



Implementation of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) and its Monitoring & Evaluation Strategies Employed by Teachers and School Heads in the Division of Occidental Mindoro, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

The School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) approach is a school-based method for enhancing teaching and learning via continual professional development. These collaborative learning sessions are also designed to address challenges in school. For this study, 342 teachers and 157 school heads in the Division of Occidental Mindoro were handed survey questionnaires. This study used a descriptive comparative and correlational research design to compare the assessments of teachers and school heads on the extent of effectiveness of the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) implementation process and the influence of the extent of effectiveness of SLAC implementation on the monitoring and evaluation strategies used by teachers and school heads. Significant differences were discovered in the study to illustrate the effect of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) efficacy with the identified intervening factors such as workloads, school head support, and motivation. The incorporation of themes using SLAC was proven to be a strong predictor of the monitoring and evaluation strategies adopted. This study recommended enhancing the program implementation review to improve the SLAC in school management.

Keywords: *Continuing Professional Development, Professional Learning Communities, School Learning Action Cell, Monitoring and Evaluation*

Introduction

The teacher's crucial role in delivering high-quality teaching and achievement of targeted learning outcomes is critical (UNICEF Philippines SEA-PLM, 2019). The Philippines Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) has explained the importance of developing well-equipped teachers to subject-matter content and pedagogy to acquire sufficient knowledge and skills to deliver quality education, which is critical in promoting student achievement, because teachers are the key players in improving learning performance.

In the Philippines, the teacher's quest for continuing professional development in Learning Action Cell (LAC) helps to develop human potential to achieve quality teaching and learning. It provides wider opportunity to level-up and guide teachers in promoting their knowledge, attitude and competencies for the effective and efficient implementation and delivery of curriculum, instruction and assessment in all schools. It is also inclusive in this policy, the aim of LAC as institutionalized by Department of Education (DepEd) in developing and supporting "*successful teachers by fostering their knowledge, attitudes, and competencies*", as they perform and execute quality delivery of curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the classroom setting.

The DepEd comprehensively advocates that LAC is a collaborative learning session of a group of teachers who tend to showcase shared accountability and responsibility to address and solve the challenges experienced in the school for the realization of high-performing teachers and learners.

The school head or a designated LAC Leader aims to promote a positive, caring, and safe space in the school-based communities of practice or through the organized Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to guide and help teachers align with the present needs of learners. Relatively, this school-based LAC will provide financial benefits since it is the "most cost-efficient CPD process wherein expenses and other resources may be allocated from the "School's Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE)" or may be generated by the school or SDO and other stakeholders subject to its utilization guidelines.

Monitoring the progress on the implementation of LAC will lead to attaining its objectives and provide feedback mechanisms to decide and make adjustments necessary for its effective implementation. It is apprehended that monitoring and evaluation should focus on what is stipulated in the LAC policy, such as: "content knowledge; skill in instructional strategies; skill in assessment; knowledge of learners and how they learn; and LAC protocols". Likewise, it is inclusive in the policy the discussion about the monitoring procedures and tools for LAC implementation progress, such as: "individual member's monitoring or assessment of their activities; peer observation or assessment; observation or assessment by supervisor or mentor or coach; and monitoring or assessment of the LAC team." The policy suggests that appropriate monitoring tools should be developed which can be similar or in

addition to the protocols, including templates and forms for easier monitoring and record-keeping. It maybe “templates for team meeting minutes, form for individual member’s notes and plans, observation, *checklist, journals or logs of classroom application of focus strategies and others*”. However, for the different elements like stages of development, growth and sustainable effective implementation of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC), it is suggested to continue the progress monitoring, collection of data and assessment from the start of its implementation process.

No studies on evaluating its impact in the long years of endeavor and no school-based M & E on SLAC to be addressed for the effective implementation of SLAC, the researcher, who is at present a Public Schools District Supervisor, decided to conduct a study assessing the implementation of SLAC in terms of the suggested topics correlating to its extent of monitoring and evaluation of SLAC in the SDO of Occidental Mindoro and be able to come up with a proposed School-based Monitoring and Evaluation tool. It is affirmable that this study supports the inclusion of LAC policy in DepEd Order 35 (2016) that SLAC must be an ongoing collaborative effort from the planning to implementation phases. Thus, the M & E tools must include a variety of forms as well as quantitative and qualitative approaches to achieve the effective implementation process of SLAC. It is equally important, too, that monitoring methods and tools should be collaboratively developed by LAC members for the monitoring of its progress which “can include, among others, a) individual members’ monitoring or assessment of their activities; b) peer observation or assessment; c) observation or assessment by supervisor or mentor or coach; and d) monitoring or assessment of the LAC team.”

This study’s quantitative and qualitative objectives sought to assess the extent of the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) implementation process, its relationship to the extent of monitoring and evaluation, and determining the strengths, weaknesses, and benefits experienced to their knowledge, attitude, and competencies, which were evaluated by two groups of participants: the LAC leader and members, who are the school heads and teachers. A cause of concern, a situation that must be handled, an issue that must be solved, or a troubling question that exists in educational literature, diverse concepts, or practices will clearly indicate to the need for meaningful knowledge and cautious inquiry.

The present study is very timely and significant to the identified key persons who are directly involved in the M & E of the practical implementation process of SLAC, such as teachers, school heads, the Public Schools District Supervisor, or focal persons from Curriculum Implementation Division (CID) and Schools Governance Operations Division (SGOD) to represent the Schools Division Office (SDO) of Occidental Mindoro, Philippines because they are the key persons responsible for the M & E of the practical implementation process of SLAC. As a result, it is necessary and pertinent that the amount of implementation of the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) be reviewed by both the school heads, who serve as LAC Leaders, and the teachers, who are the end users of this program and to find out if it has significant effect to the extent of monitoring and evaluation. In addition, the teachers’ and school heads’ perceived strengths and weaknesses, including their knowledge, attitude, and competencies, would be beneficial to develop a proposed school-based monitoring and evaluation tool on School Learning Action Cell (SLAC). Preferably, this served as backup data to the local research related to this study and, most importantly, to get realistic findings to be shared for reflection and modification of the program by the SLAC advocates/implementers/end-users as well as the bottom-up curriculum planners for the enhancement of the program.

Methods

The study employed descriptive comparative and correlational research design for the comparison on the assessments of teachers and school heads on the extent of effectiveness of the implementation process of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) and the influence of the extent of effectiveness of the implementation of SLAC influence its extent of monitoring and evaluation strategies employed by teachers and school heads. Since the study was a division-wide in scope of Occidental Mindoro, Philippines and to give accurate sample size from a huge population, the study used Cochran’s formula followed by employing stratified random sampling to get the final school head of 157 out 262 school head-populace and teacher- participants of 342 out of 3,089 teacher-populace. It is another way of helping the researcher to save resources, time and efforts in the administration of researcher-made questionnaire. The inferential statistical tools used in the study were t-test and multiple linear regression analysis.

Before primary data was formally acquired, a brief examination of the study’s objectives was undertaken as part of the academic requirements. The researcher obtained consent from the subjects of the study and inquired about their availability. There was no dishonesty or exaggeration about the goals and objectives. The researcher ensured the participants were informed about the study’s purpose and agreed to participate voluntarily. The researcher also stated that their honesty and integrity would be critical to the success of this endeavor and that they had the right to withdraw any data they provided if they were under duress or fear retaliation, particularly if their own interests would be jeopardized. The data collection method began as soon as the participants’ full agreement was accepted. Participants were promised adequate confidentiality and privacy protection, as well as the promise that only relevant components would be evaluated.

Results and Discussion

The study determined both the teacher and school heads assessments on the effectiveness of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) on the implementation of the different mandated topics as part of its process. Table 1 showcases the comparison of the means between the two respondents using the T-test of independent samples. It was evident that among the 7 variables, the Curriculum Contextualization, Indigenization and Localization and DepEd Policy and Thrusts resulted to the computed t-value of 1.6408 and 1.8488 respectively interpreted as without significant difference or not significant. This implies that although both the teachers and school heads are different in nature, they have the same standpoint that the two variables have implication on the implementation of SLAC. The other variables as shown on the table, revealed that their responses had significant difference because those variables are mostly the major tasks of the teachers and they are more inclined to perform in the actual teaching-learning process.

Table 1 clearly explains majority of the indicators or 5 out of 7 variables reflected significant difference, therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 1. Difference Between the Assessments Made by the Teachers and School Heads on the Implementation of SLAC

Variables	Computed	Critical	Description	Interpretation
	t- value	t- value		
Inclusion of Variety of Learners	8.0944	1.9647	With Difference	Significant
Pedagogy and Content	3.9601	1.9647	With Difference	Significant
Evaluation and Reporting	4.8310	1.9647	With Difference	Significant
ICT Integration	5.1393	1.9647	With Difference	Significant
Curriculum Contextualization, Indigenization and Localization	1.6408	1.9647	Without Difference	Not Significant
Professional Advancement	3.1928	1.9647	With Difference	Significant
DepEd Policy and Thrusts	1.8488	1.9647	Without Difference	Not Significant

Significantly, in this study, it was found out that the result gave realistic scenario that the mandated topics discussed in the SLAC sessions must be performed by the teachers to improved professional practices, teaching skills, attitude, and competencies. Similarly, school heads must put emphasis on the rigid monitoring, evaluation and provision of technical assistance to be able to have effective application of the learning during SLAC. The exploratory study of Abakah, Widin and Ameyaw (2022) about the current continuing professional development situation of the teachers in Ghana expressed the importance of the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) needs among teachers. Their investigation revealed that teachers' skills in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for teaching, in writing research and students with special needs are their required identified needs. However, the teachers in Ghana were found to have minimal participation in these activities due to non-available of CPD and lack of CPD policy framework. It can be gleaned, that the perceptions of the teachers and school heads in this study contradict with the study in Ghana because the SLAC as a school-based continuing professional development were assessed as high and highly effective by the two groups of respondents. It was found out that there might be some factors affecting the differences of the perception of teachers from that of school head. For the indicators that are mostly executed by the teachers, they claimed that the topics are highly effective and relevant that brought by SLAC in the actual classroom setting. According to Akomolafe and Adesusa (2015) the effectiveness of teaching-learning progression maybe affected by the classroom environment. Those topics learned from SLAC could be translated in the execution of instruction if the classroom is spacious and conducive to achieve high academic performance of students and teacher's effectiveness. Since the curriculum is being implemented in the classroom, both the teachers, being the curriculum implementers, and school heads, being the instructional leader, have specific roles and functions. It is prevalent that the school heads can influence the quality of teaching and learning that will lead to academic excellence through the inclusion of the school environment principles. The procurement required developmentally learning and teaching resources, conducive school physical environment, well-ventilated classroom, adequate chairs, and child friendly classroom must be accounted for.

With the above findings, the researcher was able to internalize the data from the two groups of participants and gave her assumption that there might be some factors that may contribute to the success indicators. The two participants of this study had different perspective in the way they evaluate the effectiveness of the topics implemented in SLAC. Some factors might be related to the intensive needs assessment and implementation. It could be reflected with the exploratory study about the status of continuing professional development of the basic school teachers of Ghana that was discussed by Abakah, Widin and Ameyaw (2022), showing relevance to this study. As they investigated the CPD needs, frequency and nature of CPD provisions and hindering factors to participate in CPD by teachers, it was discovered that teachers are required to enhance in "ICT skills for teaching, research and dissemination and teaching students with special needs". It was also noted that the teachers are seldom exposed to predominant CPD practices like "workshops, in-service training and continuing education", thus it was implied that that the CPD situation has insufficient CPD policy framework that they need to guide the teachers in the provision and practices of CPD.

Another connected insightful findings of UNICEF Philippines (2019) confirmed the importance of working collaboratively. In effective implementation of SLAC, as school-based continuous professional development strategy for teachers, it was evident that school principals in high-performing schools have high extent of teachers' engagement in order to strengthen teaching competencies. Therefore, schools must invest in SLAC to sustain collaborative sharing of solutions to problems, benchmarking of best practices and sustainable peer-to-peer learning on the knowledge and critically review and reflect the curriculum and classroom practices. The role of the school heads and supervisors must be transformed, strengthened and extended to the school principals in their instructional leadership and at the same time to guide and mentor teachers through mentoring, coaching, while fostering a community learning environment within the school with, trust, respect and compassion.

Table 2 depicts a positive correlation between the level of effectiveness of SLAC and the extent of monitoring and evaluation. This also implied that the null hypothesis is rejected having a computed F-value of 87.0443, 46.6205 and 32.4173 before, during, and after the sessions it presents a very high correlation over the critical F-value.

Table 2. Influence of the Implementation of SLAC on the Extent of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Strategies Employed by the Teachers

Implementation of SLAC as it Influence to the Extent of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Strategies Employed by the Teachers	R	R ²	Computed F-Value	Interpretation		
				Direction	Degree	Significance
Before the Session	0.8037	0.6459	87.0443	Positive	Very High Correlation	Significant
During the Session	0.7030	0.4942	46.6205	Positive	High Correlation	Significant
After the Session	0.6360	0.4046	32.4173	Positive	High Correlation	Significant
Critical F-Value: 2.03702946			Degrees of Freedom: 7, 334			

The major function of the school head in the monitoring and evaluation of SLAC is very significant. Being a Learning Action Cell (LAC) leader, his role will affect the effectiveness of its implementation. It is comprehensively presented in Table 3 the positive and high correlation of the implementation of SLAC through the different topics to the extent of monitoring and evaluation performed by the school heads. The computed F-value of 20.2768 before, during and after the sessions resulted a significant impact since it is higher than the critical F-value of 2.07154944. This finding would give motivating elements to school heads in performing their role in the monitoring and evaluation of SLAC.

The positive degree and very high correlation of the implementation of SLAC emphasizes the critical role of monitoring and evaluating the program implementation. Their ideas supported the assessment of the implementation of SLAC in this division. Exerting effort in the M & E of the school-based initiated practices done will help the school heads, as implementers, to apply in actual practice the continuous improvement to ongoing modifications and adaptations. Therefore, monitoring and evaluating the school-based adaptation activities and embracing adjustments based on how successful they have proven to be in attaining the desired adaptation objectives would provide basic tools for enhancing a program implementation like SLAC. Definitely, the positive and very high correlation of the implementation of SLAC justified to support the study of Gumban and Pelones (2021) in their study which aimed to find out how the activities of School Based Learning Action Cell (SLAC) as a lesson study program in the Philippines relates to Teacher's Work Performance. Like the findings of this study, the work performance of teachers had found to be very satisfactory in various topics such as: content knowledge and pedagogy, learning environment and learner diversity, curriculum and planning, and assessment and reporting. Based on simple linear regression, the data showed that when teachers participate in SLAC activities, their work performance increases.

Meaningfully exposed by Turner (2015) that "Monitoring and evaluation of projects, policies and programs form an important part of the adaptation process. Ultimately, successful adaptation will be measured by how well different measures contribute to effectively reducing vulnerability and building resilience". They reasoned that the lessons learned, good practices, gaps and needs identified during the monitoring and evaluation of ongoing and completed programs or projects will inform future measures.

Table3. Influence of the Extent of Implementation of SLAC on the Extent of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Strategies Employed by the School Heads

Level of Implementation of SLAC as it Influence to the Extent of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Strategies Employed by the School Heads	R	R ²	Computed F-Value	Interpretation		
				Direction	Degree	Significance
Before the Session	0.6983	0.4876	20.2586	Positive	High Correlation	Significant
During the Session	0.6297	0.3966	13.9897	Positive	High Correlation	Significant
After the Session	0.5509	0.3035	9.2768	Positive	High Correlation	Significant
Critical F-Value: 2.07154944			Degrees of Freedom: 7, 149			

The inclusion of topics and other inclusions in Department of Education (DepEd) Order 35 (2016) has been a challenging and risky process on the part of the teachers and school heads. However, the core of community-based learning with strong collaboration resulted to the fact that the phases of SLAC

impacted positive and high correlation. This picture of the implementation of SLAC signifies for the sustainable design to be implemented but to be noted to give greater emphasis now on monitoring and evaluation and how the teachers translate their learning and advancement in a responsive classroom environment and how the school heads expand to a social and natural school learning atmosphere. Desta, Chalchisa and Lemma (2014) posted the results of the evaluated opportunities and challenges in practicing CPD. Thus, the most prevailing factors for the teacher's professional development are mentoring, action research and school in-house workshops, though, teacher's self-reflection, peer discussion, self-assessment and used of portfolios were the options adapted by themselves. Despite the problems observed, like lack of knowledge and experience, lack of foundation information on theoretical alignment, inconsistencies of implementation, insufficient budget for the conduct of the programs, projects and activities (PPAs), no funds for the incentives to recognize performing and outstanding teachers, the presence of CPD offered lots of opportunities and reflective learnings to empower teachers and enriching school-based or classroom-based difficulties in relation to teaching learning process.

Substantially, interlink positive correlation between the implementation of SLAC to its monitoring and evaluation is a continuous strategic endeavor to truly address the actual situation in the classroom, school and community, awareness and positive feedback strategies on what work well or what went wrong or what lessons learned and take away on how they transform their learnings in SLAC to the delivery of curriculum, instruction and assessment.

Conclusions

Significant variations were found to demonstrate the influence of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) efficacy with the identified intervening factors such as workloads, school head support, and motivation. The use of SLAC in the inclusion of themes was shown to be a strong predictor of the monitoring and evaluation methodologies used.

Recommendations

Teachers and school leaders should identify strategies to sustain and improve the implementation of the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) while taking into account workloads, support services, and promoting innovation and motivation among teachers to improve student results. The use of SLAC in subject inclusion and monitoring and evaluation techniques, as well as school-based initiatives of regular SLAC, should be enhanced to improve teaching and learning results. Future research on elementary and secondary School Learning Action Cells (SLAC) and other intervening variables may be conducted on an on-going basis.

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