*

*...The teacher's readiness for MAPEH 7 really varies. Like, with some needing extra training. So, the curriculum is strong in being balanced and practical, but it struggles with limited resources, shallow content, and even focus on different subjects... [The curriculum is balanced and practical, but it struggles with limited resources, shallow content, and a lack of focus...] – P5*

#### **ET 6: Student Engagement and Learning Outcomes**

The theme emphasized how the MAPEH curriculum influenced student motivation and academic performance. Teachers reported that interactive, hands-on approaches, such as learner-centered lessons, significantly boosted student engagement. These methods encouraged active participation,

creativity, and holistic development (Deci & Ryan, 2020). The participants shared:

*...Yung MATATAG is more on our students. Kasi learner-centered... mas matagaan ng engagement ang students at the same time innovate, man-innovate, pinaggamit sa technology karon... mas mapromote ang student engagement, and collaborative learning ang laman ng curriculum na ito... [...the MATATAG curriculum is more learner-centered, allowing for greater engagement and collaborative learning...] – P3*

*...Okay, the MAPEH program significantly impacts student engagement. My first is personal exploration because project-based naman ang MATATAG curriculum. So, based on their experience na mostly silang activities. And also, they are given creative expression kung paano nalain. They are given creative expression kung paano nila i-analyze on certain topics... [...it significantly impacts student engagement... more personal exploration and creative expression...] – P7*

#### **ET 7: Overcoming Delivery Challenges**

The theme focused on teachers' proactive steps to address issues like limited resources, time constraints, and integration difficulties. Teachers used creative resource management, digital tools, direct instruction, and adapted lesson plans to compensate for these challenges. Harris and Sass (2019) highlighted that effective use of available resources was key to overcoming resource shortages. Similarly, Mishra and Koehler (2020) emphasized that integrating technology through the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge framework helped teachers enhance instructional delivery despite limitations. The participants shared:

*...Through hands-on interaction like playing musical instruments, yung magcreate ng artwork or magparticipate in sports. Magkakaroon sila ng active participation and collaboration... [...utilizing creative resource management... improvise materials like technology-based resources and adapt teaching methods...] – P1*

*...Kasi ang MAPE is nag-encourage na maging hands-on in learning. Kasi sa atin sa MAPE gaya sa P.E. actual na mag-exercise tayo, actual na maglalaro tayo ng basketball. So na-apply talaga nila kung ano ang kanilang hilig." "Kasi ang MAPE is nag-encourage na maging hands-on in learning. Kasi sa atin sa MAPE gaya sa P.E. actual na mag-exercise tayo, actual na maglalaro tayo ng basketball. So na-apply talaga nila kung ano ang kanilang hilig... [...improvisation of materials...] – P1*

teachers use whatever is available (e.g., musical instruments) ...] P2

#### **ET 8: Student Feedback for Teaching Improvement**

The theme emphasized the importance of systematically gathering and using student feedback to enhance teaching practices. Teachers used tools such as surveys, classroom discussions, and peer/self-assessments to understand student needs and adjust teaching strategies accordingly. Recent studies showed that student feedback was crucial for refining instructional methods. For example, Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis research found that using an automated feedback tool increased instructors' engagement and improved teaching effectiveness (Stanford, 2023). The participants shared:

*...ang mga magtutudlo naggamit ug pormal/impormal nga mga pamaagi sama sa mga survey questionnaires, focus group discussions, o class discussions... [...teachers utilize formal/informal methods such as survey questionnaires, focus group discussions, or class discussions...] – P2*

*...Ako kanunay nagkalainlain ang akong pamaagi base sa ilang pagtubag... aktibo ba sila o interactive... [...I always vary my approach based on how they respond... whether they're active or interactive...] – P3*

#### **ET 9: Technology Integration and Digital Tools**

Technology has become a key element in modernizing MAPEH instruction, with teachers increasingly utilizing digital tools to enhance engagement and interactivity. Tools like virtual learning platforms, smart TVs, and apps like YouTube and Canva transform traditional lessons into more dynamic experiences. This integration helps address challenges like limited resources and class suspensions, creating a flexible and accessible learning environment. Anderson and Dron (2021) found that digital platforms enhance student participation and motivation, making lessons more interactive and personalized. The participants shared:

*...kung suspendido ang mga klase, ang mga virtual learning platforms sama sa Google Classroom mahimong magamit... [...if classes are suspended, virtual learning platforms such as Google Classroom can be used...] – P1*

*...paggamit ug mga digital tools ug apps; pananglitan, YouTube para sa mga music tutorials ug Canva para sa digital art creation... [using digital tools and apps; for instance, YouTube for music tutorials and Canva for digital art creation...] – P2*

#### **ET 10: Interactive, Hands-on, and Collaborative Learning**

As part of instructional innovations, the shift towards interactive, hands-on, and collaborative learning methods transformed how MAPEH lessons were taught. Teachers emphasized using project-based, performance-based, and flipped classroom strategies, encouraging active student participation. Bell (2020) highlighted that these approaches improved student engagement and fostered creativity by allowing students to work together on real-world projects. The participants shared:

*...usahay mogamit ko sa flipped classroom nga estratehiya... mag-assign ug mga buluhaton sa pagpanukiduki ug video o hilisgutan... [...sometimes I use the flipped classroom strategy... assign tasks to research a video or topic...] – P3*

*...paggamit ug mga educational videos, interactive nga mga dula, ug mga proyekto sa grupo aron himoong mas hands-on ang MAPEH... [...using educational videos, interactive games, and group projects to make MAPEH more hands-on...] – P5*

#### **ET 11: Student Involvement and Feedback**

Engaging students in the innovation process through their feedback is crucial for enhancing teaching methods. Teachers utilize surveys, discussions, and suggestion boxes to create a more interactive and responsive classroom environment. Hattie (2019) found that student feedback significantly enhances teaching effectiveness by helping educators adjust their methods to meet student needs better. Using student input to refine lesson plans, teachers can ensure that their teaching practices align with students' interests and needs, leading to continuous improvement in classroom innovation. The participants shared:

*...ang pag-apil kanila sa proseso sa kabag-ohan ug pagkolekta sa ilang feedback nagpalambo sa mas interactive nga palibot sa pagkat-on... [...involving them in the innovation process and gathering their feedback fosters a more interactive learning environment...] – P1*

*...ang mga estudyante nalambigit pinaagi sa pagpaambit sa ilang mga hunahuna atol sa mga diskusyon sa klase ug pagkompleto sa mga survey sa feedback... [...students are involved by sharing their thoughts during class discussions and completing feedback surveys...] – P5*

#### **ET 12: Student-Centered Teaching**

Adapting lessons to accommodate diverse learning styles and abilities is essential for effective teaching. Incorporating visual, auditory, and kinesthetic elements into lessons creates an inclusive classroom environment. Tomlinson (2021) found that differentiated instruction helps address each student's unique strengths, allowing them to engage

with the material in ways that suit their learning preferences. Sousa (2017) emphasized that personalized learning, such as collaborative projects and open-ended tasks, supports diverse learners by offering multiple pathways to success. By tailoring lessons, educators ensure that every student has the opportunity to succeed, reflecting a commitment to equity and diversity in education. Incorporating technology into differentiated instruction can further enhance its effectiveness. The participants shared:

...nagpahaom sa mga leksyon sa MAPEH nga hinungdanon sa paghimo og makadani, inklusibo nga palibot... [...tailors MAPEH lessons that are essential for creating an engaging, inclusive environment...] – P1

...kinahanglan natong sabton ang indibidwal nga panginahanglan sa atong mga estudyante... importante ang differentiated instruction... [...we need to understand the individual needs of our students... differentiated instruction is important...] – P2

## Conclusion

The curricular simplification under MATATAG enhances subject integration, improving instructional coherence and learning efficiency. Teachers reported that reducing competencies allowed for more focused and effective lesson delivery, reinforcing student engagement and comprehension.

The streamlined approach fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills among students. By concentrating on essential competencies, the curriculum provides a structured learning experience that minimizes cognitive overload. Furthermore, teachers adapted their instructional strategies to align with the decongested framework, emphasizing interactive and student-centered methodologies.

Implementing the MATATAG curriculum has positively affected both teaching practices and student learning outcomes in MAPEH. Integrating subjects and reducing content overload contribute to a more effective and meaningful educational experience for Grade 7 learners.

## Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest by the authors in this manuscript.

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