

Inquiry-based teaching practices and mathematics teachers' instructional confidence in the MATATAG curriculum

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Abstract

This study examined the extent of mathematics teachers' inquiry-based teaching practices and their instructional confidence in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum in public secondary schools of Goa 2 District, Camarines Sur, Philippines. Using a descriptive–correlational design, data were collected from thirty (30) Grade 7 and Grade 8 mathematics teachers through a validated Likert-scale questionnaire. Results showed that teachers often employed inquiry-based strategies in mathematics instruction ($M = 3.90$), particularly in promoting collaboration, exploration, and real-world problem solving, while inquiry-oriented assessment practices were less frequently applied. Teachers demonstrated a high level of instructional confidence in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum ($M = 3.98$), especially in lesson design and curriculum alignment, though lower confidence was noted in ICT integration and inquiry-based assessment. Spearman's rank correlation analysis revealed a weak and statistically non-significant relationship between inquiry-based practices and instructional confidence ($\rho = 0.152$, $p = 0.682$), indicating that these constructs may be influenced by different contextual factors. Major challenges were identified such as limited instructional time, students' low readiness for inquiry, large class sizes, and inadequate resources. The findings suggest that while teachers are generally aligned with the inquiry-driven goals of the MATATAG Curriculum, sustained professional development and institutional support are necessary to ensure effective implementation.

Keywords: inquiry-based teaching practices, extent, instructional confidence, MATATAG curriculum, challenges

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1. Introduction

A vital part of national development is mathematics education, which gives students the analytical thinking, logical reasoning, and problem-solving abilities needed for both employability and lifetime learning. The Philippines' implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum stems from the necessity to address persistent issues with student learning outcomes, especially in science and math. Filipino students routinely fared below the global average in mathematics, placing among the lowest out of 79 participating nations, according to results from extensive tests like the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 and 2022 (OECD, 2019; OECD, 2023). Similarly, Grade 4 pupils in the Philippines performed substantially worse than the global average in both science and mathematics, according to the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS, 2019; Mullis et al., 2020). Persistent deficiencies in problem-solving and numeracy abilities have also been noted in national exams like the National Achievement Test (NAT) (DepEd, 2022).

In response, the Department of Education (DepEd) conducted a comprehensive curriculum review that identified an overloaded K to 12 curriculum as a key factor limiting mastery of essential competencies. To address this, DepEd launched the MATATAG Curriculum, guided by DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2023 and further detailed in DepEd Memorandum No. 054, s. 2023, to streamline content, strengthen foundational skills, and emphasize the use of learner-centered pedagogies. One of the central features of the MATATAG reform is the promotion of active, inquiry-driven teaching strategies such as inquiry-based learning (IBL), which are intended to deepen students' understanding rather than promote rote memorization (DepEd, 2023). This shift highlights the need to investigate how teachers adapt to these reforms, particularly in mathematics, a subject where learners often struggle and teachers are expected to employ higher-order instructional strategies.

Studies conducted locally and internationally highlight how inquiry-based pedagogy improves critical thinking, problem-solving, and student involvement. However, teachers' self-efficacy or instructional confidence plays a major role in this approach's success. Timperley and Williams (2023) found in their meta-analysis that professional development significantly enhances teachers' self-efficacy, which is crucial for implementing inquiry-based strategies effectively. Pentang et al. (2023) likewise emphasized that teachers with high self-efficacy and positive attitudes toward mathematics are more likely to engage students in meaningful inquiry and exploration. These findings underscore that teachers' confidence is essential to successfully implementing curriculum improvements in the classroom.

Early research on the MATATAG curriculum in the Philippines reveals both opportunities and difficulties. According to Herrera (2024), educators value the emphasis on learner-centered pedagogy and basic skills, but they have trouble with pacing, resource availability, and alignment with assessment standards. In a similar vein, Bihag et al. (2025) noted in their examination of Grade 7 lesson models that although MATATAG incorporates inquiry-based and competency-driven ideas, there is still little room for flexibility and the use of creative approaches. These studies demonstrate the fact that, regardless of how well-thought-out they are, curricular modifications mainly depend on the preparedness, self-assurance, and support networks of teachers.

Teachers' willingness to innovate is also strongly predicted by their level of instructional confidence. According to a study conducted in the Philippines by Padohinog et al. (2022), math teachers who have higher levels of self-efficacy are more likely to use a variety of teaching techniques, which raises student engagement. This is consistent with Edilo et al. (2022) argument that the efficacy of math teachers in implementing learner-centered and inquiry-driven approaches is influenced by their culturally sensitive self-efficacy. Collectively, these results imply that teachers' trust in their ability to apply innovative pedagogies influences their instructional

confidence in addition to training and policy.

Little is known regarding the degree to which math teachers actually use inquiry-based teaching, their degree of instructional confidence, and the difficulties they encounter when putting it into practice, despite DepEd's explicit request for it under MATATAG. This disparity emphasizes the need for empirical research that looks at the relationship between instructional confidence and inquiry-based practices in the MATATAG curriculum. The MATATAG Curriculum is newly implemented, and there are very limited empirical studies examining how teachers are actually teaching under this reform - especially in Mathematics. This study is among the early empirical investigations focusing on mathematics teachers' instructional practices and confidence within the context of the MATATAG Curriculum. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study was to explore the extent of mathematics teachers' inquiry-based practices and their level of instructional confidence in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum.

Objectives of the Study

- Determine the extent of mathematics teachers' inquiry-based teaching practices.
- Determine the level of instructional confidence of mathematics teachers in implementing the K-12 curriculum.
- Test the significant relationship between the extent of inquiry-based teaching practices and their level of instructional confidence.
- Identify challenges encountered by mathematics teachers in applying inquiry-based teaching strategies.

2. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design. It described the extent of mathematics teachers' inquiry-based teaching practices and their level of instructional confidence in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. The correlational method determined the relationship between the extent of inquiry-based teaching practices and the level of instructional confidence among teachers. This design was appropriate since it allowed the researcher to assess existing conditions and relationships between variables without manipulating them, providing an accurate depiction of teachers' current practices under the new curriculum implementation.

Several essential criteria were considered to ensure the relevance and appropriateness of the study. The accessibility and safety of the researcher were also considered, as well as the voluntary participation and willingness of the teacher-respondents. Additionally, preference was given to schools with varying contexts and available resources for mathematics instruction to ensure more representative data. Purposive sampling was used to identify the thirty (30) respondents of the study. The participants were Grade 7 and Grade 8 mathematics teachers from public secondary schools where the MATATAG Curriculum is being implemented. These teachers were selected based on their direct involvement in teaching mathematics under the new curriculum, their willingness to participate, and their availability during the data collection period.

The main research instrument was a researcher-made survey questionnaire composed of three parts. The first part gathered demographic information about the respondents such as age, sex, years of teaching experience, and professional training related to inquiry-based learning. The second part focused on determining the extent of inquiry-based teaching practices, while the third part assessed the level of instructional confidence in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. The instrument was validated by three experts in mathematics education to ensure content accuracy and appropriateness. It was also pilot-tested to determine its reliability, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.87, which indicated high internal consistency.

The survey used a 5-point Likert scale to measure the extent of teachers' inquiry-based practices and their level of instructional confidence. Prior to the conduct of the study, a research permit was obtained from the Office

of the Public Schools District Supervisor. The respondents were provided with an informed consent form that explained the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, and the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity. Code names were assigned to each respondent to maintain privacy and ensure that all data collected was treated with strict confidentiality.

The data gathered were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. The weighted mean was used to determine the extent of inquiry-based teaching practices and the level of instructional confidence of mathematics teachers. Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation was employed to measure the relationship between these two variables. Frequency and percentage were utilized to describe the common challenges encountered by mathematics teachers in applying inquiry-based teaching strategies.

A limitation of this study is the reliance on self-reported data, which may contain response biases such as social desirability bias or overestimation of teaching practices. It is possible that respondents provided answers they perceived to be favorable rather than those that accurately represented their classroom behavior. Furthermore, the study was limited to mathematics teachers handling Grades 7 and 8 in selected public secondary schools in the Goa District. Therefore, the findings may not be generalized to teachers in other grade levels, subject areas, or locations. Other external factors, such as administrative support, teaching resources, and student readiness, may also influence teachers' confidence and use of inquiry-based strategies, but were not directly examined in this research.

3. Results

Extent of Mathematics Teachers' Inquiry-Based Practices. Table 1 presents the extent of mathematics teachers' inquiry-based practices. It shows that the computed means for each indicator, ranges from 3.60 to 4.20. The overall mean was 3.90, indicating that teachers often integrate inquiry-based strategies in their mathematics instruction. These findings revealed that the integration of exploratory activities before presenting formal mathematical rules obtained the highest mean of 4.20, suggesting that teachers frequently use exploratory activities to engage students before formal instruction. This practice reflects teachers' understanding that discovery enhances conceptual understanding and promotes active participation. Encouraging students to ask thought-provoking questions that lead to mathematical exploration ranked second with a mean of 4.05, implying that teachers commonly prompt learners to think critically and independently. Meanwhile, the lowest mean of 3.60 was observed for assessing students through performance-based or inquiry-oriented tasks. This implies that while teachers emphasize inquiry during instruction, assessment methods that measure inquiry skills are less frequently used, possibly due to time constraints or a lack of assessment tools suited to inquiry-based learning.

The high overall mean of 3.91 suggests that mathematics teachers are generally confident and consistent in employing inquiry-based strategies. However, the variability among indicators indicates certain areas that require strengthening, particularly in inquiry-based assessment and student reflection practices. This finding aligns with the view of Llewellyn (2013) that inquiry-based teaching requires not only the facilitation of exploration but also systematic assessment of students' inquiry skills. Furthermore, Bybee (2019) emphasized that inquiry-based instruction is central to effective STEM education, as it promotes conceptual understanding and problem-solving competence among learners. The high level of practice found in this study, therefore, reflects teachers' positive response to the shift encouraged by the MATATAG Curriculum toward learner-centered and inquiry-driven pedagogy.

Linking these findings to previous research, similar results were reported by Bautista and Tan (2022), who found that mathematics teachers in the Philippines often used inquiry-oriented lessons, though limited by the availability of instructional resources. The current results support their conclusion that Filipino teachers recognize the value of inquiry but still need further professional support to enhance its implementation. Additionally, the findings are consistent with the DepEd (2023) directive emphasizing active learning and inquiry as key features of the MATATAG Curriculum, indicating alignment between teacher practices and current national reforms in

education.

Table 1
Extent of Mathematics Teachers' Inquiry-Based Practices

Statements	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. I encourage students to ask thought-provoking questions that lead to mathematical exploration.	4.05	Often
2. I use real-life situations to start mathematical investigations.	3.95	Often
3. I guide students in formulating hypotheses or predictions about mathematical outcomes.	3.80	Often
4. I allow students to explore multiple strategies for solving mathematical problems.	4.10	Often
5. I provide tasks that require students to explain and justify their reasoning.	4.00	Often
6. I encourage students to collaborate and discuss different problem-solving approaches.	4.20	Always
7. I integrate exploratory activities before presenting formal mathematical rules.	3.75	Often
8. I assess students through performance-based or inquiry-oriented tasks.	3.60	Often
9. I facilitate reflection sessions where students evaluate their learning process.	3.70	Often
10. I modify lessons to encourage curiosity and deeper understanding.	3.90	Often
Overall Mean	3.90	Often

Legend: 1.00-1.79 (Never), 1.80-2.59 (Seldom), 2.60-3.39 (Sometimes), 3.40-4.19 (Often), 4.20-5.00 (Always)

Based on these findings, it is recommended that school administrators and curriculum leaders strengthen professional development programs focusing on assessment strategies for inquiry-based learning. Training workshops on designing performance-based evaluation tools and reflective activities could further enhance teachers' capacity to measure students' inquiry skills effectively. Moreover, sustained mentoring and collaboration among teachers could encourage the consistent integration of inquiry practices across all mathematics lessons, ensuring that the MATATAG Curriculum's objectives of active, critical, and reflective learning are fully realized.

Level of Teacher's Instructional Confidence. Table 2 shows the level of instructional confidence of mathematics teachers in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. The overall mean rating was 3.98, interpreted as "Confident", indicating that teachers generally feel capable in aligning their practices with the curriculum's expectations. Among the indicators, the highest confidence level was reported in successfully implementing the core principles of the MATATAG Curriculum (M = 4.20), followed by integrating real-world contexts into mathematics instruction (M = 4.15), and designing inquiry-based lessons (M = 4.10). Teachers also expressed confidence in managing classroom discussions that promote critical thinking (M = 4.05) and in using learner-centered pedagogies (M = 4.00). Confidence was slightly lower in guiding students through problem-based learning tasks (M = 3.95), adapting inquiry strategies to varied learning levels (M = 3.90), and assessing performance in inquiry-based activities (M = 3.85). Teachers showed comparatively lower, yet still confident, ratings in handling challenges of new teaching strategies (M = 3.80) and using ICT tools to support inquiry-based learning (M = 3.75).

These findings indicated that mathematics teachers feel most confident in foundational pedagogical practices that align with the MATATAG Curriculum's learner-centered and contextualized approach. Teachers rated themselves as very confident in implementing the curriculum's principles and highly capable of designing lessons that are inquiry-driven and connected to real-world applications. These high scores reflect a positive alignment between teacher perception and the intended direction of the curriculum reform. However, lower mean ratings in areas such as ICT integration and performance assessment suggest that while pedagogical alignment is strong, technical and evaluative capacities may require reinforcement.

The findings suggested that teachers are generally well-prepared and optimistic about the shift toward a more inquiry-based, learner-centered mathematics curriculum. Their confidence in curriculum alignment, lesson design, and student engagement reflects a readiness to embrace pedagogical reforms. However, the comparatively lower confidence in using ICT tools and in assessing inquiry-based tasks implies that teachers may be less familiar or

comfortable with digital technologies and alternative forms of assessment, which are crucial components of modern instruction. This could be attributed to limited training opportunities, lack of resources, or minimal exposure to digital platforms and non-traditional assessment methods. Similar findings by Bautista et al. (2023) in the Southeast Asian context revealed that while educators may be pedagogically aligned with reforms, their effectiveness is limited when technical skills and resource access are lacking. Therefore, even confident teachers require ongoing support to fully realize the curriculum's goals.

Table 2*Level of Instructional Confidence in Implementing the MATATAG Curriculum*

Statements	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. I am confident in designing inquiry-based lessons aligned with the MATATAG Curriculum.	4.10	Confident
2. I can effectively guide students through problem-based learning tasks.	3.95	Confident
3. I can manage classroom discussions that promote critical thinking and reasoning.	4.05	Confident
4. I can adapt inquiry-based strategies to different student learning levels.	3.90	Confident
5. I am confident in integrating real-world contexts into mathematics instruction.	4.15	Confident
6. I can assess student performance in inquiry-based activities effectively.	3.85	Confident
7. I can handle challenges that arise from implementing new teaching strategies.	3.80	Confident
8. I feel prepared to use learner-centered pedagogies in my teaching.	4.00	Confident
9. I am confident in utilizing ICT tools to support inquiry-based learning.	3.75	Confident
10. I believe I can successfully implement the MATATAG Curriculum's principles in mathematics teaching.	4.20	Very Confident
Overall Mean	3.98	Confident

Legend: 1.00-1.79 (Not Confident), 1.80-2.59 (Slightly Confident), 2.60-3.39 (Moderately Confident), 3.40-4.19 (Confident), 4.20-5.00 (Very Confident)

It is recommended that targeted professional development programs be prioritized, particularly in the areas of ICT integration and inquiry-based assessment practices. These initiatives should include practical, hands-on training, peer mentoring, and the provision of digital tools aligned with classroom realities. Furthermore, continuous capacity-building efforts such as lesson study groups, coaching, and reflective teaching workshops should be established to sustain and elevate teacher confidence across all indicators.

Extent of Mathematics Teachers' Inquiry-Based Practices and Level of Instructional Confidence. The analysis of the significant relationship between the extent of Mathematics teachers' inquiry-based practices and their level of instructional confidence in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum through Spearman's Rank Correlation revealed not statistically significant as shown in Table 3. The results show that the teachers' extent of inquiry-based practices obtained a mean of 3.90 with a standard deviation of 0.19, indicating that most Mathematics teachers often engage in inquiry-based strategies in their classroom instruction. Meanwhile, their level of instructional confidence recorded a slightly higher mean of 3.98 with a standard deviation of 0.15, reflecting a high level of confidence in delivering lessons aligned with the MATATAG Curriculum.

The computed Spearman's rho (ρ) value was 0.152, with a corresponding p-value of 0.682, which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the relationship between the two variables is not statistically significant. This means that there is no sufficient evidence to conclude that Mathematics teachers' extent of inquiry-based practices is related to their instructional confidence in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. The weak and statistically non-significant correlation ($\rho = 0.152$, $p = 0.682$) suggests that although Mathematics teachers frequently use inquiry-based approaches, these practices do not necessarily translate into higher instructional confidence when implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. The findings imply that engaging in inquiry-based teaching and feeling confident in curriculum implementation may operate independently or be influenced by different factors such as teaching experience, administrative support, professional development opportunities, and familiarity with the new curriculum framework.

Table 3

Spearman's Rank Correlation Results for the Relationship Between the Extent of Mathematics Teachers' Inquiry-Based Practices and Level of Instructional Confidence in Implementing the MATATAG Curriculum

Variables Being Correlated	Mean	SD	Spearman's rho (ρ)	p-value	Interpretation
Extent of Mathematics Teachers' Inquiry-Based Practices	3.90	0.19	0.152	0.682	Not Statistically Significant
Level of Instructional Confidence in Implementing the MATATAG Curriculum	3.98	0.15			

Legend: $p \leq 0.05$ (Statistically significant relationship); $p > 0.05$ (Not statistically significant)

Despite the moderate-to-high mean scores in both variables, the absence of a significant correlation may reflect transitional challenges in curriculum adaptation. Teachers may be confident in general teaching strategies but still adjusting to the inquiry-based demands and contextual emphases of the MATATAG Curriculum. Alternatively, they may be implementing inquiry-based methods procedurally rather than with full conceptual integration, which can limit the direct effect on their confidence levels. According to Prado, Tan, and Pabualan (2019), Mathematics teachers in Bukidnon generally possess strong self-efficacy beliefs, yet these beliefs are shaped by factors such as administrative support, continuous training, and years of teaching experience. Thus, confidence may not depend solely on instructional approach but also on institutional climate and opportunities for pedagogical growth. Furthermore, Guerrero and Bautista (2023) emphasized that the implementation of inquiry-based teaching in the Philippine secondary context often encounters practical challenges such as limited instructional materials, time constraints, and assessment pressures. These constraints can weaken the connection between a teacher's instructional confidence and the frequency of applying inquiry-based strategies.

These findings highlight the need for continuous professional development focusing on deepening teachers' understanding of inquiry-based pedagogy and its effective alignment with the MATATAG Curriculum. Training programs should not only introduce strategies but also help teachers reflect on and refine their implementation, thereby bridging the gap between practice and confidence. Moreover, mentoring systems and collaborative learning communities can be established to provide Mathematics teachers with opportunities to share best practices, co-develop lesson exemplars, and receive feedback from peers and supervisors. Strengthening institutional support and providing ongoing coaching will likely foster both competence and confidence, enhancing curriculum delivery outcomes. The study underscores that instructional confidence is multifaceted, it develops not merely from practice but from purposeful, supported, and well-contextualized professional engagement within the framework of the MATATAG Curriculum.

Challenges Encountered in Applying Inquiry-Based Teaching. Complementing the correlation analysis, Table 4 presents the key challenges encountered by teachers in applying inquiry-based teaching in the MATATAG Curriculum. The most frequently reported challenge was limited time to conduct inquiry-based lessons (86.67%), followed by students' low readiness or engagement in inquiry tasks (83.33%) and large class size and diverse student abilities (80.00%). These findings highlight the strong influence of time constraints and learner-related factors on the implementation of inquiry-based approaches.

Table 4

Challenges Encountered in Applying Inquiry-Based Teaching

Challenges	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)
Lack of instructional materials and resources	23	76.67
Limited time to conduct inquiry-based lessons	26	86.67
Insufficient training or professional development	21	70.00
Large class size and diverse student abilities	24	80.00
Lack of administrative or peer support	19	63.33
Difficulty in assessing inquiry-based learning outcomes	20	66.67
Inadequate classroom facilities or technology	23	76.67
Students' low readiness or engagement in inquiry tasks	25	83.33
Pressure to complete content coverage	20	66.67

Resource-related concerns were also prominent, with lack of instructional materials and resources and inadequate classroom facilities or technology both reported by 76.67% of respondents. In addition, insufficient training or professional development (70.00%) and difficulty in assessing inquiry-based learning outcomes (66.67%) indicate persistent gaps in teachers' preparation and assessment practices. The pressure to complete content coverage (66.67%) further underscores the tension between curriculum demands and the time-intensive nature of inquiry-based instruction. Meanwhile, lack of administrative or peer support (63.33%), although relatively lower, remains a notable institutional challenge.

These findings suggest that the challenges in implementing inquiry-based teaching are multidimensional, encompassing time, learner readiness, class size, resource availability, training, assessment, and systemic curriculum pressures. The high prevalence of structural and instructional constraints indicates that difficulties stem largely from organizational and systemic conditions rather than teachers' resistance to inquiry-based pedagogy. Addressing these barriers requires coordinated support in terms of instructional resources, professional development, administrative backing, and curriculum flexibility to enable effective and sustainable inquiry-based teaching practices.

These findings are supported by Gutierrez (2015), who explained that serious teacher professional development efforts are being used extensively to properly orient and present the benefits of inquiry-based teaching. However, despite these efforts, a significant gap remains in the effective implementation of inquiry-based teaching in the classroom. He identified three main barriers to inquiry teaching: the lack of support, training, and available inquiry-based materials; the overemphasis on assessing content learning rather than learning through inquiry; and the misconception, difficulty, and time-consuming nature of inquiry-based teaching.

To address these challenges, a coordinated multi-level approach is recommended. At the institutional level, schools should improve access to instructional materials, facilities, and technology, while allowing greater flexibility in curriculum pacing to support inquiry-based learning. At the professional level, continuous and practice-focused training should be provided to strengthen teachers' skills in implementing and assessing inquiry-based instruction. At the administrative level, school leaders should enhance instructional support through collaboration, mentoring, and peer learning structures. At the classroom level, scaffolded inquiry strategies should be encouraged to improve learner readiness and manage diverse learning needs. Aligning supervision and assessment practices with inquiry-based goals rather than content coverage alone can further support the sustainable implementation of inquiry-based teaching in the MATATAG Curriculum.

4. Conclusions

This study examined the extent of mathematics teachers' inquiry-based practices and their level of instructional confidence in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. The findings revealed that mathematics teachers frequently employ inquiry-based strategies in their instruction, particularly in encouraging collaboration, promoting exploration, and using real-world contexts to initiate learning aligned with the goals of the MATATAG Curriculum. However, while inquiry-based approach was evident in instructional delivery, inquiry-oriented assessment and reflective practices were less frequently applied, suggesting an imbalance between teaching strategies and evaluation methods in inquiry-based mathematics instruction.

In terms of instructional confidence, the results highlighted that teachers generally feel confident in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum, especially in aligning lessons with its core principles, designing inquiry-based activities, and fostering critical thinking through classroom interactions. This confidence reflects teachers' readiness to embrace curriculum reforms and learner-centered teaching approaches. Nevertheless, lower confidence levels were observed in areas related to inquiry-based assessment and ICT integration, indicating the need for further capacity-building in technical and evaluative competencies. As emphasized, the absence of a statistically significant relationship between the extent of inquiry-based practices and instructional confidence suggests that these constructs may be influenced by different factors, such as professional development

opportunities, administrative support, and access to instructional resources, rather than being directly dependent on one another. Furthermore, the study identified multiple challenges that hinder the effective implementation of inquiry-based teaching, including limited instructional time, large class sizes, students' low readiness for inquiry, insufficient resources, and inadequate professional and administrative support. These challenges highlight that the difficulties in applying inquiry-based pedagogy are largely systemic and structural rather than stemming from teachers' lack of willingness or competence.

The findings of this study highlight important practical implications for teachers, students, and schools implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. For teachers, the results affirm their strong engagement in inquiry-based instructional practices while underscoring the need for focused support in inquiry-based assessment and ICT integration to ensure a more balanced and sustainable inquiry approach. For students, consistent and well-supported inquiry-based learning can enhance engagement, critical thinking, and collaboration, provided that inquiry skills are introduced gradually to address varying levels of readiness. At the school level, the findings emphasize that successful inquiry-based implementation depends not only on teacher confidence but also on systemic support, including adequate instructional time, access to resources, manageable class sizes, and strong administrative leadership.

Recommendations - Based on the conclusions, several recommendations can be made to improve inquiry-based teaching practices despite the level of confidence. First, schools and education leaders should strengthen support systems that help mathematics teachers move beyond inquiry-based teaching strategies toward equally strong inquiry-based assessment and reflective practices. This may be done through sustained, hands-on professional development focused on designing authentic assessments, using ICT tools meaningfully, and sharing classroom-based best practices rather than one-time trainings. Additionally, school administrators are also encouraged to address structural concerns such as limited instructional time, large class sizes, and lack of resources so that the teachers can realistically implement inquiry-based learning as intended in the MATATAG Curriculum. Furthermore, providing continuous mentoring, adequate resources, and a supportive school culture, teachers can be empowered to refine both their instructional and evaluative practices, while students benefit from a more coherent, engaging, and developmentally appropriate inquiry-based mathematics learning.

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