

Exploring the Journey of Teachers in the Implementation of the Recent Social Studies Subject

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Abstract

This qualitative single case study explored the experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of four pioneer Grade 11 Social Studies teachers implementing Pag-aaral ng Kasaysayan at Lipunang Pilipino under the MATATAG curriculum during the 2025–2026 pilot implementation in Tacloban City. Guided by street-level bureaucracy, educational change, and teacher agency frameworks, data from semi-structured interviews, reflexive journals, and lesson logs were analyzed using thematic analysis. The implementation journey revealed three core themes, an Abrupt Curriculum Transition forcing educators to navigate unguided operational boundaries, deep Pedagogical Commitment sustaining student-centered workflows, and Growth Through Necessity transforming teachers into digital content creators. Structurally, educators faced severe operational barriers, specifically a Resource Vacuum marked by a total absence of official materials, a Lack of Formal Training, and a Heavy Workload and Logistics environment where dense administrative duties and unpacking broad competencies for diverse learners increased preparation hours significantly. To maintain daily instruction, these pioneer teachers relied on grassroots coping mechanisms, using Digital Resourcefulness via open-source data and artificial intelligence, constructing horizontal Peer Collaboration networks, and practicing dynamic Pedagogical Improvisation through interactive activities. Based on these insights, the study proposes policy recommendations prioritizing shared online databases, protected collaborative planning windows, subject-specific training, and systematic instructional scaffolding. The study concludes that a clear policy-practice gap transforms pioneer teachers into the primary, uncompensated support system keeping the curriculum alive, normalizing hidden labor and accelerating professional burnout. Finally, future research should quantitatively correlate teacher-curated digital resources with student outcomes, while qualitatively exploring how learners navigate textbook-free environments.

Keywords: MATATAG curriculum, street-level bureaucracy, educational change, teacher agency, pioneer teachers, qualitative case study

Introduction

Prompted by international assessments exposing widespread learning poverty and deficits in higher-order thinking, the Philippine Department of Education launched the MATATAG Agenda and the Strengthened Senior High School Curriculum (DepEd Order No. 010 s. 2024). This reform elevated Pag-aaral ng Kasaysayan at Lipunang Pilipino (PKLP) to a core Grade 11 subject for the 2025–2026 pilot rollout to cultivate transformative citizenship aligned with Sustainable Development Goals 4, 16, and 17. However, ambitious policy design does not automatically guarantee seamless classroom enactment. At a large secondary school in Tacloban City, pioneer PKLP educators immediately encountered a severe implementation dip characterized by an absolute resource lag, forcing frontline teachers to exercise professional agency and engage in instructional bricolage to bridge the policy-practice gap and sustain daily learning.

While moving away from rote memorization is known to cultivate critical civic competencies, empirical evaluations consistently expose an implementation gap where policy mandates outpaced essential instructional scaffolds (Fullan, 2023; Monte-Sano, 2023). National assessments confirm a severe "pioneer vacuum" during the MATATAG curriculum deployment, showing that initial implementers received teaching directives long before the arrival of official modules or division-level training (David et al., 2022; EDCOM II, 2024). Frontline educators handled this void by operating as street-level bureaucrats, independently curating open-source digital materials and horizontal peer networks to survive (Biesta et al., 2015; Kilag et al., 2024). Because Social Studies demanded careful historical fact-checking, this independent curation imposes a heavy cognitive burden that exponentially increases professional burnout (Bejasa, 2026; Wineburg, 2024). Current literature predominantly relied on macro-level policy audits from well-resourced urban centers, leaving a critical empirical gap regarding how provincial teachers in resource-constrained settings like Eastern Visayas manage this hidden toll (Llego, 2025).

This study was grounded in an integrated theoretical framework that synthesizes Lipsky's Theory of Street-Level Bureaucracy (2010), Fullan's Theory of Educational Change (2023), and the Ecological

Approach to Teacher Agency (Priestley et al., 2015). Lipsky framed teachers as essential policy actors who use personal discretion and pragmatic coping strategies to handle chronic resource shortages, becoming de facto policymakers at the point of delivery. Fullan contributes the concept of the "implementation dip," demonstrating that a sharp decline in professional confidence is a predictable systemic response when rapid curriculum reforms lack synchronized logistical supports. Finally, Priestley et al. explain how teacher agency is actively achieved through the interplay of past experiences, present evaluative judgments, and future professional aims, viewing warmth-driven educators as active curriculum makers rather than passive technicians.

A profound implementation gap existed due to a severe resource lag and a complete lack of official instructional materials during the 2025–2026 pilot implementation, forcing pioneer educators in Tacloban City to navigate an institutional vacuum that caused extreme preparation fatigue, unverified digital curation, and accelerated burnout. To address this problem, this qualitative single case study determined how these frontline educators described their implementation journey and experiences. Specifically, it identified the contextual challenges they encountered during this curricular transition and analyzed the coping mechanisms they employed to sustain daily instruction. Fundamentally, the design used these empirical findings to propose targeted instructional guidelines and policy recommendations to optimize curriculum delivery and bridge the gap between policy intent and classroom reality.

This study provided critical empirical value by moving beyond superficial compliance reports to expose how curriculum policy became classroom reality during a major structural implementation. For Social Studies educators, it established a repository of classroom-tested pedagogical strategies, providing a realistic baseline of expectations to manage resource gaps through digital agility. At the institutional level, the findings functioned as an empirical feedback mechanism for the Department of Education by exposing policy-practice gaps to inform future training protocols and centralized digital repositories. Additionally, by documenting the intense cognitive demands and hidden labor placed on faculty, this research enabled school administrators to design targeted internal interventions to prevent long-term burnout, ensuring senior high school students remained the primary beneficiaries of protected, inquiry-based learning.

Methodology

Research Methodology

This study employed a descriptive qualitative single case study design grounded in a constructivist perspective to investigate the localized enactment of the MATATAG curriculum during School Year 2025–2026. A single case study design was uniquely suited for this inquiry, as it allowed for an intensive, context-bound exploration of how a major curricular transition was operationalized within a single, pioneering secondary school in Tacloban City (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). By adopting a constructivist lens, the design treated classroom practice not as a passive reflection of top-down mandates, but as a series of situated choices actively constructed by educators in response to local institutional conditions and immediate resource shortages. This bounded, single-case design focused deeply on the operational realities within this specific environment, relying on analytic rather than statistical inference. Fundamentally, the design aimed to expose the unique contextual mechanisms that drove teacher adaptation under systemic constraints, allowing readers to evaluate how these structural dynamics transfer to similar public school settings undergoing rapid reform.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at a selected premier secondary school in Tacloban City, Leyte, which served as the bounded case. Founded in 1903, this historic institution functioned as a primary pilot implementation site for the Department of Education's MATATAG Senior High School curriculum (DepEd Order No. 010, s. 2024; DepEd Memorandum No. 048, s. 2025). Its extensive departmental structure made it an ideal critical case to observe the operational tensions between new policy mandates and severe resource constraints. Crucially, the campus implementation of Pag-aaral ng Kasaysayan at Lipunang Pilipino relied on a cadre of only five Social Studies teachers, four of whom served as the core participants for this study. As a lead divisional institution whose localized practices frequently influence neighboring schools, this site captured the most consequential dynamics of this initial curricular transition.

Research Participants

Criterion purposive sampling was used to capture the entire available population of pioneer implementers of Pag-aaral ng Kasaysayan at Lipunang Pilipino (PKLP) at the pilot school during the 2025–2026 academic year, yielding a sample of four Grade 11 Social Studies teachers coded P1–P4. This small sample size is methodologically justified for a qualitative single case study. Creswell (2013) notes that three to five participants is optimal for maintaining an intensive focus within a single case, while Mason (2010) affirms that single-digit samples are standard for tightly bounded institutional inquiries. This size is further supported by Malterud et al.'s (2016) model of information power because these specific educators held exclusive, frontline responsibility for navigating the resource-starved, pioneering implementation stage of the curriculum. Inclusion criteria required permanent employment status and active generation of localized instructional materials, meaning that pre-service, substitute, and on-leave staff were excluded. This concentrated, information-rich sample ensured data depth and thematic stability (Guest et al., 2006; Patton, 2015).

Research Instrument

The primary data collection tool was a researcher-developed, semi-structured interview guide aligned with the four core research questions, containing 12 bilingual open-ended questions in English and Filipino with iterative follow-up probes. To ensure content validity, a three-expert panel comprising a qualitative specialist, a division Social Studies supervisor, and a curriculum expert, evaluated the guide for item-objective congruence and language clarity, mapping items directly onto MATATAG competencies. The researcher deployed this tool using a human-as-instrument approach to capture immediate field nuances (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For data triangulation, the guide was supplemented by a document analysis checklist adapted from Bowen's (2009) framework to evaluate teacher-made digital presentations, AI outlines, and localized activity sheets, alongside a researcher-maintained reflexive journal capturing non-verbal cues and situational observations.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection and management proceeded through four systematic phases. First, the researcher secured ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee, a Division Research Permit from the Schools Division Superintendent of Tacloban City, and school-level administrative approval. Second, one-on-one semi-structured interviews lasting 60 to 90 minutes were conducted in English and Filipino in a private setting following an informed consent orientation. With participant permission, sessions were audio-recorded and supported by a reflexive field journal, while teacher-created digital presentations, lesson plans, and localized activity sheets were gathered for document analysis. Third, all recordings were transcribed using alphanumeric identifiers to protect privacy. These digital files and artifacts were encrypted and stored in a password-protected cloud drive accessible only to the researcher, while physical notes were locked in a private filing cabinet, with all data scheduled for destruction after five years. Member-checking was then conducted, allowing participants to review and verify their transcripts before final thematic analysis. Finally, a copy of the finalized study will be submitted to the Planning and Research Section of the Division of Tacloban City for inclusion in the Division Research Catalogue, and the findings will be prepared for peer-reviewed journal publication and international conference presentation.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, integrated with Yin's (2018) pattern-matching techniques to examine contextualized implementation realities across four sequential phases. First, during data familiarization and management, the researcher repeatedly reviewed transcripts, document checklists, and field journals to establish a holistic view of the case. Second, descriptive codes were applied to segment data into meaningful units, capturing explicit challenges and instructional strategies while maintaining participant anonymity. Third, these codes were synthesized into broader themes by matching empirical patterns with systemic insights, such as conceptualizing manual material creation as teacher agency amid resource deficits. Finally, the refined themes were integrated into a cohesive qualitative narrative detailing the structural and pedagogical implementation dynamics of the Pag-aaral ng Kasaysayan at Lipunang Pilipino subject.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical safeguards were strictly observed throughout the study. Written informed consent was obtained voluntarily from each educator, with explicit assurances that participation was completely decoupled from performance evaluations and carried no administrative risks. To ensure anonymity, all personal identifiers were removed upon transcription, and unique situational details were genericized to prevent deductive identification within the institution. Non-evaluative interviews focusing on pedagogical adaptations were conducted flexibly in English, Filipino, and Waray-Waray to respect local language preferences. In compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173), all transcripts, audio recordings, and document checklists were secured in password-protected, encrypted files accessible exclusively to the researcher.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative rigor was established using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework. Credibility was achieved through member-checking of transcripts, prolonged engagement within the department, and methodological triangulation cross-verifying interview data (P1 to P4) with teacher-made artifact checklists and reflexive journals. Transferability was supported by providing thick descriptions of the school context and the structural conditions of the Pag-aaral ng Kasaysayan at Lipunang Pilipino subject implementation. Dependability was secured through a transparent audit trail tracking raw recordings, transcripts, and coding schemas, coupled with peer debriefing. Finally, confirmability was maintained through a reflexive journal to ensure all findings remained grounded strictly in the empirical data rather than personal professional preconceptions.

Reflexivity

The researcher, as a Social Studies educator, utilized a reflexive journal to continuously monitor personal assumptions and pedagogical biases regarding the Pag-aaral ng Kasaysayan at Lipunang Pilipino subject curriculum shift. This ongoing self-critique ensured that data interpretation and the final qualitative narrative remained strictly grounded in the participants' (P1 to P4) actual voices and instructional adaptations rather than the researcher's professional preconceptions.

Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the empirical findings gathered from the field, organized according to the study's central research objectives. The thematic analysis captures the operational realities, localized adaptations, and professional trajectories of the pioneer educators navigating a major systemic transition. By pairing participant narratives with documentary evidence, the following sections discuss how policy mandates translate into ground-level classroom practices.

Teachers Journey and Experiences in Implementation of the Recent Social Studies Subject

The first objective analyzed the implementation experiences of pioneer Grade 11 Social Studies teachers executing the Pag-aaral ng Kasaysayan at Lipunang Pilipino subject under the MATATAG curriculum. The data revealed a complex reality where sudden macro-level administrative timelines encountered deep individual commitment and rapid, forced professional adaptation on the ground. This baseline experience is analyzed through three sequential themes.

Theme 1: Abrupt Curriculum Transition

Pioneer teachers experienced the initial implementation as a sudden, unguided institutional transition, forcing them to navigate complex social science targets while managing active mid-year workloads. This rapid deployment required frontline educators to discover the operational parameters of the curriculum on the exact days of delivery, transforming a macro-level policy directive into an immediate coping experience. The accounts cross-verify this structural gap, revealing that teaching assignments occurred instantly between academic terms with zero time permitted for collaborative onboarding. This ground-level friction reflects Fullan's (2023) implementation dip, which states that a sharp decline in professional comfort is a predictable systemic response when ambitious policy reforms lack synchronized logistical supports. Viewed through Lipsky's (2010) Street-Level Bureaucracy and Priestley and Drew's (2019) pioneer's vacuum, this institutional unreadiness forces frontline workers to absorb policy friction directly at the point of

delivery, transforming individual teachers into the de facto architects of the curriculum's survival. Below are the significant responses of the participants:

Significant response 1: "Abruptly assigned to teach the subject." (P₁, L₂₇)

Significant response 2: "No formal training or orientation provided." (P₂, L₁₇₃)

Significant response 3: "Started teaching immediately without modules or guides." (P₃, L₄₉₇)

Significant response 4: "Designated midyear due to specialization." (P₄, L₆₁₂)

Theme 2: Pedagogical Commitment

Despite demanding implementation schedules and systemic resource gaps, the pioneer implementers demonstrated profound dedication and a strong sense of intrinsic commitment to the core values of the subject matter. Frontline educators refused to reduce their sudden assignments to mechanical rote learning, viewing the implementation instead as a vital educational mission to develop student agency, critical historical thinking, and active civic responsibility among Grade 11 learners. Document analysis of the teachers' Daily Lesson Logs verified this operational commitment; while the standard fields for state-provided instructional references remained completely blank, lesson targets were manually populated with case-based activities focusing on real-world legal scenarios and constitutional rights. This behavioral pattern directly aligns with the projective dimension of teacher agency within the ecological framework of Biesta et al. (2015), which posits that professional actions are powerfully driven by future-oriented educational ideals and long-term civic aims. Consequently, this vocational clarity supported by the active citizenship literature (Banks, 2020; OECD, 2023) functioned as a vital emotional shield against immediate burnout, allowing educators to leverage their internal professional identities to protect students from structural chaos within an institutional vacuum. Below are the significant responses of the participants:

Significant response 1: "Grounded by the significance of Lipunan Pilipino." (P₁, L₄₁)

Significant response 2: "Committed to empowering students to influence society." (P₂, L₂₃₀)

Significant response 3: "Wanted students to see civic responsibility despite no modules." (P₃, L₅₇₂)

Significant response 4: "Designed activities for critical thinking on real-world issues." (P₄, L₆₇₃)

Theme 3: Growth Through Necessity

The implementation journey acted as an involuntary catalyst for professional evolution and rapid instructional modernization, forcing all participants to upgrade their digital resourcefulness out of sheer pedagogical survival. Lacking baseline teaching guides, educators shed traditional textbook-dependent habits to become self-reliant content curators who designed high-fidelity interactive slide decks and localized primary sources from scratch to replace non-existent state modules. From an analytical standpoint, this pattern demonstrates the practical-evaluative dimension of teacher agency under structural duress (Biesta et al., 2015), where professional growth is generated dynamically when educators make high-stakes contextual judgments to resolve immediate classroom problems. This operational reality perfectly illustrates the concept of instructional bricolage (Sawyer, 2022; Tour, 2023), where individuals operating under intense resource constraints creatively assemble diverse digital materials to construct functional learning environments. Operating within Lipsky's (2010) street-level bureaucracy, these educators proved that systemic deficits can run parallel to rapid technological adaptation, though this growth remains a double-edged sword that subsidizes institutional unreadiness through the uncompensated labor of frontline teachers. Below are the significant responses of the participants:

Significant response 1: "Adapted by supplementing with curated resources." (P₁, L₉₆)

Significant response 2: "Became more resourceful, agile, and adaptive." (P₂, L₃₂₄)

Significant response 3: "Designed interactive slides and localized sources from scratch." (P₃, L₅₅₇)

Significant response 4: "Careful content curator, fact-checking against guides and sources." (P₄, L₆₈₇)

Challenges Encountered by the Teachers

The second objective of this study focused on identifying and analyzing the specific operational challenges, structural barriers, and systemic constraints encountered by pioneer Grade 11 Social Studies teachers during the deployment of the Pag-aaral ng Kasaysayan at Lipunang Pilipino (PKLP) subject under the MATATAG curriculum. Empirical data revealed that macro-level administrative goals encountered

substantial friction when introduced on the ground, placing an intense professional, physical, and operational burden directly onto frontline implementers. This systemic friction is analyzed through three distinct, interconnected themes that capture the operational realities of the pilot implementation.

Theme 1: Resource Vacuum

The most critical challenge identified by pioneer teachers was the complete absence of official Department of Education modules, standardized textbooks, or teacher reference guides during the initial curriculum rollout. Operating within this material void, educators bore the exclusive responsibility for manually sourcing, historical fact-checking, and generating all classroom instructional content from scratch. This localized state of material deprivation was systematically cross-verified by Daily Lesson Logs showing a complete omission of state-provided material codes, matching Reflective Journal Entry #01 which recorded zero physical textbooks on departmental shelves during the opening weeks of implementation. Analytically, this vacuum exemplifies Lipsky's (2010) assertion that street-level bureaucracies are chronically defined by a severe lack of the basic material resources necessary to execute public mandates, forcing the state to depend on frontline actors to absorb logistical deficits. This finding aligns with Fullan's (2023) concept of an implementation gap caused by a lack of system coherence, which warns that decoupling macro structural changes from material supports induces a prolonged crisis that compromises instructional quality and accelerates teacher burnout. Below are the significant responses of the participants:

Significant response 1: "Total unavailability of standardized materials." (P₁, L₇₄)

Significant response 2 "No official modules or references provided." (P₂, L₃₀₀)

Significant response 3: "Biggest gap was zero official materials." (P₃, L₅₃₄)

Significant response 4: "Faced immediate challenges with lack of modules and textbooks." (P₄, L₆₅₃)

Theme 2: Lack of Formal Training

This material deficit was directly worsened by a complete lack of professional preparation, development, or official division-level orientations prior to the launch of the new curriculum. Pioneer teachers were deployed to execute broad, highly sensitive political and sociological competencies without receiving structured guidance on intended pedagogical methods, specialized assessment models, or content boundaries. The participants' interview accounts explicitly verified this structural gap, revealing that zero division-led training slots or school-level Learning Action Cell sessions had been conducted to prepare them for this specific subject transition. Analytically, this total absence of preparatory training represents a severe breakdown in the structural features of change within Fullan's (2023) theory of educational change, which establishes that professional development is an essential prerequisite for shared conceptual clarity during a major curriculum transition. Viewed through Biesta et al.'s (2015) ecological approach to teacher agency, this institutional omission heavily restricted the practical-evaluative dimension of agency by forcing educators to rely on isolated trial-and-error methods rather than a solid foundation of shared standards. Below are the significant responses of the participants:

Significant response 1: "No formal training or orientation attended." (P₁, L₂₅)

Significant response 2: "Division provided no training for PKLP teachers." (P₂, L₁₈₆)

Significant response 3: "Purely self-learning, no training given." (P₃, L₅₀₂)

Significant response 4: "Did not attend any trainings or orientations." (P₄, L₆₁₇)

Theme 3: Heavy Workload and Logistics

The combined weight of generating learning materials from scratch and interpreting broad competencies caused teacher preparation hours to skyrocket, a challenge heavily exacerbated by demanding administrative duties and intense instructional logistics. Frontline educators spent excessive time unpacking massive competencies into manageable daily lessons while manually modifying abstract socio-political concepts for integrated Special Education (SPED) learners within limited class hours. The participants' interview accounts explicitly detailed a pervasive climate of physical exhaustion, revealing that they frequently extended their instructional tasks into open periods and personal breaks to satisfy the immediate requirements of the curriculum enactment. Analytically, this dynamic represents what Lipsky (2010) defines as the structural coping mechanisms of street-level bureaucrats under extreme workload pressures, where workers routinely sacrifice personal well-being to meet basic public mandates. By failing to provide

synchronized planning windows or specialized support for diverse learners, the institution relied on the uncompensated hours of individual teachers to prevent the under-resourced curriculum mandate from collapsing. Below are the significant responses of the participants:

Significant response 1: *“Vacant hours never enough for research and preparation.”* (P₁, L₃₉)

Significant response 2: *“Prepared lessons even during personal breaks.”* (P₂, L₂₀₄)

Significant response 3: *“Ancillary tasks consumed time, leaving little for preparation.”* (P₃, L₅₄₂)

Significant response 4: *“Studied content, mapped lessons, and delivered next day.”* (P₄, L₆₂₈)

Teachers Coping Mechanisms Employed

The third objective of this study focused on discovering and analyzing the tactical coping mechanisms, strategic adaptations, and ground-level adjustments employed by pioneer Grade 11 Social Studies teachers to sustain classroom instruction despite severe systemic constraints. The data revealed that rather than surrendering to the material and structural deficiencies, the educators engaged in active instructional survival. This grass-roots resilience manifested through three highly specialized themes.

Theme 1: Digital Resourcefulness

To combat the total lack of physical books, official modules, and reference guides, the pioneer teachers transitioned from traditional textbook consumers into active digital content curators. This mechanism manifested as a highly localized form of instructional bricolage, where frontline educators independently mined open academic repositories, converted public historical text archives, and integrated artificial intelligence interfaces to assemble high-fidelity learning materials entirely from scratch. The participants' interview accounts explicitly detailed this digital agility, revealing how they relied on online design platforms and open-access archives to bypass prolonged state procurement delays and sustain daily instruction. Analytically, this behavior provides a vivid, real-world manifestation of the practical-evaluative dimension of teacher agency within the ecological model of Biesta et al. (2015), where agency is achieved through the creative mobilization of available tools to mitigate a systemic pioneer's vacuum (Priestley & Drew, 2019; Sawyer, 2022). Consequently, this heavy reliance on independent digital bricolage represents a substantial amount of uncompensated hidden labor (Kilag et al., 2024; Tour, 2023), proving that the basic continuity of the MATATAG execution on the ground is actively subsidized by the personal technological initiatives of the frontline staff. Below are the significant responses of the participants:

Significant response 1: *“Created localized case studies, news articles, and digital presentations.”*

(P₁, L₁₀₀)

Significant response 2: *“Supplemented lessons with digital and AI-generated resources.”* (P₂, L₂₇₀)

Significant response 3: *“Manually searched and gathered materials online daily.”* (P₃, L₅₃₅)

Significant response 4: *“Internet became my primary support for vital resources.”* (P₄, L₆₂₄)

Theme 2: Peer Collaboration

Because formal division-level professional development initiatives remained entirely absent, the pioneer teachers insulated themselves from professional isolation by constructing an informal, highly localized departmental safety net. This collaborative mechanism was characterized by spontaneous peer review sessions, cross-grade material sharing, and collaborative problem-solving routines where educators turned inward to leverage their shared disciplinary expertise as Social Studies specialists. The participants' interview accounts explicitly detailed this lateral solidarity, revealing how they transformed their shared open periods and lunch breaks into active, unstructured planning huddles to co-author lecture frameworks and verify the historical accuracy of their curated digital content. From an analytical standpoint, this lateral collaboration represents a resilient structural adaptation within Lipsky's (2010) framework of Street-Level Bureaucracy, demonstrating that when frontline workers are denied formal institutional training, they naturally form peer networks to distribute the psychological and operational pressures of the mandate. This localized reality strongly reinforces Fullan's (2023) assertion that surviving a major implementation dip requires deep interactive professionalism, which effectively allows educators to establish relational trust and cross-check unverified online content to minimize the risk of introducing historical distortions or factual errors into the classroom. Below are the significant responses of the participants:

Significant response 1: *“Leaned on colleagues for support and shared ideas.”* (P₁, L₁₁₇)

Significant response 2: *“Collaboration with peers and supervisor provided guidance.”* (P₂, L₃₈₁)

Significant response 3: *“Faculty have been an essential support group.”* (P₃, L₆₅₆)

Significant response 4: *“Closely collaborated to share self-made activities and lesson plans.”* (P₄, L₆₇₇)

Theme 3: Pedagogical Improvisation

The final coping mechanism involved a sophisticated blend of classroom improvisation, structural curriculum deconstruction, and interactive teaching adjustments to navigate the complex mandates of the new subject. Because educators were forced to introduce broad, sensitive, and wide-ranging competencies within restricted class hours and without pre-vetted modules, they adapted by dismantling large learning targets into smaller, digestible daily blocks. The participants' interview accounts explicitly detailed this ground-level flexibility, revealing how they abandoned passive textbook readings to implement student-centered strategies like structured debates, real-world case studies, and tailored scaffolding for integrated Special Education (SPED) learners. Analytically, this responsive pedagogy perfectly maps onto the intersection of Wineburg's (2024) historical thinking framework and the practical-evaluative dimension of teacher agency (Biesta et al., 2015), which together show that inquiring into complex history under structural duress requires intense intellectual and ethical gatekeeping (Monte-Sano, 2023). By tailoring contested historical narratives for diverse learners under severe time constraints, these educators willingly bore a heavy knowledge burden (Bejasa, 2026) to filter out unverified online misinformation, ultimately proving that frontline teachers can leverage personal commitment to transform a chaotic macro policy enactment into a meaningful classroom reality. Below are the significant responses of the participants:

Significant Response 1: *“Developed localized case studies, news articles, and digital presentations.”* (P₁, L₉₆)

Significant Response 2: *“Differentiated instruction for SPED learners with translations and visuals.”* (P₂, L₃₄₆)

Significant Response 3: *“Taught with passion and real-world relevance, not just slides.”* (P₃, L₅₇₂)

Significant Response 4: *“Shifted to creative, hands-on activities for critical thinking.”* (P₄, L₆₇₉)

Proposed Instructional Guidelines and Policy Recommendations

Based on the empirical findings, three strategic recommendations are proposed to close the policy-practice gap. First, the Division and school levels must establish a centralized, quality-assured digital resource bank under the Learning Resource Management Section to host ready-to-use lesson plans, primary source archives, and localized case studies. To protect students from historical distortion, a vetting committee of master teachers and historians must verify these materials, supported by an institutional incentive system that rewards contributors with professional evaluation credits. Second, the Division must execute targeted, content-focused Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions providing practical teaching strategies under tight timelines. This capacity-building must run parallel to providing scaffolded materials for integrated Special Education (SPED) learners and a structured peer-onboarding program to prevent new teachers from experiencing systemic shock. Third, future curriculum guidelines must officially support flexible, student-centered historical inquiry through adaptive time-allotments that break down massive competencies into digestible daily tasks. Policy frameworks must also legitimize performance-based assessments, such as structured debates and source analyses, instead of rigid testing templates to better accommodate large classroom settings. Conclusively, institutionalizing these guidelines standardizes the adaptive classroom adjustments required on the ground, shifting the weight of reform from individual teacher sacrifice to structural institutional support.

The case study findings reveal that pilot curriculum implementation is inherently transitional, vocational, and evolutionary. It is transitional because teachers had to navigate abrupt timeline transitions and unguided curriculum changes, while it is vocational because educators anchored their daily practice in intrinsic civic values to insulate instruction from a severe material resource vacuum and crushing workload logistics. Furthermore, it is evolutionary because these systemic constraints forced a rapid professional transformation, compelling teachers to secure instructional survival by mobilizing advanced digital resourcefulness, horizontal peer collaboration networks, and strategic pedagogical improvisations. The

essence of this case demonstrates that pilot educational reform within an under-resourced public school setting is a high-stakes, contextualized process where top-down mandates are sustained on the ground entirely by converting individual teacher sacrifice into localized coping strategies. Therefore, transitioning from temporary classroom survival to long-term stability requires institutionalizing targeted policy recommendations focused on centralized digital repositories, content-focused professional development, and formal instructional guidelines to shift the weight of reform from individual sacrifice to structural support.

Conclusion

Based on the empirical findings of this case study, a severe policy-practice gap exists within the initial implementation due to a deep disconnect between top-down curriculum mandates and bottom-up classroom realities, directly confirming Lipsky's Theory of Street-Level Bureaucracy. First, navigating an *Abrupt Curriculum Transition* within an absolute material void forced frontline educators to absorb structural deficits at the exact point of delivery, transforming them into the primary, uncompensated stabilizing force of the curriculum's survival. Second, operating within a severe *Resource Vacuum*, a complete *Lack of Formal Training*, and a *Heavy Workload and Logistics* put an intense physical and operational strain on educators, highlighting a critical structural breakdown within Fullan's Theory of Educational Change. Third, despite these exhausting barriers, teachers achieved a state of *Growth Through Necessity* by anchoring their practice in deep *Pedagogical Commitment*, actively leveraging their *Digital Resourcefulness*, constructing tight *Peer Collaboration* networks, and executing rapid *Pedagogical Improvisation* to protect their students from institutional chaos. Fourth, to resolve this unsustainable reliance on individual teacher sacrifice, the study concludes that the school system must institutionalize the *Proposed Instructional Guidelines and Policy Recommendations* by establishing centralized digital repositories, targeted training, and contextualized instructional guidelines. Ultimately, this structural shift moves the curriculum from a state of temporary classroom survival to long-term stability, ensuring that the weight of educational reform is sustained by organized institutional supports rather than the personal endurance of frontline teachers.

Recommendation

To bridge the policy-practice gap and transition curriculum implementation from individual survival to institutional stability, targeted interventions must be enacted across all stakeholder levels. At the institutional level, the Department of Education and its Division Learning Resource Management Section must resolve the resource vacuum by establishing a quality-assured, shared cloud repository of peer-reviewed materials, while mandating subject-specific Learning Action Cell sessions to mitigate the implementation dip through uniform competency unpacking. On the ground, school administrators must protect teacher agency and well-being by scheduling a mandatory 60-minute weekly collaborative planning period and providing systemic special education scaffolding through co-drafted modified resources to prevent vocational exploitation. To sustain these gains, pioneer Social Studies teachers must archive their custom lesson blueprints and pedagogical improvisations in shared digital folders to protect incoming faculty from initial structural shock and professional isolation. Finally, future researchers should expand this scholarship by conducting quantitative evaluations to correlate teacher-curated digital resources with student outcomes, alongside parallel qualitative inquiries evaluating how learners navigate textbook-free environments.

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About the Author

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