
Competence of Public and Private Junior High School English Teachers in Integrating 21st-Century Learning Skills Under the Matatag Curriculum: Basis for an Intervention Program

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the competence of public and private junior high school English teachers in integrating 21st-century learning skills under the MATATAG Curriculum. It specifically focused on teachers' competence in Information, Media, and Technology Skills; Learning and Innovation Skills; Communication Skills; and Life and Career Skills, while also considering selected profile variables, school type, and the challenges encountered during classroom implementation. The study was conducted in the context of junior high school English instruction and was designed to generate evidence to inform an intervention program for teachers. Data were gathered from teacher and learner respondents using survey questionnaires, and the results were used to determine competence levels, examine differences and relationships among variables, and identify prevailing difficulties in integrating 21st-century skills in English teaching. Findings indicated that English teachers demonstrated competence in integrating 21st-century learning skills, although variations were observed across domains and teaching conditions. The results also revealed existing challenges that may affect effective curriculum delivery, particularly regarding classroom practice, instructional support, and the demands of implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. Based on the findings, an intervention program was proposed to strengthen teacher competence and support more effective integration of 21st-century learning skills in junior high school English classes. The study provides useful input for teachers, school administrators, and education stakeholders in designing responsive professional development initiatives aligned with current curricular reforms.

Keywords: teacher competence, 21st-century skills, MATATAG Curriculum, junior high school, intervention program

INTRODUCTION

Education systems worldwide continue to evolve in response to globalization, technological advancement, and the increasing demand for learners who are equipped not only with academic knowledge but also with practical competencies for work, citizenship, and lifelong learning. In this context, 21st-century learning skills have become central to curriculum reform because they prepare learners to think critically, communicate effectively, collaborate, and use technology responsibly to solve real-world problems. These skills are commonly grouped into four major domains: information, media, and technology skills; learning and innovation skills; communication skills; and life and career skills. Together, these competencies support holistic learner development and help bridge the gap between school learning and the demands of modern society.

In the Philippines, curriculum reform has increasingly emphasized the need for meaningful, learner-centered, and competency-based education. The MATATAG Curriculum reflects this direction by strengthening foundational learning, reducing curricular congestion, and promoting more purposeful and contextualized instruction. It was launched in August 2023 and is being implemented in phases beginning in SY 2024-2025 for Kindergarten, Grades 1, 4, and 7. For Junior High School English, this reform places greater responsibility on teachers to integrate 21st-century skills into everyday classroom instruction in ways that are responsive to learners' needs and the realities of the changing educational landscape. English teachers are especially expected to develop learners' communication abilities while also fostering digital literacy, creativity, critical thinking, and adaptability.

However, the success of any curriculum reform depends largely on teachers' competence in translating policy into practice. Even when curricular goals are clearly defined, classroom implementation may vary depending on teacher preparation, access to resources, school context, and professional support. In public and private junior high schools, differences in the institutional environment may influence how teachers integrate 21st-century learning skills, particularly regarding technology use, innovative pedagogy, and learner-centered practices. These differences make it important to examine not only the teachers' self-perceptions but also their learners' perceptions, since both perspectives contribute to a more complete understanding of instructional competence.

Despite the growing emphasis on 21st-century education, there remains limited empirical evidence on how public and private Junior High School English teachers in Nueva Vizcaya integrate these skills under the MATATAG Curriculum. Most available studies focus on broader teacher competence, digital literacy, or isolated skill domains, while fewer studies examine the combined domains of 21st-century learning skills in a localized Philippine context. There is also a need to identify the challenges teachers encounter in integrating these skills so that appropriate intervention programs can be developed to support their professional growth. For these reasons, the present study aimed to assess the competence of public and private Junior High School English teachers in integrating 21st-century learning skills under the MATATAG Curriculum, as perceived by both teachers and learners, and to use the findings to inform an intervention program.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the view that teacher competence in integrating 21st-century learning skills is shaped by both instructional practice and the demands of contemporary curriculum reform. English teachers are expected to function not only as content deliverers but also as facilitators of critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity, and responsible use of technology. In this sense, the study may be guided by the 21st-century skills framework, which emphasizes four major domains: information, media, and technology skills; learning and innovation skills; communication skills; and life and career skills.

The study is also consistent with the idea that teachers' competence is influenced by contextual factors such as training, experience, school setting, and access to instructional support. Public and private schools may differ in resources, professional development opportunities, and institutional expectations, which can affect how teachers implement curriculum requirements in practice. Thus, teacher competence is not viewed as a fixed trait but as a professional capability that develops through exposure, support, and reflective practice.

In relation to the MATATAG Curriculum, the framework supports the view that curriculum implementation requires teachers to adapt their instruction to evolving educational goals while remaining responsive to learners' needs. The study therefore assumes that the effective integration of 21st-century learning skills depends on the alignment of teacher preparedness, classroom conditions, and curricular expectations.

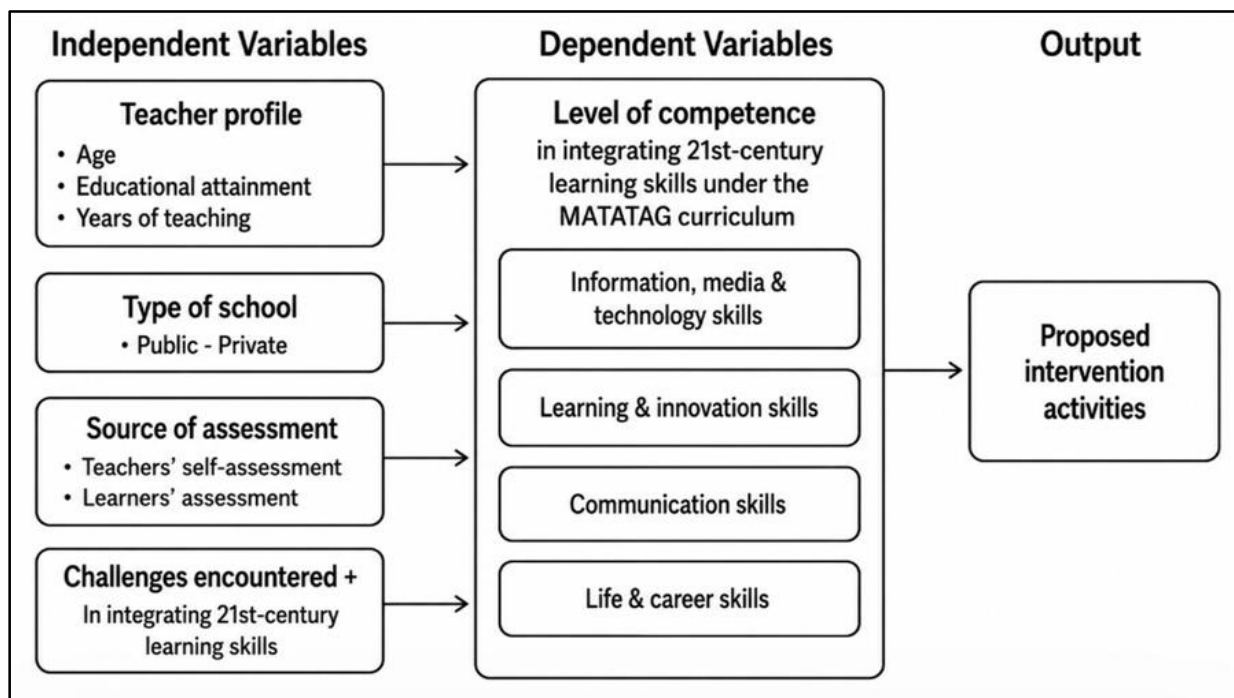
Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study presents the relationship among the selected variables involved in examining the competence of public and private junior high school English teachers in integrating 21st-century learning skills. The input variables include the teacher profile, specifically age, sex, educational attainment, years in teaching, type of school, and training attended. The study also considers the respondents' type of school as a comparative variable, since public and private institutions may offer different teaching environments.

The process component involves assessing teachers' competence in integrating 21st-century learning skills across information, media, and technology skills; learning and innovation skills; communication skills; and life and career skills. It also includes identifying the challenges teachers encounter in applying these skills under the MATATAG Curriculum. Data from both teacher and learner respondents are used to obtain a more complete view of instructional competence.

The study's output is the development of an intervention program based on its findings. This program is intended to strengthen teachers' competence in integrating 21st-century learning skills and to support more effective implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum in junior high school English classes. In this way, the framework shows a logical flow from teacher characteristics and instructional conditions to assessed competence, identified challenges, and a proposed intervention.

Research Paradigm



Statement of the Problem

This study determined the competence of public and private junior high school English teachers in integrating 21st-century learning skills under the MATATAG Curriculum as a basis for an intervention program. Specifically, it answered the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the teacher-respondents in terms of age, sex, educational attainment, years in teaching, type of school, and relevant training attended?
2. What is the level of competence of the teacher-respondents in integrating 21st-century learning skills in terms of information, media, and technology skills; learning and innovation skills; communication skills; and life and career skills?
3. Is there a significant difference in the level of competence of the teacher-respondents when grouped according to school type?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the teacher-respondents' competence and their profile variables?
5. What challenges do the teacher-respondents encounter in integrating 21st-century learning skills under the MATATAG Curriculum?
6. What intervention program may be proposed based on the findings of the study?

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive-correlational design to examine the competence of public and private junior high school English teachers in integrating 21st-century learning skills under the MATATAG Curriculum. The study was conducted in selected public and private junior high schools in Nueva Vizcaya, including Solano High School, Quezon National High School, Aldersgate College, Incorporated, and Saint Louis College of Solano, Incorporated.

The respondents included 16 junior high school English teachers and 338 learners in Grades 7 and 8. The teacher respondents were purposively selected for their direct involvement in English instruction, while the learner respondents were selected through stratified random sampling using Cochran's formula. This combination of respondents enabled the study to capture both teacher self-assessment and learners' perceptions of instructional competence.

Data were gathered using two validated and pilot-tested questionnaires. The first instrument elicited teacher profile information, self-assessed competence in the four 21st-century skill domains, and challenges encountered in integration. The second instrument measured learner perceptions of teacher competence in the same domains, using indicators aligned with information, media, and technology skills; learning and innovation skills; communication skills; and life and career skills.

The data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages to describe respondent profiles, the mean to determine competence levels, the Mann-Whitney U test to compare public and private school groups, and the Spearman rank-order correlation to examine relationships between profile variables and competence. Ethical procedures were observed throughout the study, including obtaining permission from school authorities, obtaining informed consent from respondents, and obtaining assent from learners.

RESULTS

The study examined the competence of public and private junior high school English teachers in integrating 21st-century learning skills under the MATATAG Curriculum. The findings are presented in line with the major variables of the study: respondent profile, competence level, differences by school type, relationships among variables, and challenges encountered.

Respondent Profile

Table 1 presents the profile of the teacher-respondents in terms of age, sex, educational attainment, years in teaching, type of school, and relevant training attended.

Profile Variable	Description
Age	Mostly 20–25 years old
Sex	Predominantly female
Educational Attainment	Mostly bachelor's degree holders
Years in Teaching	Mostly 1–5 years

Type of School	Public and private school teachers
Training Attended	With limited relevant training

The profile shows that most of the teacher-respondents were young and early in their teaching careers. This suggests that many of them may still be developing their instructional competence and exposure to advanced curriculum implementation.

Competence Level

Table 2 shows the level of competence of the teacher-respondents in integrating 21st-century learning skills.

Domain	Teacher Self-Rating	Learner Rating
Information, Media, and Technology Skills	Proficient	Approaching Proficiency
Learning and Innovation Skills	Proficient	Proficient
Communication Skills	Proficient	Proficient
Life and Career Skills	Proficient	Proficient

The results indicate that teachers rated themselves as **Proficient** across all four domains. Learners, however, gave a lower rating in information, media, and technology skills, suggesting that this area remains the most challenging aspect of integration. The other domains were generally viewed as proficient by both groups.

Difference by School Type

Table 3 presents the significant difference in the level of competence when respondents were grouped according to school type.

Domain	Result
Information, Media, and Technology Skills	No significant difference in teacher self-rating; significant difference in learner rating
Learning and Innovation Skills	No significant difference in teacher self-rating; significant difference in learner rating
Communication Skills	No significant difference in teacher self-rating; significant difference in learner rating
Life and Career Skills	Significant difference in both teacher and learner ratings

The findings suggest that school type did not consistently affect all areas of competence, although differences were observed in selected domains. Public school teachers

rated themselves higher in life and career skills, while learner perceptions showed more variation across domains.

Relationship With Profile Variables

Table 4 summarizes the relationship between teacher competence and selected profile variables.

Profile Variable	Relationship With Competence
Age	Significant in life and career skills
Sex	Not significant
Educational Attainment	Not significant
Years in Teaching	Not significant
Training Attended	Not significant

Age was the only profile variable that showed a significant relationship with competence, particularly in life and career skills. This implies that maturity and professional exposure may contribute to stronger application of workplace- and life-oriented skills in the classroom. Other profile variables did not show significant relationships with the competence domains.

Challenges Encountered

Table 5 presents the challenges encountered by the teacher-respondents in integrating 21st-century learning skills.

Domain	Level of Challenge
Information, Media, and Technology Skills	Moderate Challenge
Learning and Innovation Skills	Moderate Challenge
Communication Skills	Moderate Challenge
Life and Career Skills	Moderate Challenge

Overall, the teachers experienced a **Moderate Challenge** in integrating 21st-century learning skills. The greatest difficulty was observed in information, media, and technology skills, which suggests the need for stronger support in digital integration and ICT-based instruction.

Proposed Intervention

Table 6 presents the intervention activities proposed based on the findings.

Proposed Activity	Purpose
ICT Integration Workshop	Strengthen technology-based teaching skills

Professional Learning Community Sessions	Improve collaboration and critical thinking instruction
Reflective Teaching and Feedback Program	Enhance instructional self-awareness
Life Skills Integration Module	Support life and career skills teaching
Inter-School Collaborative Teaching Exchange	Promote shared practices and peer learning

These activities were developed to address the competence gaps and challenges identified in the study. The proposed intervention program provides a practical response to the findings and may help teachers better align classroom practice with MATATAG Curriculum expectations.

DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that public and private junior high school English teachers are generally capable of integrating 21st-century learning skills under the MATATAG Curriculum, but their competence is uneven across domains. Teachers rated themselves as proficient in all four domains, yet learners perceived lower competence in information, media, and technology skills, indicating that digital integration remains the clearest area of concern. This gap between teacher self-assessment and learner perception suggests that teachers may feel prepared to use technology, but students may not always experience that integration as consistent or effective in actual classroom practice.

The profile of the respondents provides useful context for interpreting these results. Most teachers were young, early in their careers, and had limited training, which may explain why competence was already present but still developing. Early-career teachers often adjust gradually to curriculum demands, especially when teaching requires both content mastery and integration of modern instructional strategies. The significant relationship between age and life and career skills further suggests that maturity and professional exposure may strengthen teachers' ability to model workplace-related and practical life skills in English instruction.

The results also show that school type did not consistently shape teacher competence across all domains. While some differences appeared, especially in life and career skills, the pattern suggests that instructional competence depends on more than whether a teacher works in a public or private school. Factors such as access to materials, school support, professional development, and classroom culture may be more influential than school type alone. This implies that intervention efforts should be inclusive and context-responsive rather than limited to one sector.

The moderate level of challenge reported by teachers reinforces the need for targeted support, particularly in information, media, and technology skills. This is consistent with research showing that digital competence is one of the most critical expectations for 21st-century teachers and remains a common area of difficulty in classroom integration. In the context of the MATATAG Curriculum, these challenges are especially important because the curriculum expects teachers to deliver more focused, meaningful, and skill-oriented

instruction. When teachers face limitations in ICT integration, the curriculum's goals may be harder to realize fully in day-to-day teaching.

The proposed intervention activities are therefore well aligned with the study findings. The ICT Integration Workshop directly addresses the weakest area of competence, while the Professional Learning Community sessions and Inter-School Collaborative Teaching Exchange can help teachers share practices and solve classroom problems together. The Reflective Teaching and Feedback Program supports self-improvement, and the Life Skills Integration Module strengthens less technology-dependent but equally important aspects of 21st-century learning. Taken together, these interventions respond to the specific gaps identified by the study and provide a practical basis for strengthening teacher competence under the MATATAG Curriculum.

Overall, the study shows that teacher competence in integrating 21st-century learning skills is present but uneven, with digital integration emerging as the key priority for improvement. The findings support the need for sustained professional development, stronger instructional support, and school-based collaboration to help teachers translate curriculum expectations into effective classroom practice. For the MATATAG Curriculum to be implemented meaningfully, teacher development must be treated as an ongoing process rather than a one-time training event.

CONCLUSIONS

The study revealed that public and private junior high school English teachers generally possess a satisfactory level of competence in integrating 21st-century learning skills under the MATATAG Curriculum. However, competence is not evenly distributed across domains, with information, media, and technology skills emerging as the most challenging area. This indicates that while teachers are capable of delivering instruction aligned with 21st-century expectations, there remains a clear need to strengthen digital integration in classroom practice.

The findings further suggest that teacher competence is shaped more by age and professional exposure than by most of the profile variables considered in the study. The absence of consistent differences by school type implies that both public and private school teachers face similar instructional demands and development needs. Overall, the results show that sustained support, capacity building, and collaborative professional development are necessary to help teachers translate the MATATAG Curriculum into effective classroom instruction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. School administrators may conduct regular ICT integration workshops to enhance teachers' competence in using digital tools and media-based instructional strategies.
2. Department heads and English coordinators may establish professional learning community sessions where teachers can collaboratively discuss 21st-century teaching practices, particularly critical thinking and innovation.

3. Teachers may be encouraged to participate in reflective teaching activities and peer feedback mechanisms to strengthen instructional awareness and classroom effectiveness.
4. English departments may adopt life skills integration modules to help teachers better connect lesson content with practical life and career competencies.
5. Public and private schools may implement inter-school collaborative teaching exchanges to promote the sharing of effective practices and encourage professional growth.
6. Future researchers may conduct similar studies in a wider setting and with a larger sample to further validate the findings and refine the proposed intervention program.

AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

AI-supported tools helped with grammar and structure in creating this article. No AI tools were used to collect, analyze, or interpret data; all authors are credited for their academic contributions.

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