

Educational Philosophies and Teaching Methods Challenges of Junior High School Teachers

Wilson Angel H. Villarin, Jheny P. Villacruz, EdD

Camarines Norte State College, Daet, Camarines Norte

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the educational philosophies and teaching methods of junior high school teachers within the framework of the MATATAG Curriculum. As education reforms continue to align with global standards, it is essential for teachers to harmonize their personal philosophies with effective instructional strategies. However, they face persistent challenges such as curricular transitions, limited resources, and learner diversity. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study involved forty-one English, Mathematics, and Science teachers from a public secondary school in the Bicol Region. Data were gathered through a validated questionnaire and analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, and thematic analysis. Findings revealed that Progressivism was the most dominant educational philosophy, while collaborative learning emerged as the most commonly employed teaching method. The top challenges identified included limited learning resources (100%), behavioural issues (78%), and diverse learning styles (71%), with behavioural concerns being the most difficult to manage. To address these issues, the study introduced the Teaching Excellence through Alignment of Classroom Philosophy and Methods Assistance Program (TEACH MAP), a mentoring framework designed to support instructional coherence through structured modules, mentoring timelines, and assessment tools. The inclusion of underexplored philosophies such as Reconstructionism provided a broader conceptual base, while international literature offered comparative insights. Although the study's single-site scope limits its generalizability, it provides a foundation for further research and application in diverse educational contexts. Overall, the study underscores the value of reflective mentoring in enhancing alignment between philosophy and practice and proposes TEACH MAP as a practical, replicable tool for improving teaching under the MATATAG Curriculum. This context-specific framework contributes a novel perspective to bridging philosophical beliefs and instructional approaches in Philippine education.

Keywords: Educational philosophies, teaching methods, MATATAG Curriculum, mentoring program, instructional challenges

INTRODUCTION

In earlier times, education primarily served as a tool for survival, where children were taught essential life skills. Over time, its role has expanded to enrich leisure, cultural, and social aspects of life (OECD, 2023). Today, education is recognised as a driver of sustainable development and economic growth (UNESCO, 2022). Achieving quality education relies on clear goals and objectives, guided by a nation's educational philosophy (Peel, 2021).

Educational philosophy provides a theoretical foundation for teaching methods and supports teachers' understanding of learning processes (Woodhouse, 2022). It reflects teachers' beliefs about optimal teaching approaches and their role in education (Baxter, 2023). Core philosophies—Idealism, Realism, Pragmatism, Progressivism, and Existentialism—continue to influence modern pedagogical practice. Emerging and less commonly studied frameworks, such as Reconstructionism and Humanism, are also gaining attention for their potential to address social issues and promote learner empowerment—especially relevant under curriculum reform initiatives. Teachers who understand their philosophy are better equipped to implement effective classroom strategies and to navigate emerging instructional challenges (Woodhouse, 2022).

Complementing educational philosophy, teaching methods refer to the strategies that teachers employ to facilitate learning (Jacob, 2023). Effective methods include clear objectives, active discussions, formative feedback, and ongoing assessment (Alber, 2023). A variety of approaches—collaborative learning, project-based learning, differentiated instruction—help teachers address the diverse needs of students in today’s classrooms (Lathan, 2023). Synthesizing teaching methods with philosophical orientation allows teachers to achieve stronger alignment between what they believe and how they teach, especially in adapting to classroom realities. A strong understanding of both educational philosophy and teaching methods allows teachers to critically reflect on and enhance their instructional practices (Seo, 2023; Casinillo & Guarte, 2021).

The Philippine education system continues to face significant challenges. In the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Filipino students ranked among the lowest globally in reading, mathematics, and science (OECD, 2023). In response, the Department of Education introduced the MATATAG Curriculum in 2023 to streamline competencies and prioritise core skills such as literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional learning (DepEd, 2023). However, as observed during the early implementation of the K to 12 programme, new reforms often bring difficulties. These include inadequate teacher preparation, behavioural issues in the classroom, limited learning resources, and increasingly diverse learning needs (Dizon et al., 2021; Sevillano, 2022). These challenges mirror those faced in other education systems undergoing reform, such as in Turkey, Chile, and the United States, where the disconnect between curricular ideals and classroom realities underscores the importance of teacher support mechanisms.

While there is growing research on educational philosophies and teaching methods, few studies explore how secondary teachers in the Philippines align these elements in the context of the MATATAG Curriculum. Moreover, limited attention has been given to the specific challenges teachers encounter in this alignment process, or to the role of structured mentoring programmes in supporting them. This study addresses these gaps by proposing a contextualised mentoring framework to enhance alignment and instructional adaptability.

The aim of this study is to examine the educational philosophies and teaching methods of junior high school teachers, and to explore the challenges they encounter in applying these approaches under the MATATAG Curriculum. Specifically, this study seeks to identify the predominant educational philosophies adopted by secondary school teachers; explore the teaching methods used in the classroom; determine the challenges teachers encounter in implementing their educational philosophies and teaching methods; identify which challenges are perceived as the most difficult to address; and develop a mentoring programme to support teachers in aligning their philosophies and methods.

To achieve these objectives, the following research questions are posed: What educational philosophies are adopted by secondary school teachers? What teaching methods are used in the classroom? What challenges are encountered in implementing educational philosophies and teaching methods? Which of these challenges are the most difficult to address? How can a mentoring programme support teachers in aligning their educational philosophies and teaching methods?

This study is expected to contribute to teacher professional development by informing the design of mentoring programmes that address instructional challenges. By incorporating international insights, underexplored philosophies, and detailed programme documentation, it aims to broaden the relevance and replicability of findings. Ultimately, the findings will support improved classroom practices and more effective implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum in Philippine secondary schools.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to examine the educational philosophies and teaching methods of junior high school teachers and to explore the challenges they encounter under the MATATAG Curriculum (Timans et al., 2019). Combining quantitative and qualitative approaches enabled a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. This design also allowed for the triangulation of data, revealing nuanced connections between philosophical orientations, teaching practices, and implementation challenges.

The study was conducted in a public secondary school located in the Bicol Region, Philippines. The participants consisted of forty-one (41) junior high school teachers, comprising 12 English teachers, 14 Mathematics teachers, and 15 Science teachers, all actively engaged in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. A purposive sampling technique was utilised to select respondents with relevant teaching experience and involvement in the current curriculum reforms. While the single-site setting limits generalizability, the sample was sufficient to identify consistent themes within a reform-focused context; future research is recommended to include multi-site comparative analysis.

Data were collected using a researcher-designed questionnaire comprising both closed-ended and open-ended items. The instrument was validated by three experts in educational leadership and pedagogy to ensure content validity and relevance. The questionnaire gathered information on teachers' educational philosophies, teaching methods, challenges in implementation, and perceptions of a proposed mentoring programme.

The data collection process occurred during the first quarter of the 2024–2025 academic year. Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, ensuring voluntary participation and confidentiality of responses.

Quantitative data from closed-ended questions were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequency counts and percentages). Qualitative data from open-ended responses were subjected to thematic analysis (Caulfield, 2019), involving coding and categorisation to identify emerging themes. Key themes were cross-referenced with quantitative trends to uncover deeper connections between philosophy, practice, and classroom challenges. Findings also informed the development of the TEACH MAP framework, which includes structured modules, implementation timelines, and assessment tools to support replication. Comparative analysis with international studies was later used to contextualize these themes in broader reform contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Educational Philosophies of Secondary School Teachers. This objective aimed to determine the predominant educational philosophies adopted by secondary school teachers in the context of the MATATAG Curriculum, which promotes learner agency, inclusivity, and critical thinking. Results revealed that Progressivism was the most prevalent philosophy (22%), followed by Realism (19%), Existentialism and Humanism (15% each), Idealism and Pragmatism (11% each), and Reconstructionism (7%). One teacher shared, “Hinihikayat ko ang mga mag-aaral na matutong mag-isip at matuto sa kanilang sariling karanasan” [“I encourage my students to think and learn through their own experiences”] [TP-9], reflecting the core of Progressivism. Another affirmed, “Mas mahalaga na matutunan nila kung paano mag-isip kaysa basta kabisaduhin ang leksyon” [“It is more important for them to learn how to think than to simply memorise lessons”] [TP-15]. These responses demonstrate alignment between philosophical beliefs and classroom practice focused on inquiry, experience, and critical thinking. The prominence of Progressivism suggests that teachers are adopting student-centered strategies, aligned with MATATAG's goals of learner empowerment and active participation. Realism's strong representation implies that factual, structured learning still holds value, contributing to a balanced instructional approach. The presence of Existentialism and Humanism reflects teachers' emphasis on personal growth and emotional development. Although cited less frequently, Reconstructionism points to emerging awareness of education as a tool for social transformation. Synthesizing these insights indicates that teachers combine traditional and progressive philosophies to respond to diverse learner needs. This finding supports Alemdar and Aytac (2022), who found a dominant preference for Progressivism, and aligns with Woodhouse (2022), who argued that philosophically grounded teachers adapt more effectively to educational change. International literature further affirms that clarity in teaching philosophy strengthens pedagogical coherence, as seen in education systems navigating reform in Finland, Chile, and South Korea.

Table 1 Educational Philosophies of English, Mathematics, and Science Teachers

Educational Philosophy	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Existentialism	8	15%
Humanism	8	15%
Idealism	6	11%

Pragmatism	6	11%
Progressivism	12	22%
Realism	10	19%
Reconstructionism	4	7%
Total	54	100%

Teaching Methods of English, Mathematics, and Science Teachers. This objective aimed to explore the teaching methods employed by secondary school teachers, recognising the importance of aligning instructional strategies with the MATATAG Curriculum’s focus on active, inclusive, and meaningful learning. Results showed that collaborative learning was the most frequently used method (90%), followed by experiential learning and lecture method (69% each). Demonstration and differentiated instruction were each cited by 59% of respondents, while problem-based learning (49%), inquiry-based learning (46%), direct instruction (32%), and project-based learning (27%) were also reported. One teacher shared: “Mas natututo ang mga mag-aaral kapag nagtutulungan sila sa paggawa ng mga gawain” [“Students learn more effectively when they collaborate on tasks”] [TP-12], while another emphasized: “Gusto ko na ang mga mag-aaral ay magkaroon ng sariling karanasan sa pagkatuto, hindi lang pakikinig sa aralin” [“I want students to have their own learning experiences, not just listen to lectures”] [TP-6]. These narratives reflect the core of collaborative and experiential learning—student engagement, peer interaction, and ownership of learning. The combined data suggest that teachers adopt a range of strategies that balance student-centered approaches with structured instruction, particularly in content-heavy subjects. The continued use of traditional methods like lectures alongside progressive techniques indicates teachers’ adaptive efforts to meet diverse learning needs. This diversity highlights the importance of professional development in helping teachers blend traditional and progressive methods effectively. Training should focus on designing collaborative, differentiated, and resource-efficient activities, while also supporting philosophy-method alignment. These findings are supported by international literature, including Nuñez et al. (2022), who affirmed the value of collaborative learning in fostering engagement and critical thinking, and Turi et al. (2021), who found it enhances student resilience. Examples from Finland and Singapore further validate the need for instructional flexibility and alignment, especially in systems implementing curriculum reforms like MATATAG.

Table 2 Teaching Methods of English, Mathematics, and Science Teachers

Teaching Method	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Collaborative Learning	37	90%
Demonstration Method	24	59%
Differentiated Instruction	24	59%
Direct Instruction	13	32%
Experiential Learning	28	69%
Inquiry-Based Learning	19	46%
Lecture Method	28	69%
Problem-Based Learning	20	49%
Project-Based Learning	11	27%

Note: Total not computed because respondents selected multiple methods.

Challenges Encountered by English, Mathematics, and Science Teachers. This objective aimed to identify the challenges encountered by English, Mathematics, and Science teachers in implementing their educational philosophies and teaching methods under the MATATAG Curriculum. Data revealed that limited learning resources were the most common challenge, cited by all 41 respondents (100%), followed by behavioural issues (78%) and diverse learning styles (71%). Other notable concerns included technological limitations (66%), large class sizes and time constraints (56% each), teacher burnout (37%), parental involvement (34%), and adapting to student needs (32%). One teacher shared: “Laging kulang ang mga aklat at kagamitan, kaya kami ang gumagastos mula sa aming sariling bulsa” [“Books and materials are always lacking, so we often spend from our own pockets”] [TP-26]. Another commented: “Sobrang hirap kontrolin ang klase dahil sa hindi magandang ugali ng ilan sa mga estudyante” [“It is very difficult to manage the class because of poor student behavior”] [TP-22]. Regarding learning diversity, one noted: “Iba-iba ang antas ng kakayahan ng mga mag-aaral kaya

mahirap sabayan ang kanilang mga pangangailangan” [“Students have different ability levels, making it hard to meet their needs”] [TP-17]. Thematic analysis showed that material, behavioral, and pedagogical issues are deeply interconnected, forming complex barriers to instructional coherence. These challenges reveal a misalignment between teacher philosophies—particularly Progressivism and Humanism—and classroom realities constrained by limited support and systemic inefficiencies. Teachers’ desire to adopt learner-centered and inclusive strategies is often hindered by time constraints, inadequate training, and lack of resources. Similar issues have emerged in reform efforts in Indonesia and Brazil, where teacher overload and policy fragmentation impeded implementation. These findings highlight the urgency of capacity-building initiatives that enhance both material provisions and pedagogical competence. Aligned with Varas et al. (2023), this study affirms the global need for targeted interventions to support teacher resilience and instructional effectiveness under evolving education reforms.

Table 3 Challenges Encountered by English, Mathematics, and Science Teachers

Challenge	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Limited Learning Resources	41	100%
Behavioural Issues	32	78%
Diverse Learning Styles	29	71%
Technological Challenges	27	66%
Large Class Sizes	23	56%
Time Constraints	23	56%
Teacher Burnout	15	37%
Parental Involvement	14	34%
Adapting to Student Needs	13	32%
Policy Changes	9	22%
Standardised Testing	9	22%
Inclusive Education	9	22%
Curriculum Constraints	8	20%
Administrative Expectations	7	17%
Societal Issues	5	12%
Professional Development	2	5%

Most Difficult to Address Challenges Encountered by English, Mathematics, and Science Teachers. This objective aimed to examine which challenges teachers perceived as the most difficult to address when implementing their educational philosophies and teaching methods under the MATATAG Curriculum. Behavioural issues emerged as the top concern, followed by limited learning resources, adapting to student needs, large class sizes, diverse learning styles, time constraints, inclusive education, parental involvement, policy changes, and curriculum constraints. Several teachers highlighted behavioural issues as especially difficult: “Sobrang hirap kontrolin ang klase dahil sa hindi magandang ugali ng ilan sa mga estudyante” [“It is very difficult to manage the class because of poor student behavior”] [TP-22] and “Kulang ako sa kaalaman sa tamang paghandle sa may behavioural issues” [“I lack the knowledge on how to properly handle students with behavioral issues”] [TP-22]. Others cited limited resources: “Laging kulang ang mga aklat at kagamitan, kaya kami ang gumagastos mula sa sariling bulsa” [“Books and materials are lacking, so we spend from our own pockets”] [TP-26]; “Absence of textbooks in Grade 7. As in zero” [TP-12]. Regarding student needs, one shared: “Iba-iba ang antas ng kakayahan ng mga mag-aaral kaya mahirap sabayan” [“Students have different ability levels, making it hard to meet their needs”] [TP-17]. These top challenges intersect with efforts to implement learner-centered philosophies like Progressivism and Humanism. Teachers aspire to promote active, individualized learning, yet classroom conditions often limit these efforts. Behavioural concerns signal the need for training in classroom management and socio-emotional learning. Resource inadequacies call for infrastructure support, while adapting to learner diversity requires professional development in differentiated instruction. These local findings mirror international struggles seen in South Africa, India, and Turkey, where systemic limitations impede reform. Addressing these barriers demands not only motivation but also institutional support, such as mentoring programs tailored to pedagogical and contextual realities. This supports Varas et al. (2023), who emphasized global challenges in implementing inclusive, learner-centred practices.

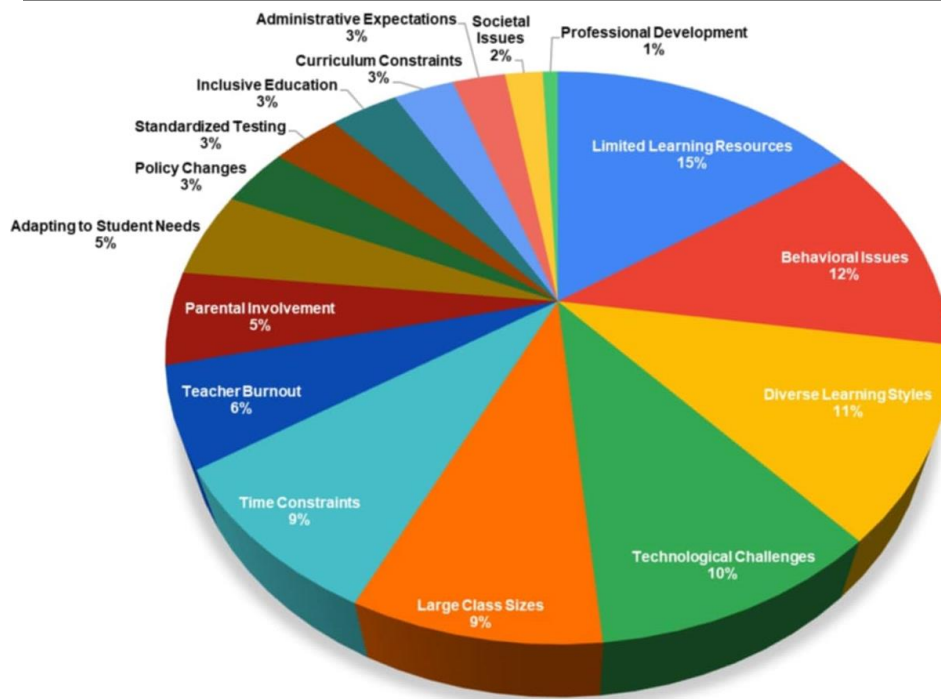


Figure 1 Most Difficult to Address Challenges Encountered by English, Mathematics, and Science Teachers

Teaching Excellence through Alignment of Classroom Philosophy and Methods Assistance Program (TEACH MAP). This objective aimed to develop a mentoring programme through which experienced teachers can support newly hired teachers in aligning their educational philosophies with effective teaching methods—particularly to address challenges under the MATATAG Curriculum. Based on findings that highlighted behavioural issues, resource limitations, and learner diversity, the Teaching Excellence through Alignment of Classroom Philosophy and Methods Assistance Program (TEACH MAP) was created to close professional development gaps and promote adaptive instructional practice. Grounded in three principles—philosophical alignment, context-driven responsiveness, and sustained mentorship—TEACH MAP offers structured guidance tailored to the realities of classroom reform. Its framework includes clearly outlined modules, phased mentoring plans, timelines, and assessment tools for monitoring mentor-mentee progress. Core components are: (1) seminar-workshops to guide teachers in applying educational philosophies to real classroom challenges; (2) school-based workshops focusing on managing behavioral issues, implementing differentiated instruction, and delivering effective lessons with limited resources; and (3) one-on-one or peer mentoring with ongoing reflection and feedback. Teacher voices affirmed the need for this support. One new teacher said, “Bilang bagong guro, nangangailangan talaga ako ng gabay kung paano ko maiaangkop ang aking paraan ng pagtuturo sa mga pilosopiyang pang-edukasyon” [“As a new teacher, I need guidance on aligning my teaching approach with educational philosophies”] [TP-5]. Another reflected, “Magandang may mentor na tutulong sa amin lalo na sa pagharap sa mga hamon sa klase” [“It would be good to have a mentor to help us with classroom challenges”] [TP-18]. Inspired by Singapore’s Beginning Teacher Induction Programme and the UK’s Early Career Framework, TEACH MAP aligns global mentoring best practices with local reform needs. It offers a scalable, replicable solution to support instructional coherence, teacher resilience, and professional growth under MATATAG.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that Progressivism is the predominant educational philosophy adopted by secondary school teachers, with collaborative learning as the most commonly used teaching method. Teachers encounter significant challenges in aligning their philosophies with classroom practices, particularly in navigating limited learning resources, behavioural issues, and diverse learning styles. These challenges were found to be deeply interconnected, revealing a misalignment between teachers’ student-centered ideals and the constraints of their instructional environments. Among these, behavioural issues were identified as the most difficult to address due to their strong impact on classroom management, student engagement, and instructional flow. The findings also highlighted how teachers’ efforts to implement learner-centered methods were often hindered by systemic and

contextual factors, reflecting patterns observed in other reform-driven countries where teacher philosophies remained aspirational in practice. In response, the Teaching Excellence through Alignment of Classroom Philosophy and Methods Assistance Program (TEACH MAP) was developed to support new and struggling teachers through structured mentorship. The program integrates philosophy-based reflection, classroom-based solutions, and scaffolded support through documented modules, workshop series, and formative assessment tools. It was designed not only to address common instructional challenges but also to reinforce the alignment between what teachers believe and what they are able to enact in their classrooms. The qualitative insights from teacher reflections provided essential context for understanding the statistical trends—particularly in explaining why Progressivism was dominant and why behavioural issues proved most challenging. By anchoring mentoring in both theory and practice, and aligning it with both local findings and global models of teacher support, TEACH MAP provides a practical framework for improving instructional coherence and fostering teacher resilience. Overall, the study emphasizes that strengthening the link between philosophy and practice through targeted mentoring is essential to improving instructional quality and advancing the goals of the MATATAG Curriculum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, it is recommended that school leaders and policymakers provide sustained professional development opportunities to help teachers deepen their understanding of educational philosophies and strengthen their alignment with teaching methods. These professional learning initiatives should explicitly address the gap between teachers' instructional beliefs and their capacity to enact them in resource-constrained and behaviourally complex classrooms. Special attention should be given to addressing behavioural issues through targeted training in classroom management, socio-emotional learning, and inclusive practices. Schools should prioritise improving access to instructional materials and learning technologies, while also expanding training in differentiated instruction to accommodate diverse learner needs. These capacity-building efforts must be tailored not only to pedagogical competence but also to contextual responsiveness, ensuring alignment with both teacher values and daily instructional realities. Moreover, the implementation of the Teaching Excellence through Alignment of Classroom Philosophy and Methods Assistance Program (TEACH MAP) is strongly recommended to foster a culture of mentoring and collaboration. The program's documented modules, defined mentoring timelines, structured feedback tools, and alignment with global best practices make it a scalable and sustainable solution for bridging theory and practice in Philippine classrooms. Future evaluations of TEACH MAP will include pre- and post-assessments, feedback loops, and mentor-mentee progress tracking to measure effectiveness and guide continuous improvement. Through this framework, newly hired and developing teachers can be supported in developing reflective, philosophy-driven, and adaptive teaching practices that respond effectively to the demands of the MATATAG Curriculum. To ensure lasting impact, it is also recommended that TEACH MAP be institutionalised as a formal component of teacher induction and continuous professional development programs, with built-in monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Doing so will help secure the sustained professional growth of teachers and the successful implementation of curriculum reforms. In the long term, such efforts can contribute to a more resilient, equity-oriented, and pedagogically coherent education system.

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