Improving teachers' professional development through School Learning Action Cell (SLAC)

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Abstract

As drivers of change and learning in future generations, teachers are required to have the grit to learn and adapt to different practices and what is the trend. The School Learning Action Cell is a tool for filling in instructional gaps and for exchanging practices to deepen and broaden the teaching and learning process for the consistency of attaining the curriculum goal. This study used a qualitative research design utilizing a phenomenological approach. Purposive sampling was used in the study to choose the participants and it was participated by 8 Master Teachers in one of the secondary public schools in the Philippines. Based on the results of the research, conceptual framework was emerged in the study: cost-efficient learning, teaching effectiveness, and lack of needs assessment. With these, the School Learning Action Cell is a cost-efficient platform that develops and manages teaching effectiveness and addressing to fill the gaps in the delivery of instruction through needs assessment and it is a key for professional development among teachers. More than the change to the new educational norm, active engagement in the School Learning Action Cell helped to improve, reskill, and retool the teachers' capacities for addressing the instructional gaps. This finding suggests its usefulness in providing in-depth knowledge for implementing School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) in the school for future directives.

Keywords: Cost-efficient, curriculum, needs assessment, School Learning Action Cell, teaching effectiveness

Introduction

The implementation of the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) enhances the teaching and learning process to achieve the addressed goals in the curriculum (Culajara, 2022a). These goals address equality and quality services in education, thus this can be implemented when

the instructional leaders and teachers have the grit in improving their competencies through professional development. One of the key components of helping teachers become more effective is professional development (PD). Through this action, more efficient and adaptable to the evolving educational context can be attained and learning progresses in line with the enormous transformations brought by industrialization and globalization.

To transform learning and make it worthwhile, teachers must have a thorough awareness of the value of instructional models and how they work in the instructional process. The main forces behind curriculum development are teachers who serve as instructional leaders (Arrieta, 2021). As stipulated by the Department of Education Republic of the Philippines (2016), Learning Action Cell goals include enhancing teachers' competencies in contextualizing instructional delivery and integrating the principles of global citizenship education into instruction. The Learning Action Cell is a K–12 Education Program school-based continuing professional development strategy. This is strengthened by the study of Binauhan (2019) Learning Action Cell (LAC), teachers work together to enhance their professional development and empower members to act as changemakers.

Continuous professional development should go hand in hand with igniting learning and preparing each individual for the future so that the objectives addressed in the curriculum can be more sustainably and consistently upheld and developing oneself also means enhancing the way that teaching is delivered. School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) is a platform for group discussion where people in the organization can share ideas and strategies that they can apply or adapt. This group learning session also emphasizes sharing trends, being creative and innovative, and adapting to the 21st-century abilities that each person requires. It also focuses more on the various effective methods of instruction delivery.

The study aims to explore how the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) improves teachers' professional development. Specifically, it sought to address the following objectives: (1) understand how the school-Learning Action Cell has affected teachers' professional development, (2) identify the challenges experienced by the teachers in the School Learning Action Cell, and (3) proposed an enhancement program for the implementation of the School Learning Action Cell. Expanding other institutions in adapting and keep up with the trend through the implementation of the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC). With the acquired in-depth knowledge and understanding from the teachers' viewpoints, the improving teachers' professional development through School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) will be better understood and shows that this is a continuing professional development.

Conceptual framework

In order to adapt to the quick changes, the teaching profession needs a continuous improvement mindset (Silva, 2021). With the Learning Action Cell, the achievement is more integrated with the vision and mission of the organization to be future-ready and ready for every change in our educational system (Javier, 2021). Furthermore, as Culajara et al., (2022) stated that teachers must understand how to interact with students and provide effective and efficient instruction. The objective of this research is to determine how the SLAC has improved teachers' professional development, comprehension of their experiences and a planned improvement program for the implementation of the SLAC result from investigating the impact and challenges.

Figure 1 *Conceptual framework in improving teachers' professional development through School Learning Action Cell (SLAC)*

Research questions

The study aims to explore how the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) improves teachers' professional development. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:
1. How School Learning Action Cell improve teachers' professional development?
2. What are the challenges experienced by the teacher in the School Learning Action Cell sessions?
3. What enhancement program needs to be developed in the implementation of School Learning Action Cell?

Methodology

Research Design

The research used a qualitative research design utilizing phenomenological approach. Qualitative research uses a subjective perspective to understand experiences which are used to understand people's thoughts, emotions, attitudes, behavior, and interpersonal connections (Tawfik et al., 2022).

Participants and Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to select the research participants. As reiterated by Campbell et al., (2020) purposive sampling is the process of better matching the sample to the goals and objectives of the research, strengthening the thoroughness of the research and accuracy of the data and findings. The study was participated by eight (8) Master Teachers in one of the secondary schools in Quezon Province in the Philippines. Master Teachers are considered highly proficient teachers who have a role in leading and managing instructional competence and providing professional development programs and activities in the schools.

Table 1 *Profile data of the participants in the study*

Codes of Participants	Gender	Teaching Positions	Years in Teaching
P1	M	Master Teacher II	14
P2	M	Master Teacher II	16
P3	F	Master Teacher I	14
P4	F	Master Teacher I	16
P5	F	Master Teacher I	18
P6	F	Master Teacher I	19
P7	F	Master Teacher I	20
P8	F	Master Teacher I	15

Data Gathering and Analysis

In order to gather data for the study, open-ended interviews and focus group discussions (FDG) were used. It allows the researcher to comprehend the participants' actual experiences in great detail. In order to have an accurate result on the findings, the study used an interview guide that was validated by the experts. The Department Heads of the school validated the guide questions to determine the study's intended goals. Data from the focus group discussion was transcribed using codes and themes. Following an analysis of the responses, a thorough transcription process was used to gain a thorough picture of the participants' perceptions of how the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) has affected their professional development. As Noble and Heale (2019) emphasized that triangulation is a method for strengthening the reliability and validity of research findings. Data triangulation was also used in the study to make each response of the participants more credible and to have an equal grasp understanding in all aspects.

Ethical Consideration

The researcher takes ethical considerations in conducting the study. All responses and information provided by the participants are kept as anonymous and remain private and there is no conflict of interest involved in the study. These researchers make sure that every part of the study goes through the validation and guidance of the experts. After the gathering of responses and findings was interpreted, participants will be informed of the results of the findings.

Results and discussion

Teachers participate in each session to discuss and exchange best practices in the teaching process because this was done in a school setting. Nevertheless, it also seeks to understand the challenges that teacher faces in SLAC. The following was explored using the data gathered in order to have a thorough understanding of the participant's experiences in the impact of the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) on their professional development. As instructional leaders and teachers, improving the delivery of instruction must have the grit in improving oneself capabilities in delivering quality service in education. Based on the participant's responses, the following have been recorded and transcribed:

Table 2 *Impact of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC)*

Superordinate Themes	Responses
Cost-efficient learning	P1: SLAC is a way to help reduce the cost of attending the seminar because there are highly proficient teachers in the organization who are able to teach or share learnings with us.
	P2: The School Learning Action Cell is a discussion group that covers issues and insights from different webinars and workshops that support our future directives for the teaching process. Since it is conducted at the school with lecturers who are skilled and knowledgeable in the subject matter during SLAC sessions, there are no fees associated with it.
	P4: Having a School Learning Action Cell is a means to avoid interrupting our learning in seminars, training, or workshops. During the SLAC session, our ability to teach and adapt to the new setup is boosted because there shouldn't be any disruption during class hours in giving instructions that are only given inside our school; no fees or other payments are made.
	P8: Attending School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) is economical and hassle-free because there is this type of activity/program in the school that aims to continue learning trends and new ways in delivering instructions.
Teaching effectiveness	P3: SLAC is a learning session when we have colleagues in the group or in the rest of the school who are competent and willing to discuss the topic. The sharing of best practices or current trends in the teaching and learning process is a fundamental component of professional growth and development. This is another approach to better ourselves since when one continues to get better at something, one become better at teaching students.
	P5: One of the positive impacts of SLAC is the acquisition of new skills, and practices and the addressing issues in each classroom setup within your department. This is an effective way to make the teaching and learning process smoother and more efficient because the world we live in is a lifelong journey that requires continuous improvement.
	P6: One of the things I liked about the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) is that it is done monthly, so learning is continuous and the initiative to learn is not lost because it is for the students.

> P7: The School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) is a platform that precisely tackles the varied needs of the students as well as concerns that need to be filled or resolved, such as interventions and improvement programs. We learn more about trends and how teaching practices might be effective through sharing, partnerships, and connections, which is one of the positive effects of SLAC.

Cost-efficient learning

Teachers require adequate technical assistance as well as continual professional development (Chin et al., 2022). To help teachers improve their teaching approaches and create efficient lesson plans, the Department of Education (DepEd) offers many options for professional development programs (Pobre, 2022). School Learning Action Cell is essential in overcoming the difficulties of instruction delivery in the modern environment, as stated by Department of Education Republic of the Philippines (2016). The teaching and learning process can be developed and managed in this way. The most significant impact of the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) has been a cost-effective method of improving the teaching-learning process (Correos & Paler, 2020). Professional development is an important aspect in improving teachers' competences and capabilities in delivering quality services in education. If education is evolving, then so too I in teachers' way of teaching.

SLAC sessions assist positively to teacher overall well-being in their profession. They claimed to have reduced their tasks and encouraged workplace interaction (Bajar et al., 2021). As reiterated by P1, "…SLAC is a way to help reduce the cost of attending the seminar, because there are highly proficient teachers in the organization who can teach or share learnings with us". Furthermore, P5 stated that, "Attending School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) is economical and hassle-free because there is this type of activity/program in the school that aims to continue learning trends and new ways in delivering instructions".

Thus, Albano (2019) stated that a school-based continuing professional development strategy which is known as School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) aims to assist Filipino students to acquire literacy, numeracy, and lifelong learning attitudes through teachers' professional growth and development.

As Lucero (2018) reiterates that a learning action cell emphasizes pedagogical approaches. SLAC is a platform that brings more knowledge and enhances the strengths and expands the competencies of each teacher and expands their horizons to learn in the new trend of education. Even if teachers are not attending international or national seminars or workshops, their learning is continuing as a result of the school-based program for increasing their personal and professional development. Added by P2:

> The School Learning Action Cell is a discussion group that covers issues and insights from different webinars and workshops that support our future directives for the teaching process. Since it is conducted at the school with lecturers who are skilled and knowledgeable in the subject matter during SLAC sessions, there are no fees associated with it.

Through the implementation of the School Learning Action Cell, more emphasis is given to teaching processes within their context. Contextualizing is a way to better address the gaps they experience in the real-life delivery of instructions. Gradually, the students are regaining opportunity to traditional education (Culajara, 2022b). Likewise, as P4 stated that,

…having a School Learning Action Cell is a means to avoid interrupting our learning in seminars, training, or workshops. During the SLAC session, our ability to teach and adapt to the new setup is boosted because there should not be any disruption during class hours. in giving instructions that are only given inside our school; no fees or other payments are made.

The School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) is a platform that makes them satisfied by allowing them to continue learning without losing new knowledge or being out of track in adapting to the new trend in delivering instructions. As Correos and Paler (2020) asserts that School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) primary effect has been continuous professional development is an effective means to enhance the teaching-learning process. Progress is experienced by teachers, ongoing education is crucial, and must adjust to the changes in the educational environment. Enhancing the delivery of education and being more efficient are some of the goals in pursuing digital, mathematical, and literacy skills appropriate for the 21st century. Teachers must therefore be empowered to take the lead and accept change. Teachers must be capable and persistent in order to advance, broaden, and maintain upcoming stage in the educational process.

Teaching effectiveness

The School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) is a way of sharing ideas and learnings to further develop our abilities, thus establishing shared educational objectives as part of creating collaboration is a learning culture. Teachers must have the initiative to improve themselves (De Vera et al., 2021) implementing School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) is a way to help teachers in improving their instructional incompetence. As stated in the study of Gumban and Pelones (2021) teachers perform better at work when they engage in SLAC activities. Participating in learning is a way to develop additional knowledge and skills in delivering instruction. As P3 stated that:

…in SLAC is a learning session when we have colleagues in the group or in rest of the school who are competent and willing to discuss the topic. The sharing of best practices or current trends in the teaching and learning process is a fundamental component of professional growth and development. This is another approach to better ourselves since when one continues to get better at something, they become better at teaching students.

It is very evident that professional development addresses teachers' instructional competence. As to the study of Adlit et al., (2023) School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) capacitates the teacher's competence to advance the programs and services in education. Improving yourself is also improving instructional competence. By being dedicated, committed, and passionate in igniting the fire of learning and teaching, effectiveness will be reached and success will be successfully achieved for each student. Added to this P6, "….one of the things I liked about the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) is that it is done monthly, so learning is continuous and the initiative to learn is not lost because it is for the students".

This was strengthened by Jackaria and Caballes (2022) teachers participated many Teachers Professional Development because of their desire to become better teachers and useful in their delivery of instructions. Thus, Castillo (2019) continual professional development is necessary for teachers to provide the most efficient service possible. Along with the changes in the educational landscape, increasing participation in learning is another opportunity for teachers to make the most of their opportunities for professional development and develop personally. This is strengthened by the study of Aquino and

Chavez (2022) teachers have a crucial role in providing high-quality education and strongly influenced instruction to the students.

This demonstrates the need to prioritize and emphasize teachers' ongoing professional development in addition to the quality of educational services. Professional development initiatives should be prioritized and continually improve to raise the level of instructional competence (Lucero, 2018). Similarly, as reiterated by Borg (2018), being a competent teacher requires professional development. As to the response of P7,

> …the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) is a platform that precisely tackles the varied needs of the students as well as concerns that need to be filled or resolved, such as interventions and improvement programs. We learn more about trends and how teaching practices might be effective through sharing, partnerships, and connections, which is one of the positive effects of SLAC.

Moreover, Cabral and Millando (2019) School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) were used as a continuous professional development strategy in schools to enhance instruction. As our heart is focused on developing the ability of students, we also need initiatives to strengthen and expand our ability to teach.

School Learning Action Cell is a way in gaining new skills and manage tactics to address 21st-century learning and teaching skills (de Rosas et al., 2019). Furthermore, as stated by P5,

> …one of the positive impacts of SLAC is the acquisition of new skills, practices and addressing issues in each classroom setup within your department. This is an effective way to make the teaching and learning process smoother and more efficient because the world we live in is a lifelong journey that requires continuous improvement.

As considered a noble profession of all, being a teacher is a lifelong journey that requires a broad mind and an open heart to learn and adjust to every challenge of the educational landscape. This is also a promise to the profession that we are leading toward the students' success. Effectiveness varies between the pedagogies employed to assist performance (Postholm, 2012). Thus, having the grit to learn and willingness to improve our instructional competence is also our personal and professional development.

Through assessing and evaluating the weaknesses and strengths in instruction delivery, teachers can better see the area in what area need to evolve and enrich it more to have a concrete plan for ourselves to engage ourselves to have constant learning. School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) has a tremendous effect on curriculum execution and teaching effectiveness toward students' academic success (Culajara, 2022). Hence, teachers need to teach and give learnings to our students, and it is necessary that we can manage our delivery of instructions and we are ready to give knowledge and acquire skills in the diverse world of individuals. Professional development should work hand-in-hand to attain the goals of the curriculum and must fulfill the learning and teaching process and addressing the pillars in education which is access, equality and good governance.

Table 3 *Challenges experienced by the teachers in School Learning Action Cell (SLAC)*

Superordinate Themes	Responses
Lack of Needs Assessment	P1: The topics discussed in the session are repeated and sometimes there is not enough time to internalize the learnings. P2: The topics do not answer every challenges in teaching and learning that is experienced in an event in the teaching process, so sometimes it is just extra knowledge, but it is not enough to expand the new trend or knowledge in learning. P3: The topics are repeated. P4: The topics discussed in SLAC do not refer to our needs in learning and adapting to the new trends. Sometimes the topic is focused on teaching or pedagogical strategies and our needs are not incorporated into following the Philippine Professional Standards in Teachers (Highly Proficient). P5: Lacks a needs assessment or asking for the possible lessons/topics that I hope can be taught. P6: No needs analysis and assessment. There is no shared responsibility or involvement in planning. P7: Coaching and mentoring are not given focus P8: Lessons/topics that need to be discussed are not filtered, so lessons/topics are sometimes repeated in each session.

Lack of Needs Assessment

An organization is a shared responsibility where everyone should be involved in every decision-making program and activity. Based on the result, one of challenges experienced by the participants were lack of needs assessment. As shared by P8, "... Lessons/topics that need to be discussed are not filtered, so lessons/topics are sometimes repeated in each session".

One of the school programs that are allocated is the implementation of the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC), which is a platform that aims to have professional development for all members of the organization. To improve teaching practices and performances, teachers' professional development should be theory-based and supported by research (Ancho and Arrieta, 2021). It is important to keep learning and developing professionally in the field of teaching (Bates and Morgan, 2018). The School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) program is utilized to address teachers' instructional competence and equipped with knowledge of the teaching and learning process for continuous professional development strategy for improving teaching and learning (Pascua, 2019) stated by P1 and P3, "…the topics discussed in the session are repeated and sometimes there is not enough time to internalize the learnings".

As reiterated by De Vera et al. (2020) sessions in the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) should be adapted to the field of teaching load or specialization to address the challenges that teachers face as a group. It was strengthened to the study that is important and relevant to the teacher's life. If education is changing, so is our way of teaching. In these standards, each teacher can see and assess their ability as a teacher whose heart and task

should provide knowledge to each student and develop their skills and behavior. As shared by P5 and P6, "…Lacks of needs assessment or asking for the possible lessons/topics that I hope can be taught and no needs analysis and assessment. There is no shared responsibility or involvement in planning".

This reiterates that prioritization of conducting school learning action cell should be met by the organizational goals. This also becomes a guide for every teacher on what they should do, improve, upskill and prepare for the challenge of the modern world of the profession regarding teaching. These standards provide a clear set of expectations from us as teachers that are key to the success and excellence of an individual. Thus, P4 emphasizes that:

> …the topics discussed in SLAC do not refer to our needs in learning and adapting to the new trends. Sometimes the topic is focused on teaching or pedagogical strategies and the needs are not incorporated into following the Philippine Professional Standards in Teachers (Highly Proficient).

Moreover, Avidov-Ungar (2016) stated that designing professional development programs and incentives that would meet the specific needs of teachers could make use of professional goals. Added by P7, "…Coaching and mentoring are not given focus".

Mentoring and coaching should take precedence in School Learning Action Cell sessions as professional development that attempts to improve teachers' competence, particularly in the instructional competence. As a result, it became easier to share the best practices in the teaching and learning process and collaborate to meet organizational objectives for delivering high-quality educational services. With these, one of their challenges in implementing the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) is the lack of needs assessments that address every issue, challenge, and need of every teacher in the contemporary learning environment. As a result, the planning of the lessons and topics in the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) must be accompanied by the voices of every member of the organization.

Enhancement Program in the implementation of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC)

Every student's education depends on teachers and teachers should actively participate in accomplishing the goals of the curriculum. Consequently, teachers must make sure that students develop significant competencies as well as meaningful educational experiences. Furthermore, the duration of a teacher's position in the classroom cannot be used to gauge their commitment. Instead, it must be determined by the amount of time and effort they are prepared to dedicate to improving and deepening the field of their profession or the impact on the lives of the students. Furthermore, teachers' involvement in continual professional development is essential. Coaching and mentoring should be given focus in the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) because this is where viewpoints, and shared practices that can be adapted from others to be done in their learning area can be discussed. Thus, School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) should be implemented continuously in addressing the gaps in the teaching and learning process. As we made progress, it was crucial to have the ability and commitment to research, understand, and adjust to the dynamic environment in continuous professional development for teaching effectiveness. As we enhance the way we deliver instruction, we must first strengthen ourselves to accomplish our objectives.

Conclusions and recommendations

As revealed in the study, the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) is cost-effective learning, promoting teaching effectiveness that calls for the needs of assessment in order to better address the instructional gaps and increase teachers' dedication and commitment to enhancing and promoting their personal growth and professional development. Participating in such ongoing development helps people enhance their innate abilities and makes them more effective in influencing future generations around the world. Teachers play a crucial part in the delivery of instructional programs, and they must be knowledgeable about the curriculum in order to create and implement strategies that will support providing high-quality instruction to their students. To keep up with the progressive world of change, teachers must have the determination to learn and adapt to the new changes happening in the delivery of instruction, and at the same time, it is also necessary to pay more attention to being committed to evolving ourselves in enhancing the teaching and learning. Thus, participating in teachers' professional development such as seminars, workshops, and training needs to be given emphasis and attention for the future of education. Promoting and implementing School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) that is theory-based and supported by research is the key to better addressing the contextualized method of delivery of instructions. This finding suggests its usefulness in providing in-depth knowledge for implementing School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) in the school for future directives.

Acknowledgement

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