

Resilience Amid Reform: Teachers' and School Administrators' Lived Experiences of Curriculum Transition

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ABSTRACT

Curriculum reforms in basic education require teachers and school administrators to continually adapt to evolving policies, instructional expectations, and organizational demands, making resilience a critical component of successful implementation. This study explored the lived experiences of teachers and school administrators in describing their moment-to-moment emotional and cognitive responses to successive Department of Education curriculum reforms. It employed a qualitative research design utilizing Max van Manen's (2017) hermeneutic phenomenological approach. Data were gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews using a researcher-developed interview guide validated by experts. The study was conducted in selected public elementary schools within the Schools Division of Tandag City, Surigao del Sur, Philippines. Participants consisted of sixteen (16) educators, including twelve (12) teachers and four (4) school administrators, selected through purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using van Manen's phenomenological thematic analysis. Findings revealed nine essential themes: Emotional Turbulence and Mixed Reactions, Cognitive Appraisal and Sense-Making, Adaptation and Coping Mechanisms, Professional Identity Strain and Role Reconfiguration, Support Systems and Collaborative Resilience, Workload Pressure and Time Constraints, Transformative Growth and Resilience Building, Emotional-Cognitive Influence on Practice, and Critical Incidents as Turning Points. The findings indicate that participants initially experienced anxiety, uncertainty, confusion, and increased workload; however, these challenges gradually evolved into opportunities for professional growth, resilience development, and adaptive leadership through reflection, collaboration, and institutional support. The study concludes that resilience is a dynamic process shaped by the interaction of emotional, cognitive, professional, and organizational factors. It is recommended that educational policymakers and school leaders strengthen support systems, provide sustained professional development opportunities, promote collaborative cultures, and implement responsive interventions that address both the technical and emotional demands of curriculum reform.

Keywords: curriculum reform, teacher resilience, school administrators, hermeneutic phenomenology, MATATAG curriculum, educational change, lived experiences, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly evolving education system, teachers and school administrators often find themselves repeatedly adjusting to new curriculum reforms that come in quick succession. Amid shifting guidelines, updated competencies, and increasing administrative demands, the Department of Education (DepEd) issued DepEd Order No. 10, s. 2024, which revises the K to 10 program and streamlines Senior High School (SHS) tracks beginning School Year 2024–2025 through the MATATAG Curriculum framework. This policy introduces modifications in learning competencies, instructional time allotments, and subject structures that require educators to adapt their instructional and leadership practices. While curriculum reforms are designed to improve educational quality and learner outcomes, they also create significant professional, emotional, and cognitive demands on those responsible for implementing them. Consequently, understanding how teachers and school

administrators experience and respond to curriculum reforms has become an important area of educational research.

Previous studies have highlighted the complex challenges educators face during curriculum reform implementation. Fullan (2020) argued that educational change is fundamentally a process involving people, emphasizing that successful reform depends largely on how educators understand, interpret, and respond to change initiatives. Likewise, Datnow (2020) noted that policy reforms often require educators to engage in continuous sense-making as they reconcile new expectations with existing practices. Research by Leithwood (2021) further demonstrated that school leaders play a critical role in shaping teachers' responses to educational change through organizational support, communication, and capacity-building efforts. Moreover, Priestley, Biesta, and Robinson (2021) emphasized that teachers are not merely implementers of curriculum policy but active agents whose beliefs, emotions, and professional judgments significantly influence reform outcomes. Collectively, these studies suggest that curriculum reform implementation is not simply a technical process but a deeply human experience involving emotional and cognitive adaptation.

Despite the growing body of literature on educational change and curriculum implementation, limited research has examined the immediate lived experiences of teachers and school administrators during the announcement and early implementation stages of curriculum reform. Existing studies have largely focused on implementation outcomes, leadership practices, teacher agency, or organizational readiness, often relying on retrospective accounts collected after reforms have been established. Consequently, little is known about how educators experience curriculum reform in real time, particularly within the Philippine context and the recent implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring how teachers and school administrators describe their moment-to-moment emotional and cognitive responses, including uncertainty, anticipation, stress, hope, and adaptation, when confronted with the realities of DepEd Order No. 10, s. 2024.

This analysis contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing a deeper understanding of the affective and cognitive dimensions of curriculum reform within Philippine basic education. By examining educators' lived experiences during a major policy transition, the study extends current educational change literature beyond structural and procedural considerations to include the human experiences that shape implementation success. The findings may provide valuable insights for policymakers, school leaders, and professional development providers in designing implementation strategies that address not only technical requirements but also the emotional and psychological needs of educators. Ultimately, this study may contribute to more responsive and sustainable approaches to curriculum reform that support educator well-being and enhance the effectiveness of educational change initiatives.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design utilizing Max van Manen's (2017) hermeneutic phenomenological approach to explore and understand the lived experiences of teachers and school administrators in navigating successive Department of Education (DepEd) curriculum reforms. Phenomenology seeks to uncover the essence and meaning of human experiences as they are consciously lived and interpreted by individuals. Guided by van Manen's phenomenological framework, the study focused on capturing participants' emotional, cognitive, and professional responses to curriculum shifts and how these experiences shaped their resilience, adaptation, and professional practice within the context of educational change.

The study was conducted in selected public elementary schools within the Schools Division of Tandag City, Surigao del Sur, Philippines. The research sites were purposively selected from performing schools representing different population categories to ensure diversity of experiences and contexts. Large schools included Tandag Pilot Elementary School, Tandag Central Elementary School, and Telaje Elementary School; medium schools comprised Buenavista Elementary School, Bongtud Elementary School, and Engr. Nestor Ty Memorial Elementary School; while small schools included Pandanon Elementary School, Mahanon Elementary School, and Awasian Elementary School. The Schools Division Office, located in Balilihan, Mabua, Tandag City, served

as the administrative center overseeing the implementation of educational policies and curriculum reforms within the division.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on predetermined inclusion criteria relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. Eligible participants were teachers and school administrators who had experienced at least two major DepEd curriculum transitions, thereby possessing substantial exposure to successive educational reforms and their implementation processes. Furthermore, participants were required to be actively employed in the public school system at the time of data collection to ensure that their experiences reflected contemporary educational realities. The study involved a total of sixteen (16) participants, consisting of twelve (12) teachers and four (4) school administrators. The sample size was deemed sufficient to achieve information-rich descriptions and thematic saturation, consistent with phenomenological research standards.

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews using a researcher-developed interview guide. The interview protocol was carefully constructed based on the study objectives, relevant literature, and the theoretical foundations underpinning teacher resilience and curriculum reform. Open-ended questions and follow-up probes enabled participants to articulate their experiences, perceptions, coping mechanisms, and professional reflections in rich and meaningful detail. Prior to implementation, the interview guide underwent expert validation by specialists in educational research, curriculum studies, and qualitative methodology to establish content validity, clarity, coherence, and appropriateness of the interview questions. All interviews were conducted in a manner that encouraged openness, reflection, and authentic sharing of lived experiences.

Data analysis followed van Manen's phenomenological thematic approach, which emphasizes reflective interpretation and thematic exploration of lived experiences. Interview transcripts were read and reread to facilitate immersion in the data. Significant statements and experiential descriptions were identified, clustered, and interpreted to reveal essential themes that captured the meaning structures underlying participants' experiences. Through a process of holistic, selective, and detailed reading, themes were developed and refined to construct a comprehensive understanding of how teachers and school administrators experienced, interpreted, and responded to successive curriculum reforms.

To ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of the study, established qualitative criteria including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were observed. Credibility was strengthened through prolonged engagement with participants, member validation, and careful interpretation of interview narratives. Rich and thick descriptions were provided to enhance transferability, while an audit trail documenting methodological decisions and analytical procedures supported dependability. Reflexive practices and systematic documentation of the research process contributed to confirmability by minimizing researcher bias and ensuring that findings remained grounded in participants' accounts.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study. Prior approval was secured from the appropriate authorities before data collection commenced. Participants were fully informed of the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and anticipated benefits through an informed consent process. Separate consent forms were provided for participation, audio recording, and the use of photographs or other supporting materials. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants retained the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without consequence. To protect privacy and confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned to all participants and schools, and any personally identifiable information was removed from transcripts and research records. All collected data were securely stored and accessed exclusively by the researcher. These ethical safeguards ensured the protection of participants' rights, dignity, and well-being throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Narratives on the teachers and school administrators do teachers and school administrators describe their moment-to-moment emotional and cognitive responses when a new DepEd curriculum is announced or implemented.

Table 1 presents the thematic analysis derived from teachers and school administrators describe their moment-to-moment emotional and cognitive responses when a new DepEd curriculum is announced or implemented.

Table 1. Perceived division-level support systems as either fostering or hindering teacher resilience.

Category	Themes	Sub - themes
Support Systems Fostering/ Rendering Resilience Response	Emotional Turbulence and Mixed Reactions	- Feelings of anxiety, stress, fear, or overwhelm at the announcement - Simultaneous excitement or hope for improvement - Sense of uncertainty due to lack of clarity
	Cognitive Appraisal and Sense-Making	- Efforts to understand the purpose and implications of the reform - Internal questioning - Interpretation of policy guidelines and expectations
	Adaptation and Coping Mechanisms	- Gradual adjustment from confusion to familiarity - Development of strategies - Reliance on past experiences to navigate new demands
	Professional Identity Strain and Role Reconfiguration	- Feeling challenged in competence or expertise - Redefining roles as educators or administrators - Tension between personal teaching beliefs and new mandates
	Support Systems and Collaborative Resilience	- Importance of peer support and guidance, and teamwork - Shared struggles fostering solidarity - Institutional support influencing coping
	Workload Pressure and Time Constraints	- Perceived increase in workload and responsibilities - Mental fatigue and cognitive overload - Struggles with time management during transition
Support Systems Fostering/ Rendering Resilience Response	Transformative Growth and Resilience Building	- Development of new skills and adaptability - Increased confidence over time - Viewing challenges as opportunities for professional growth
	Emotional-Cognitive Influence on Practice	- Emotional states affecting teaching quality, decision-making, and leadership - Shifts in classroom or administrative practices due to internal responses
	Critical Incidents as Turning Points	- Specific moments that shaped perception - Events that triggered either breakthrough understanding or heightened stress

Theme 1: Emotional Turbulence and Mixed Reactions

The complex and fluctuating emotional responses experienced by individuals when facing challenging or changing circumstances in their professional environment. It involves the coexistence of negative emotions such as stress, anxiety, and frustration with positive responses like hope, acceptance, and determination. This mixture reflects the difficulty of adjusting to demands and uncertainties while maintaining professional responsibilities. It highlights those emotional responses are dynamic and multifaceted, influencing how individuals cope, adapt, and continue functioning effectively despite ongoing pressures.

As the participant 8, passionately explained,

“Sa una nako nadungog ang bag-ong kurikulum, nakulbaan ug nabug-atan ko kay daghan kaayong bag-ong kinahanglan buhaton.” (*When I first heard about the new curriculum, I felt nervous and overwhelmed because there were so many new things that needed to be done.*)

This response reflects initial emotional turbulence, marked by anxiety and overwhelm. The teacher perceives the

reform as demanding and uncertain, indicating cognitive overload and emotional stress. This aligns with research showing that curriculum reforms often trigger negative emotional responses such as stress, anxiety, and uncertainty, especially during the early stages of implementation. Teachers frequently experience emotional strain due to increased expectations and unclear policies, which can affect confidence and performance.

Another respondent added,

“Na-excite ko sa posibilidad sa kausaban, pero kabalaka sad ko kung andam ba ang among eskwelahan ug mga magtutudlo.” (*I am excited about the possibility of change, but I am also concerned about whether our school and teachers are prepared for it.*)

This response shows mixed emotional reactions both positive (excitement) and negative (concern). The administrator recognizes opportunities for improvement but is also worried about preparedness. This confirms that educators often experience ambivalent emotions during reform, simultaneously feeling excitement for innovation and anxiety about implementation challenges. This means that on educational change suggest that such mixed emotions emerge because reforms represent both opportunities for growth and sources of uncertainty.

A different participant explained;

“Nakalibog gyud sa sugod kay dili klaro ang mga guidelines, pero sa kadugayan, nasabtan ra nako ug nakapangita ko ug paagi.” (*It was really confusing at first because the guidelines were not clear, but over time, I understood them and found ways to adapt.*)

This response illustrates a transition from confusion to clarity. The teacher initially experiences uncertainty but gradually adapts and gains understanding. Research indicates that uncertainty and confusion are common during curriculum implementation due to lack of clarity and guidance, especially in early stages. However, studies also show that teachers gradually move from confusion to adaptation through experience, reflection, and coping strategies, which strengthens resilience.

The teachers and school administrators initially experience emotional turbulence and mixed reactions when confronted with successive curriculum reforms. Feelings of anxiety, confusion, and overwhelm are often accompanied by excitement and optimism for potential improvement. These emotional responses are shaped by increased demands, uncertainty, and the complexity of implementation requirements. Literature supports that such emotional ambivalence is a common response to educational change, as reforms introduce both opportunities and challenges (Zhang & Luo, 2023; Cole et al., 2022). Over time, these initial reactions evolve as educators engage in adaptation and meaning-making processes, suggesting that emotional turbulence serves as a critical starting point for developing resilience.

Theme 2: Cognitive Appraisal and Sense-Making

The participants evaluated and interpreted challenging experiences in their professional context to better understand their meaning and implications. Their responses suggest that teachers actively assessed situations, identified causes of difficulties, and reinterpreted events in ways that helped them cope and move forward. This indicates that sense-making is a cognitive process that enables individuals to transform stressful or uncertain experiences into more manageable and meaningful understandings, supporting adaptive responses and resilience in their practice.

The participant 2, clearly pointed out this need for continuous checking stating,

“Sa dihang na-implement ang bag-ong kurikulum, gipaningkamotan nako nga sabton unsa gyud ang tumong niini ug unsaon nako pag-adjust sa akong pagtudlo.” (*When the new curriculum was implemented, I made an effort to understand its purpose and how I could adjust my teaching practices accordingly.*)

This response reflects cognitive appraisal, where the teacher actively tries to understand the purpose and implications of the reform. The use of “sabton unsa gyud ang tumong” indicates meaning-seeking, while “unsan nako pag-adjust” shows practical interpretation and decision-making. Cognitive appraisal involves how

individuals interpret and evaluate changes before responding to them. Studies show that teachers engage in sense making by interpreting curriculum goals and aligning them with their teaching practices. Additionally, research confirms that teachers are not passive implementers but active interpreters of reforms, making adjustments based on understanding and professional judgment.

As the participant 9 passionately explained,

“Ginatan-aw nako ang bag-ong polisiya dili lang isip dugang trabaho kundi isip oportunidad nga mapaayo ang sistema sa among eskwelahan.” (*I viewed the new policy not merely as additional work, but as an opportunity to improve our school's system.*)

This response shows positive cognitive reframing. Instead of viewing reform as a burden, the administrator interprets it as an opportunity for improvement, indicating adaptive thinking. This highlights that cognitive appraisal shapes emotional and behavioral responses. Educators who reframe challenges as opportunities demonstrate greater adaptability and resilience. Furthermore, sensemaking theory suggests that leaders influence change by constructing shared meanings that align reforms with institutional goals.

Another respondent commenced,

“Sa sugod, naglibog ko sa mga requirements, pero hinay-hinay nako gisabtan ug giangay sa akong klase hangtod naging klaro na para nako.” (*At first, I was confused by the requirements, but I gradually understood them and adapted them to my class until they became clear to me.*)

This response reflects a process of gradual meaning-making, moving from confusion to clarity. The teacher engages in continuous interpretation and adjustment, showing evolving understanding. Studies confirm that sensemaking is an ongoing process where teachers resolve uncertainty through experience and reflection, gradually building clarity in implementation. Moreover, cognitive change research shows that curriculum reforms often lead to transformation in teachers’ thinking, knowledge, and instructional decisions.

This implies that teachers and school administrators engage in cognitive appraisal and sense-making as they navigate successive curriculum reforms. Participants actively interpret the purpose, expectations, and implications of policy changes, allowing them to align these reforms with their instructional and leadership practices. Initially characterized by uncertainty and confusion, this process evolves into clarity through reflection and experience. Literature supports that teachers’ sensemaking is a critical mechanism in curriculum implementation, as educators construct meaning from reform policies and adapt them to their contexts (Andersen et al., 2024; Bümen & Holmqvist, 2022). Furthermore, cognitive appraisal influences how educators respond emotionally and behaviorally, with positive reinterpretation enhancing resilience and adaptability (Gaines et al., 2025). Thus, sense-making serves as a vital process through which educators transform uncertainty into informed action, enabling effective navigation of continuous curriculum reform.

Theme 3: Adaptation and Coping Mechanisms

It is evident in how participants adjusted their behaviors, strategies, and mindsets in response to challenges in their professional environment. Their accounts show the use of various coping strategies such as seeking support, managing time effectively, staying positive, and modifying teaching approaches to meet emerging demands. This suggests that adaptation is an active process where individuals continuously modify their responses to reduce stress and maintain effectiveness. Overall, these coping mechanisms highlight teachers’ resilience in sustaining their performance despite ongoing difficulties.

The participant 11 noticed this positive shift observing,

“Sa kadaghan sa kausaban, nag-self-study ko ug nangutana sa akong mga kauban aron masabtan nako unsaon pag-adjust sa bag-ong kurikulum.” (*With so many changes, I engaged in self-study and consulted my colleagues to better understand how to adjust to the new curriculum.*)

This response highlights active coping through self-initiative and collaboration. The teacher uses self-directed learning (self-study) and peer support as strategies to manage uncertainty and adapt to change. This shows that teachers commonly use peer collaboration and self-directed learning as primary coping mechanisms during curriculum reform. These strategies help teachers gain confidence, improve understanding, and reduce stress. Additionally, resilience literature emphasizes that coping strategies such as collaboration, professional learning, and support networks are critical in helping educators adapt to complex changes.

The participant 12 proudly shared this observation stating,

“Nag-organize mi ug mga meeting ug training aron matabangan ang mga magtutudlo nga makasabay sa kausaban ug dili sila mabug-atan kaayo.” (*We organized meetings and training sessions to help teachers keep pace with the changes and prevent them from feeling overly burdened.*)

This response reflects organizational coping mechanisms, where leadership provides structured support systems such as training and collaboration. It highlights the role of administration in reducing stress and facilitating adaptation. Studies show that institutional support such as training programs, mentoring, and leadership guidance enhances teachers’ coping capacity and resilience during reform. Moreover, this indicates that coping is more effective when supported by organizational structures and leadership initiatives, which reduce emotional burden and promote successful implementation.

Another participant responded,

“Kung ma-stress ko, ginapaningkamotan nako nga magpabiling positibo ug mangita ug paagi aron masulbad ang problema imbis nga magpadala sa kakapoy.” (*When I become stressed, I strive to remain positive and find ways to address the problem rather than letting fatigue overwhelm me.*)

This response highlights emotion-focused and problem-focused coping. The teacher consciously maintains a positive mindset while actively seeking solutions, demonstrating psychological resilience. It emphasizes that teachers cope with stress through positive reframing, emotional regulation, and problem-solving strategies, which help maintain well-being and effectiveness. Furthermore, coping strategies such as self-motivation and maintaining a positive outlook are associated with improved resilience and sustained performance despite stress.

The teachers and school administrators employ a range of coping mechanisms to navigate the challenges of successive curriculum reforms. These include self-directed learning, collaboration with colleagues, participation in institutional support systems, and the use of positive emotional regulation strategies. Participants actively adapt by modifying their teaching practices, seeking support, and maintaining a constructive mindset. Literature supports those coping strategies such as peer collaboration, leadership support, and positive reframing are essential in enhancing teachers’ resilience and professional effectiveness during periods of change (Wabingga & Tomakin, 2024; Bazar, 2025). Furthermore, coping mechanisms function as both individual and organizational processes that sustain educators’ well-being and performance. Thus, adaptation and coping emerge as critical processes that enable educators not only to manage challenges but also to maintain their commitment and effectiveness in the face of continuous reform.

Theme 4: Professional Identity Strain and Role Reconfiguration

The tension experienced by individuals when changes in their work environment challenge their established sense of professional identity and expected roles. It occurs when shifting responsibilities, expectations, or reforms create uncertainty or conflict about one’s position and function. In response, individuals often undergo role reconfiguration by adjusting their practices, redefining their responsibilities, and adopting new professional perspectives. The participant proudly shared this observation stating:

“Usahay murag lain na akong papel isip magtutudlo kay dili lang kay pagtudlo akong trabaho, kundi apil na ang research, reports, ug daghan pang responsibilidad.” (*At times, I feel that my role as a teacher has changed because my work is no longer limited to teaching; it now also includes research, reports, and many other responsibilities.*)

This response reflects professional identity strain, where the teacher experiences tension due to expanding

expectations beyond traditional teaching roles. The phrase “murag lain na akong papel” suggests a feeling of disruption in professional self-concept. This indicates that curriculum reforms and evolving educational demands often lead to role expansion, requiring teachers to take on multiple responsibilities such as research, innovation, and administrative tasks. Moreover, this confirms that reforms reshape teacher identity, creating tension between traditional teaching roles and newly imposed expectations, which can result in identity strain.

One additional participant noted,

“Sa karon nga sitwasyon, murag nagbag-o gyud ang papel sa lider sa eskwelahan kay kinahanglan na ko mahimong mentor, facilitator, ug problem-solver sa tanan.” (*In the current situation, the role of a school leader has truly evolved because I now need to serve as a mentor, facilitator, and problem-solver for everyone.*)

This response shows role reconfiguration in leadership, where the administrator adapts from a traditional managerial role to a multifaceted leadership role. The shift highlights increasing expectations placed on school leaders. This emphasizes that school leaders are required to assume multiple roles, including instructional leadership, mentorship, and organizational management, especially during reform implementation. Additionally, literature shows that professional identity is fluid and continuously reconstructed in response to changing policy and institutional demands.

A different participant explained,

“Nakafeel ko ug kalibog sa sugod kay nagtuo ko nga igo ra ko motudlo, pero karon kinahanglan na pud ko mo innovate ug mag adjust sa daghang butang.” (*I felt confused at first because I thought my role was simply to teach, but now I also need to innovate and adapt to many changes.*)

This response highlights identity confusion and transition, where the teacher struggles to align previous expectations with current demands. It reflects cognitive and emotional tension during role adjustment. This shows that curriculum reforms often create identity-role conflict, where teachers experience misalignment between their professional identity and new expectations. Furthermore, studies indicate that teachers shift from being content deliverers to curriculum co-constructors, requiring them to adopt innovative and adaptive roles.

It is revealed that teachers and school administrators experience significant professional identity strain as they navigate successive curriculum reforms. Participants described feelings of confusion, role overload, and tension arising from the expanding and shifting expectations of their profession. However, these challenges also led to role reconfiguration, as educators gradually adapted to new responsibilities such as facilitating learning, engaging in research, and leading innovation. Literature supports that teacher professional identity is dynamic and continuously reconstructed in response to reform contexts, with tensions between traditional roles and new expectations influencing both identity development and reform implementation (Aderet-German et al., 2021; Quirke et al., 2023). Furthermore, identity-role conflict is a common experience in contemporary education, as increasing demands require educators to navigate multiple professional roles simultaneously (Li, 2025). Thus, professional identity strain and role reconfiguration emerge as critical processes through which educators adapt, evolve, and sustain resilience amid continuous curriculum change.

Theme 5: Support Systems and Collaborative Resilience

The role of interpersonal relationships, institutional support, and teamwork in strengthening individuals' ability to cope with challenges in the workplace. It emphasizes how collaboration with colleagues, guidance from leaders, and access to organizational resources contribute to emotional stability and professional effectiveness. Through shared experiences and mutual assistance, individuals develop resilience not in isolation but as part of a collective process. As the participant 16 passionately explained,

“Dako kaayo ang tabang sa akong mga kauban nga magtutudlo kay magtinabangay mi sa pagplano ug pag-adjust sa bag-ong kurikulum.” (*My fellow teachers have been a great help because we work together in planning and adjusting to the new curriculum.*)

This response highlights peer collaboration as a key support system. The teacher emphasizes “magtinabangay mi” we help each other, indicating shared responsibility and teamwork in addressing curriculum changes. This shows that collaborative peer support is a central factor in strengthening teacher resilience. Teachers who engage in teamwork and shared planning develop better coping and adaptive strategies. Additionally, collegial support has been found to reduce stress and improve professional engagement, enhancing resilience during systemic changes.

Another informant expressed;

“Ginapaningkamotan namo nga hatagan ug suporta ang among mga magtutudlo pinaagi sa mentoring, training, ug open communication aron dili sila ma-overwhelm.” (*We strive to provide support to our teachers through mentoring, training, and open communication so that they do not become overwhelmed.*)

This response reflects institutional support systems, focusing on leadership initiatives such as mentoring, training, and communication. It highlights the administrator’s role in creating a supportive environment. This confirms that supportive leadership and access to resources (e.g., feedback, autonomy, professional development) significantly enhance teacher resilience. Moreover, structured support systems like mentoring programs and training opportunities contribute to teacher well-being, confidence, and effectiveness. Another teacher indicated;

“Kung naa koy problema, dili nako ginatago kay mangayo ko ug tabang sa akong mga kauban ug sa admin aron makakita mi ug solusyon.” (*When I encounter a problem, I do not keep it to myself; instead, I seek help from my colleagues and the administration so that we can find a solution together.*)

This response shows help-seeking behavior and relational coping, where the teacher actively utilizes social support networks. It highlights openness, trust, and collective problem-solving. This indicates that social support, including peer and leadership assistance, is a vital coping strategy that promotes resilience and well-being among teachers. Furthermore, collaborative cultures in schools foster collective efficacy, which strengthens both individual and organizational resilience.

The support systems and collaborative resilience play a crucial role in enabling teachers and school administrators to navigate successive curriculum reforms. Participants emphasized the importance of peer collaboration, leadership support, and open communication as essential mechanisms for coping with challenges. Through shared experiences, teamwork, and structured institutional support, educators are able to manage stress, enhance their competence, and sustain their professional commitment. Literature supports that resilience in education is not solely an individual capacity but is significantly influenced by social and organizational contexts, including collegial relationships, mentoring systems, and leadership practices (Nasvytienė & Sakadolskis, 2022; Diab & Green, 2024). Furthermore, collaborative environments foster collective efficacy, which strengthens both individual and organizational resilience (Benoliel & Chen Schechter, 2024). Thus, support systems and collaboration emerge as fundamental drivers of resilience, enabling educators to adapt effectively and thrive in the face of continuous curriculum change.

Theme 6: Workload Pressure and Time Constraints

The challenges individuals experience when faced with excessive responsibilities and limited time to accomplish tasks effectively. It highlights how heavy workloads, overlapping duties, and strict deadlines can create stress and reduce efficiency in performing professional roles. This condition often requires individuals to prioritize tasks, manage time strategically, and adapt to competing demands in order to maintain productivity.

One participant answered:

“Grabe kaayo ang kadaghan sa trabaho karon, dili lang pagtudlo kundi apil ang reports ug paperwork, usahay wala na koy igong oras para sa lesson preparation.” (*The workload has become overwhelming nowadays. It is no longer limited to teaching, as it also includes reports and paperwork. At times, I no longer have enough time for lesson preparation.*)

This response highlights workload intensification, where the teacher experiences an overload of responsibilities beyond teaching. The mention of “reports ug paperwork” reflects administrative burden, while “wala na koy

igong oras” indicates time constraints affecting instructional quality. This shows that teachers’ workload has significantly increased due to administrative tasks, documentation, and reforms, often exceeding their contracted hours. Additionally, studies confirm that excessive workload reduces time for lesson preparation and instructional planning, which negatively impacts teaching effectiveness.

One more participant mentioned:

“Lisod usahay i-manage ang oras kay daghan kaayong kinahanglan buhaton gikan sa DepEd ug sa eskwelahan, mao nga magdali-dali na lang mi sa ubang butang.” (*It is sometimes difficult to manage time because there are so many tasks required by both the Department of Education and the school, which often forces us to rush through certain responsibilities.*)

This response reflects time pressure and decision-making constraints. The administrator experiences challenges in balancing multiple responsibilities, resulting in rushed execution of tasks. School leadership indicate that administrators face layered responsibilities and competing demands, leading to time pressure and rapid decision-making. Research further highlights that time poverty when professionals lack sufficient time to complete tasks is a major issue in education systems undergoing reform.

Another participant commenced;

“Usahay ginadala nako ang trabaho sa balay kay dili na mahuman sa eskwelahan, busa naapektuhan na pud akong personal nga oras.” (*At times, I bring work home because I cannot finish it at school, which has also begun to affect my personal time.*)

This response highlights spillover of work into personal life, indicating poor work-life balance. The teacher extends working hours beyond school time due to unmanageable workload. This indicates that teachers frequently work beyond official hours, resulting in extended working time and reduced personal time, which contributes to stress and burnout. Furthermore, studies show that workload and time constraints negatively affect well-being, motivation, and job satisfaction, particularly when work interferes with personal life.

The workload pressure and time constraints are significant challenges faced by teachers and school administrators during successive curriculum reforms. Participants described increased administrative responsibilities, extended working hours, and limited time for instructional preparation, leading to stress and work-life imbalance. Literature supports that workload intensification and time poverty are pervasive issues in education, often resulting in reduced teaching effectiveness and diminished well-being (Creagh et al., 2023). Moreover, curriculum reforms further exacerbate these challenges by introducing new demands and expectations, requiring educators to allocate time across multiple responsibilities (Daga et al., 2025). These findings highlight that while educators strive to remain committed, sustained resilience requires adequate structural support, effective workload management, and improved time allocation systems to ensure both professional effectiveness and personal well-being.

Theme 7: Transformative Growth and Resilience Building

The process through which individuals develop stronger coping abilities and achieve meaningful personal and professional growth as a result of overcoming challenges and adversities. It emphasizes that difficult experiences can serve as opportunities for learning, self-reflection, and positive change rather than merely sources of stress. Through continuous adaptation and perseverance, individuals strengthen their resilience, improve their skills, and develop a more mature and confident professional outlook.

As the participant passionately explained,

“Bisan lisod ang mga kausaban sa sugod, naka-realize ko nga daghan ko’g bag-ong nahibal-an ug mas nahimo kong mas flexible nga magtutudlo.” (*Although the changes were difficult at first, I realized that I learned many new things and became a more flexible teacher.*)

This response reflects learning through adversity, where the teacher acknowledges initial difficulty but recognizes personal and professional growth. The emphasis on “bag-ong nahibal-an” and “mas flexible” demonstrates skill

development and adaptability. The teacher resilience highlights that challenging experiences often lead to professional growth, increased adaptability, and enhanced teaching competence. Teachers who face reform-related stress tend to develop stronger skills and confidence over time. This implies that resilience is not merely about coping but involves transformative learning, where educators expand their capabilities and improve their instructional practices after navigating difficulties.

Another participant expressed;

“Ang mga hagit sa kurikulum nakatabang nako nga mahimong mas maayo nga lider kay nakakat-on ko unsaon pag-handle sa mga problema ug pag-suporta sa akong team.” (*The challenges brought by the curriculum have helped me become a better leader because I learned how to handle problems and support my team.*)

This response highlights leadership development through challenges. The administrator perceives difficulties as opportunities to improve problem-solving and leadership skills. This shows that school leaders develop resilience by engaging in reflective practice, adaptive leadership, and problem-solving during change processes. Furthermore, resilience in leadership is linked to transformational growth, where leaders improve their capacity to support teachers, manage crises, and guide organizational change effectively.

One more participant mentioned;

“Sa sige’g kausaban, nakakat-on ko nga dili mahadlok sa bag-ong pamaagi ug mas open na ko sa pag-improve sa akong pagtudlo.” (*Through the continuous changes, I have learned not to be afraid of new approaches and have become more open to improving my teaching practices.*)

This response demonstrates mindset transformation, where the teacher shifts from fear to openness. The statement reflects increased confidence and willingness to innovate. This indicates that resilient teachers develop a growth mindset, allowing them to embrace innovation and continuous improvement. Additionally, studies show that exposure to reforms encourages teachers to become more open to change, reflective in practice, and proactive in professional development, which are key indicators of transformative growth.

The transformative growth and resilience building are central to the lived experiences of teachers and school administrators navigating successive curriculum reforms. Participants described how initial challenges evolved into opportunities for learning, skill development, and professional improvement. Through continuous exposure to reform-related demands, educators developed increased adaptability, confidence, and openness to innovation. Literature supports that resilience extends beyond coping, encompassing transformative processes that enhance professional competence, mindset, and leadership capacity (Zhang & Luo, 2023; Jin et al., 2025). Furthermore, resilience-building experiences contribute to sustained engagement and growth, enabling educators to thrive in dynamic educational environments. Thus, transformative growth emerges as a key outcome of resilience, reflecting the ability of educators to convert challenges into meaningful professional advancement.

Theme 8: Emotional-Cognitive Influence on Practice

The interaction between emotional experiences and cognitive processes in shaping how individuals perform and make decisions in their professional roles. It highlights that emotions such as stress, motivation, confidence, and frustration influence how people think, interpret situations, and respond to challenges. At the same time, cognitive processes like reflection, judgment, and problem-solving help regulate emotional responses and guide effective actions. This concept emphasizes that professional practice is shaped by the combined influence of emotions and thinking processes, affecting adaptability, decision-making, and overall performance.

One participant answered:

“Kung ma-stress ko sa kausaban, usahay maapektuhan ang akong pagtudlo, pero kung makontrol nako akong pagbati, mas klaro ang akong pagplano ug pagtudlo.” (*When I become stressed by the changes, my teaching is sometimes affected. However, when I am able to manage my emotions, I can plan and teach more clearly and effectively.*)

This response highlights the interplay between emotions (stress) and cognition (planning and clarity). The teacher recognizes that emotional states directly affect instructional decision-making and teaching effectiveness. This indicates that teachers' emotion regulation significantly influences instructional quality, classroom management, and decision-making. When teachers manage emotions effectively, they demonstrate greater clarity, improved planning, and better classroom interactions. Moreover, there are studies indicate that positive emotional states reduce cognitive load, enabling teachers to make more effective instructional decisions.

One more participant mentioned:

"Kung positibo akong panan-aw sa mga kausaban, mas dali nako makit-an ang solusyon ug makahatag ko ug klaro nga direksyon sa akong mga magtutudlo." (When I maintain a positive outlook toward changes, it becomes easier for me to find solutions and provide clear direction to my teachers.)

This response reflects cognitive appraisal shaped by emotional disposition. The administrator's positive emotional outlook enhances their ability to think critically, solve problems, and provide direction. This indicates that emotions influence cognitive processes such as decision-making, problem-solving, and leadership effectiveness. Positive emotions are associated with improved perspective-taking and strategic thinking, which are essential for effective leadership.

Another participant commenced;

"Kung maglibog ko sa kurikulum, maghunahuna ko unsa ang angay buhaton, ug ang akong pagbati makatabang o makapalisod sa akong desisyon sa klase." (When I feel confused about the curriculum, I reflect on what should be done, and my emotions can either help or complicate my decision-making in the classroom.)

This response highlights decision-making influenced by both cognitive analysis and emotional response. The teacher acknowledges that emotions can either facilitate or hinder classroom decisions. This confirms that teachers' classroom decisions are shaped by the interaction of cognitive load and emotional states, influencing how they respond to classroom situations. Additionally, studies show that teachers' emotion regulation and resilience affect their ability to cope with stress and make sound instructional decisions.

This implies that teachers and school administrators' practices are significantly influenced by the interaction between emotional and cognitive processes. Participants acknowledged that their emotions, such as stress, confusion, and optimism, directly affect their thinking, decision-making, and instructional practices. When emotions are effectively regulated, educators demonstrate improved clarity, planning, and responsiveness in their roles. Literature supports that teacher emotions are closely linked to cognitive processes, influencing instructional quality, professional development, and student outcomes (Xu et al., 2025; Ehlert et al., 2025). Additionally, the interaction of emotional states and cognitive load plays a critical role in shaping teachers' classroom decisions and problem-solving strategies (Blackley et al., 2021). Thus, emotional-cognitive integration emerges as a key mechanism in resilience, enabling educators to navigate challenges and maintain effective practice in the context of continuous curriculum reform.

Theme 9: Critical Incidents as Turning Points

The significant experiences or events that create substantial changes in an individual's perspectives, behaviors, or professional practices. These incidents often involve challenges, successes, or unexpected situations that prompt deep reflection and learning. Through these experiences, individuals reassess their beliefs, develop new insights, and make important adjustments in how they approach their roles and responsibilities. Overall, critical incidents serve as transformative moments that influence personal growth, decision-making, and professional development.

As the participant passionately explained,

"Adunay usa ka higayon nga naglisod gyud ko pagpatuman sa bag-ong kurikulum, pero didto nako nasabtan nga kinahanglan ko magbag-o sa akong pamaagi aron mas motugma sa panginahanglan sa mga

estudyante.” *(There was a time when I truly struggled to implement the new curriculum, but it was during that experience that I realized I needed to change my approach to better meet the needs of my students.)*

This response reflects a critical incident that triggered a turning point in teaching practice. The teacher initially struggled but used the experience to re-evaluate and modify instructional strategies. Critical incidents are described as significant experiences that disrupt routine practice and prompt deep reflection, leading to professional change. This also shows that reflecting on such incidents helps teachers bridge theory and practice and improve their instructional strategies.

Another participant expressed;

“Adunay panahon nga nagka-problema gyud mi sa implementasyon, ug didto nako nakita nga kinahanglan na gyud ang mas klaro nga komunikasyon ug suporta sa mga magtutudlo.” *(There was a time when we encountered serious challenges during the implementation, and it was then that I realized the need for clearer communication and stronger support for teachers.)*

This response highlights a critical organizational challenge that led to a shift in leadership approach. The administrator recognized the need for improved communication and support systems. It shows that critical incidents serve as learning opportunities for leaders, prompting reflection and changes in management practices. Through reflection, educators develop better decision-making and leadership strategies. Additionally, critical incidents are often described as turning points that reshape professional thinking and actions, especially in complex environments like schools.

One more participant mentioned;

“Sa usa ka sitwasyon nga wala gyud ko kabalo unsaon paghandle sa klase, didto ko naka-realize nga kinahanglan ko mangayo ug tabang ug magtuon pa gyud para mas ma-improve nako akong pagtudlo.” *(In one situation where I truly did not know how to handle the class, I realized that I needed to seek help and continue learning in order to further improve my teaching.)*

This response reflects a moment of crisis and realization, where the teacher recognizes limitations and seeks improvement. It shows a shift from uncertainty to proactive learning and help-seeking behavior. It indicates that critical incidents often lead to self-awareness and professional development, encouraging teachers to reflect on their practices and seek improvement. Furthermore, phenomenological studies show that reflecting on these incidents contributes to identity formation and resilience building, as teachers reinterpret experiences and adjust their practices.

The transformative growth and resilience building are central to the lived experiences of teachers and school administrators navigating successive curriculum reforms.

The critical incidents serve as significant turning points in the lived experiences of teachers and school administrators navigating successive curriculum reforms. Participants described moments of difficulty, confusion, and challenge that disrupted their usual practices and required immediate response. These incidents prompted deep reflection, leading to adjustments in teaching strategies, leadership approaches, and professional perspectives. Literature supports that critical incidents are powerful tools for reflective practice, enabling educators to analyze experiences, develop new understandings, and improve their professional competence (Cole et al., 2022). Furthermore, phenomenological studies highlight that such incidents contribute to identity development and resilience by transforming challenging experiences into opportunities for growth (Kabilan et al., 2025). Thus, critical incidents function as pivotal moments that shape educators’ resilience, guiding them toward continuous learning and professional transformation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the nine themes, the findings reveal that teachers and school administrators experience curriculum reform as a complex process characterized by emotional, cognitive, and professional challenges. Initial responses to the implementation of new DepEd curricula were marked by anxiety, confusion, uncertainty, and increased

workload. However, these emotional reactions were often accompanied by optimism and a willingness to embrace change. Participants actively engaged in cognitive appraisal and sense-making, striving to understand the purpose and implications of reforms while gradually adapting their instructional and leadership practices. These findings suggest that educators are not passive recipients of policy changes but active agents who interpret, negotiate, and respond to reform demands in ways that shape their professional experiences and resilience.

The study further demonstrates that resilience is strengthened through a combination of individual coping mechanisms and collective support systems. Teachers and school administrators relied on self-directed learning, peer collaboration, mentoring, training, and open communication to navigate the uncertainties associated with curriculum implementation. Although participants experienced professional identity strain, workload intensification, and time constraints, they were able to reconfigure their roles and develop adaptive strategies that enabled them to sustain their effectiveness. The presence of supportive leadership, collegial relationships, and collaborative school cultures emerged as critical factors that fostered resilience and reduced the negative effects of reform-related pressures. These findings highlight that resilience is not solely an individual attribute but a socially and organizationally supported process.

Ultimately, the findings underscore that successive curriculum reforms serve not only as sources of challenge but also as catalysts for transformative growth and professional development. Through critical incidents, reflective practice, and continuous adaptation, participants developed greater flexibility, confidence, leadership capacity, and openness to innovation. The interaction between emotional and cognitive processes played a significant role in shaping decision-making, teaching effectiveness, and leadership practices, demonstrating that resilience evolves through experience and reflection. Therefore, curriculum reform can be viewed as a transformative journey that, when supported by effective institutional structures and collaborative networks, enables educators to convert adversity into opportunities for learning, growth, and sustained professional excellence.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The authors affirm that there are no conflicts of interest related to this study. The research was conducted in accordance with the principles of academic integrity, ethical research practice, and transparency. All efforts were made to ensure originality, avoid plagiarism, and maintain objectivity in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. The outcomes of this study are presented exclusively for academic and research purposes.

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