Learning Action Cell Implementation in the Philippine Public Schools: A Descriptive Phenomenological Study

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Abstract
Philippine DepEd Order (DO) #35, s. 2016, institutionalized the Learning Action Cell (LAC) in public schools. The policy's key objective is to improve teachers' teaching competence. Conversely, there needs to be more literature, specifically in the Davao City public schools, to account for its implementation since its inception. Thus, this study. The study aimed to propose a LAC implementation model for the Davao City public school's division. It made use of qualitative, descriptive phenomenological research design. Ten (10) participants were involved, and they participated in the focus group discussion and key informant interviews. The proposed LAC implementation model focused on the students' learning as its definitive goal. It can be realized if the teachers' teaching skills are enhanced, and the LAC implementation is well implemented. Correspondingly, the proposed model emphasizes supportive leadership, teachers' positive attitudes, well-defined roles and responsibilities, sufficient resources, systematic procedures, and well-disseminated policy. One of the study's recommendations is for future researchers to study the impact of the continuous improvement model adopted in the implementation of LAC in the DepEd schools on the learning quality of the students and the school improvement.
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1. Introduction

Quality education can be achieved when teachers continue strengthening their practice throughout their careers. Professional development (PD) offers continuing opportunities for teachers to advance their knowledge and skills (Mizell, 2010). Indeed, researchers have emphasized teacher professional development (TPD) as a key to student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Desimone, 2009; Harris & Sass, 2011; Mourshed *et al.*, 2011; Rockof, 2004; Wei *et al.*, 2009). The teachers are the most potent determinants of student achievements (Day, 2017; Madalińska-Michalak, 2019); *"the quality of an educational system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers"* (Barber & Mourshed, 2007, p. 43). This particular phenomenon is the focus of this investigation; it deals with how the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd) promotes professional development among its teaching force.

Lewis and Tsuchida (1998) identify four significant conditions that support the professional learning community, Japanese Lesson Study: a shared prudent curriculum; collaboration among teachers; critical self-reflection, *hansei*, highly valued in the broader Japanese ethos; and constancy in an academic program. Perry and Lewis's (2009) study conducted in a U.S. school district also found that teachers have increased their use of reflection, which enabled them to *"capture their learning"* (p. 374). Moreover, in Mainland China, using Teaching Research Groups identical to the Japanese Lesson Study saw one lesson dramatically changed after the post-lesson discussion and re-taught within a couple of hours (Yang, 2009).

In the Philippine setting, DO #35, s. 2016, institutionalized the Learning Action Cell (LAC) to improve teachers' competence. LAC shares the characteristics with the Japanese Lesson Study Teaching Research Groups. It is a school-based community of practice that aims to support teachers' continuing professional development. It is an avenue of collaboration and sharing of best practices among teachers towards improving students' learning.

Accordingly, the Davao Region directed all school division offices and schools to institutionalize the LAC sessions to support the ongoing professional growth of its teaching personnel (Regional Memo #094 s. 2017). Subsequently, Davao City enjoined all the school heads to take the lead in organizing the LAC and to ensure that the holding of regular LAC sessions is established, maintained, and sustained. It also directed school heads to monitor LAC activities and evaluate their impact on the school improvement (Division Office Memo #993 s. 2018).

However, more studies need to be conducted since its inception to determine whether the policy meets its intended objective, thus this study. It proposed to develop a LAC implementation framework. Specifically, the study answered the following questions:
1) What are the views of the teachers and school heads about LAC as implemented in their schools?
2) How was LAC implemented in public schools?

3) What mechanisms support effective and efficient LAC implementation in schools?
4) What implementation framework could be proposed to effectively and efficiently implement LAC in public schools?

1.1. Theoretical Underpinnings

This study viewed the following theories and models: Teacher Change Model (Evans, 2011), Theoretical Foundation of Adult Learning (Knowles, 1975), Path-Goal Theory of Leadership (House, 1971), Collaborative Learning Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), and PDCA Cycle (Deming, 1950).

The Teacher Change Model (Evans, 2011) supports the purpose of TPD programs to change teachers' professional thinking, knowing, feeling, and doing. It is an avenue to cause teachers' pedagogical change and positive professional growth and support their personal and socio-emotional development (Guskey, 2002; Borg, 2018; Rodriguez *et al.,* 2020). Most researchers (Birman *et al.,* 2000; Desimone, 2009; Garet *et al.,* 2001; Luft & Hewson, 2014) concur that professional development must incorporate active learning, have a strong content focus, be coherent and a significant amount of time, and involve group participation. Coherence refers to how professional development can be included within a program for training teachers (Birman *et al.,* 2000). These general qualities are some of the design components and conditions of professional development that are most effective in encouraging teacher change and impacting student achievement across subject areas (Borko, 2004; Garet *et al.,* 2001; Knapp, 2003). This study aimed to determine whether these TPD general qualities are present in the LAC implementation of public schools. It is incorporated into the design and development of the LAC implementation framework.

Conversely, Knowles' (1975) Theoretical Foundation of Adult Learning suggests that adults learn based on their needs and personal goals. The process begins with the determination of what they need to learn, *the creation* of strategies and resources to achieve the learning goals, *the implementation* of the learning strategy and utilization of the learning resources, and finally, an assessment of the attainment of the learning goals and process of reaching it, *evaluate*. Once the last phase is done, the process continues based on new felt *need*s and new personal *goals* to achieve. The present investigation equally considered the need to create, implement, and evaluate procedures in the LAC implementation.

The Collaborative Learning Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) asserts that learning is a social process. It articulated a socio-cultural perspective on cognitive development incorporating individual learning and a social context for learning. This theory suggests that teachers as learners continuously develop their professional skills and knowledge through active participation in Inservice training (Hudson, 2015). Correspondingly, the LAC implementation allows teachers to work collaboratively with their co-teachers to learn new teaching strategies for their teaching-learning environment.

House's (1971) Path-Goal Theory (PGT) focuses on leadership behavior, which is seen as a source of influence that can change the attitude, motivation, and behaviors of subordinates (Malik *et al.,* 2014). Educational leaders interested in disseminating learning culture may adopt directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented leadership behavior. It illustrates that educational leaders can employ any path-goal leadership approach to motivate teachers to close students' learning gaps by advancing their content knowledge and pedagogical skills. By defining the path, removing barriers, and enabling the improvement goal to be attained, path-goal leadership theory allows educational leaders to influence their teachers' attitudes. The principal school leadership should collaborate with the PGT to make the LAC implementation successful.

The Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) Cycle (Deming, 1950), a collaborative professional development approach, is a popular tool often used in the teaching improvement processes. It suggests the presence of a means of control to monitor the quality of changes and improvements within the organization (Ferrucci, 2015). The PDCA Cycle matches the LAC implementation; both encourage teachers to be systematic in professional development to avoid wasting time, money, and effort.

Brown and Marshall (2008) define the PDCA's four (4) phases: (1) *Plan*. Define purpose, goals, and objectives; collect data; (2) *do*- identify needs; propose change; implement; *check*- monitor, evaluate, and analyze change; compare old and new data; and (4) *act*- adjust strategies for improvement; refine and reinstitute. Consequently, the PDCA Cycle requires a *"commitment"* and *"continuous conversations with as many stakeholders as possible. . . (it) is a constant process"* (National Council of Teachers of English and Council of Writing Program Administrators, 2008, p. 27).

2. Methods

Research Design

This study aimed to explore the school heads and teachers' feelings, observations, and perceptions of the LAC sessions they have attended. It was done to propose a LAC implementation model for the Davao City public schools. Thus, this study employed a phenomenological research design (Colaizzi, 1978, 1973; Blundell, 2015). Phenomenological studies enable researchers to obtain rich information about the participant's experiences with

the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). It seeks to investigate the participants' experiences, exposing multiple perspectives and considerations to reveal new insights about the experiences. In this case, the school heads and teachers' perceptions of their LAC sessions' experiences as a phenomenon. The exploration of the phenomenon usually takes place in the participant's setting, in this case, the participant's school setting.

Study Participants

Englander (2012) argues that to select the subjects for phenomenological research, the question that a researcher has to ask is: *"Do you have the experience that I am looking for?"* (p. 19). It suggests that the study used a purposive sampling technique. The teachers and the school heads had direct experiences in the LAC sessions, the phenomenon under investigation. Creswell (2013) suggested that the study participants could be between 2 and 25; thus, ten (10) selected participants are fit for the study. The ten (10) participants, three (3) school heads, and seven (7) teachers shared their unique and diverse experiences in the conduct of LAC in their respective schools. A semi-structured interview was the core instrument in this study. It is the most commonly used data-collection technique in phenomenography studies.

Data Gathering Procedure

To gather the data, the researcher requested permission from the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS) of Davao City to conduct the study. Recruitment letters were sent to the participants. They were requested to indicate their willingness to participate in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Key Informant Interview (KII) by completing a document sent through their official email addresses. Initially, the FGD and the two KIIs were conducted face to face; however, due to the safety protocols implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, the continuing KIIs were conducted through an agreed online platform.

At the onset of the interview, it used a protocol to briefly describe the study, including each participant's objectives, procedures, risks, and benefits. As each interview occurred, each participant was given a consent form; they were requested to sign the informed consent before the interviews began (Creswell, 2007). They were also given ample time to comment or to ask questions for clarification before a question was asked. It is an integral part of the research process so participants can share their experiences without fear of distortions or prosecution (Alase, 2017).

Ethical Considerations

Participants were assured that their identities remained confidential. Pseudonyms were upheld to safeguard the participants' anonymity and privacy. The participants were also reminded that they could end the interview at any time if they felt that the questions could cause them mental harm (Mertens, 2010; Yin, 2009). During the interview, probe questions were asked when the narrative shared was not specific. Also, the researcher paraphrased the narration when the narration was not coherent. The participants were given time to confirm if the paraphrased statement meant the same thing as the original. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim; only the researcher has access.

Data Analysis

The study used descriptive phenomenological data analysis methods and techniques (Colaizzi, 1978). This method builds descriptively upon the transcendental phenomenological attitude regarding the determination of the universal essence of a phenomenon (Giorgi, 2009). Colaizzi's (1978) analysis method was selected because it moves this "phenomenological attitude" from the theoretical to the practical domain. Although Colaizzi's (1978; 1973) research focuses on psychology, he has also used descriptive phenomenological methods to examine the concept of learning, specifically in Colaizzi's 1973 study. Colaizzi's (1978; 1973) writing explains in great detail how his focus was not on the "reality" of learning but instead on the "perception" of learning as participants experienced it.

3. Results and Discussion

Participants' Views on the LAC Implementation

This phase presents the participants' views on the LAC implementation in their schools. From the narrations of the teachers and the school heads, three themes emerged, *"improvement of teaching strategies," "acquisition of new knowledge,"* and *revitalization of commitment and dedication."* The central theme is *"positive influence on instructional effectiveness."* This central theme corresponds with the idea of Stoll *et al.* (2006). It contended that professional learning communities hold considerable promise for the capacity building of teachers, individually and collectively, which supports school-wide capacity for promoting students' learning. Table 1 presents the participants' views on the LAC implementation.

Table 1. Teachers and school heads' views on the LAC implementation.

Central theme	Sub-themes	Narratives
Positive influence on instructional effectiveness	Improvement of teaching strategies	*"LAC helps us learn new teaching strategies to make our learners understand the difficult concepts. The discussion during the LAC session redound to students' improved academic performance"* (Lisa, FGD). *"The LAC session allows teachers to hear, see, and experience the sharing of best practices"* (Tito, KII).
	Acquisition of new knowledge	*"Yes, especially for the newly retained teachers; teachers below five (5) years in service must attend training to hone their teaching skills and to be aware of the DOs. Through LAC, they will better understand what they should do"* (Jane, KII).
	Revitalization of commitment and dedication	*"Yes, it is essential; it is like a wake-up call for the teachers that we have to adapt to change, and we need to take action on how to address problems"* (Grace, FGD).

The study conducted by Kruse and Johnson (2017), Luyten and Bazo (2019), and Qiao *et al.* (2018) manifests that the concept of a professional learning community like LAC had been introduced to address the issue of students' achievement gap as it poses positive teacher professional development and stimulated changes in teaching practices. Teachers participating in a professional learning community can be involved in professional dialogues with other teachers of the same expertise. Moreover, teachers' involvement in this learning community helps them improve their pedagogical teaching skills (Kruse & Johnson, 2017). Through a professional learning community, teachers are appreciable of new ideas and adopt different teaching practices (Lee *et al.,* 2011) to cater to more diverse needs of students, which indirectly helps to motivate students in learning (Stoll *et al.,* 2006). Here, the teachers were in unison that their LAC participation has allowed them to learn new teaching strategies. It corroborated the first sub-theme, *improvement of teaching strategies."* The teachers narrated-

> *"Yes, it is essential, especially regarding pedagogy updates considering that not all teachers*
> *get to attend a training. So, the sharing during LAC is relevant"* (Marie, KII).

The school heads also observed that implementing LAC is helpful for the TPD, specifically in improving the teachers' teaching strategies. They said:

> *"Some teachers are assigned to teach subjects, not their field of expertise, e.g., an English*
> *teacher teaching Science subjects. So, with the help of LAC, they will know what to do through*
> *the sharing during the session"* (Will, KII).

Based on the participants' narrations, they viewed LAC implementation as a positive influencer of the teachers' teaching strategies. Concurrently, they also viewed LAC implementation as an avenue to improve student's academic performance.

The second sub-theme is the *"acquisition of new knowledge."* The participants claim that LAC is a promising opportunity for teachers new to the service because they obtain reliable and applicable information on navigating the teaching-learning environment. They shared:

> *"We are updated and reminded on how to facilitate better learning with diverse*
> *learners"* (Lisa, FGD).
> *"The topics are clear when discussed. We are also updated, especially in the 21st-century*
> *teaching-learning pedagogical skills"* (Marie, KII).

The *third* sub-theme is *"revitalization of commitment and dedication"* among teachers. This sub-theme is consistent with Asiyah (2021), Imron *et al.* (2020), and Hidayah and Tobing (2018), which stated that TPD affects the teachers' teaching commitment; teachers' commitment can improve the quality of education. Regarding teachers' dedication, the study by Mart (2018), Hidayah *et al.* (2018), Altun (2017), Kurniadi *et al.* (2017), Gunawan *et al.* (2017), and Bandula and Jayatilake (2016) also found that teachers' dedication can enhance student learning. Having attended the LAC sessions, the teachers have become more committed and dedicated because they are continuously reminded to improve professionally to serve the learners better. The teachers narrated:

> *"Through the LAC, we are reminded of the rules and regulations that we need to follow; that*
> *is why it is helpful"* (Arnie, FGD).
> *"It helps the teachers. When I attend, I get updated. I put into practice what I learned from the*
> *LAC. I think every teacher is doing that also"* (Anna, KII).

The participants viewed LAC implementation as an occasion to become better professional teachers. The teacher change model supports this idea. This model suggests that a significant change in teachers' attitudes and beliefs occurs after they gain evidence of improvements in student learning. These improvements typically result from changes teachers have made in their classroom practices, a new instructional approach, new materials or

curricula, or simply a modification in teaching procedures or classroom format. It is emphasized that it is not the professional development *per se* but the experience of successful implementation that changes teachers' attitudes and beliefs (Guskey, 1986).

The teachers and the school heads believe it works because they have seen it work, and that experience shapes their attitudes and beliefs (Guskey, 2002). Thus, according to the teacher change model, the critical element in a significant change in teachers' attitudes and beliefs is clear evidence of improvement in the learning outcomes of their students. It is assumed that the change in attitudes and beliefs should come first to gain acceptance, commitment, and enthusiasm from the teachers and school administrators before implementing new practices or strategies.

The LAC Implementation Processes

The teachers and the school heads described LAC as a *"multifaceted LAC implementation process."* The sub-themes are *"identifying needs," "preparing the plan," "prioritizing topics and discussants," "creating technical working group," "scheduling the session," "participation,"* and *"conducting monitoring and evaluation."* Table 2 presents the central theme and the sub-themes in the LAC implementation processes.

Table 2. LAC implementation processes.

Central theme	Sub-themes	Narratives
Multifaceted LAC implementation processes	Identifying needs	*"The first thing is identifying teachers' PD needs. The coordinators consolidate these needs"* (Jane, KII).
	Preparing the plan	*"It depends upon the need. In our case, we prepare an Action Plan for the whole year. By June, we submit it to the Division Office for approval"* (Jane, KII).
	Prioritizing topics and discussants	*"The LAC coordinator, in coordination with the different learning areas and special program coordinators, decides the topics to be included in the LAC session"* (Marie, KII).
	Creating a technical working group	*"In a small school, there is a LAC coordinator. This is a big school, the department heads, usually Master Teachers, synchronize the LAC sessions"* (Will, KII).
	Scheduling the session	*"We have LAC session every Friday by grade level. It is done from 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm, so one hour only"* (Anna, KII).
	Participation (during the LAC session activities)	*"The topics in our LAC sessions are those we can apply in our teaching-learning processes"* (Gwen, FGD).
	Conduct of monitoring and evaluation (after the LAC session activities)	*"The monitoring and supervision by the principal are consistent"* (Anna, KII).

The school heads narrated that the first step in the LAC conduct is identifying the teachers' professional needs. Thus, the first sub-theme is *"needs identification."* They explained:

> *"Before a LAC session could be implemented, a meeting with the department heads is held to identify the teachers' PD needs. It is taken from the teachers' IPCRF (Individual Performance and Commitment Review Form); the teachers' PD needs are consolidated by subject area"* (Tito, KII).

> *"It should be based on the needs of the teachers per department. For example, if it is a need of the Senior High School (SHS) teachers, the LAC is responsive to the identified needs of the SHS teachers"* (Will, KII).

Likewise, based on the teachers' experiences, teachers' professional needs identification is the starting point of the LAC implementation. A teacher shared-

> *"Through the annual action plan of every department, we sort out the common teachers' professional needs that must be addressed"* (Lisa, FGD).

These statements validate the LAC policy. Assessing needs is the first step in the implementation procedure (DO #35, s. 2016). The LAC leader and facilitator identify the teachers' PD needs. These needs are assessed through self-assessment tools, classroom observation results, critical reflections, surveys, research-based teacher development needs, students' assessment results, and other forms.

"Preparing the plan" is the *second* sub-theme. The school heads and the teachers agree that a well-prepared plan is essential in the LAC conduct. They shared:

> *"At the beginning of the school year, the LAC coordinator prepares the training matrix to be approved by the SDS. When this is returned to the coordinator, the LAC happens. The coordinator plans the topics and asks the consensus of the teachers for any topics to be added on"* (Marie, KII).

"In July, we do the action planning. I prepared the matrix. The action plan is done by grade level; a Master Teacher is assigned per grade level. The coordinator prepares the final matrix. Then the principal recommends it for approval, and the district supervisor approves the plan" (Anna, KII).

"In our school, we have a LAC plan by June, a monthly LAC session schedule" (Anna, KII).

"Everyone helps prepare the plan for the LAC session" (Grace, FGD).

The *third* sub-theme is *"prioritizing topics and discussants."* As experienced by the school heads, the topics and discussants are paramount during the LAC implementation. The school heads shared:

"Our LAC is like an echo of the training attended by teachers. For example, if a teacher attended a division training, it has to be shared with the group during the LAC session" (Grace, FGD).

"There was confusion on the LP format, and our principal noticed it. So, a LAC session was about LP writing following the accepted format. In the subsequent month, we had LAC about the Classroom Observation Tool. In another LAC session, we had our co-teacher who shared with us about DI (Differentiated Instruction), the topic in a seminar he had attended. In other words, whatever problem arises is an add-on topic for the LAC session" (Nars, FGD).

"Let us say six (6) out of eight (8) subject areas have the same problem, we come up with a LAC Activity Plan, and we invited a resource speaker to discuss the topic" (Lisa, FGD).

"The LAC coordinator, in concurrence with the different learning areas and special program coordinators, decides the topics to be included in the LAC session" (Marie, KII).

The teachers' views supported the school heads' perceptions-

"The topic should respond to the teachers' PD needs" (Will, KII).

The narration of the school heads and the teachers aligned with DO #35, s. 2016, which directs topic prioritization in the LAC implementation. From the needs identified, the teachers agree on which should be prioritized. The basis for prioritization could be in terms of urgency of need; time spent addressing the needs and interests, or in whatever way agreed upon by the teachers.

The *fourth* sub-theme is *"creating a technical working group."* DO #35, s. 2016, stipulates that every teacher is a LAC member. It could comprise five (5) to 15 members; thus, a school may organize as many LACs as necessary. LAC members are given specific roles during its sessions. These roles could be rotated among the group members. Consequently, the school heads and teachers are not only participants but also perform essential roles in the success of the LAC implementation. Two (2) school heads revealed:

"The school head designates a LAC school coordinator" (Tito, KII).

"We have a technical working group that takes charge of the LAC session" (Jane, KII).

Additionally, a teacher divulged-

"We have a technical working group composed of teachers who take charge of the LAC implementation. Each of us has a role to play" (Anna, KII).

The *fifth* sub-theme is *"session scheduling."* It is essential to set a regular LAC schedule because disruption of classes is not allowed. The school heads and teachers expressed:

"The Division Office requires a minimum of four (4) LAC sessions in a year. However, if a specific need arises, they can have more than four (4) sessions. We observed at least two hours per session" (Tito, KII).

"Usually it takes an hour, but there are instances that we do it half-day" (Grace, FGD).

"They do it [LAC] by department, one after the other, to avoid conflict; more or less one to two hours is allotted per topic" (Will, KII).

"We have a LAC session every last Friday of the month. We allow two (2) hours for every session, 3 pm-5 pm" (Jane, KII).

"In our school, we have it once a month, every last Friday, 3:00 to 4:00 pm, to avoid disruption of classes" (Marie, KII).

The sub-themes "needs identification," "plan preparation," "topics and discussants prioritization," "technical working group creation," and "session scheduling" are categorized as the "Before LAC Implementation Activities" (DO #35, s. 2016).

The *sixth* sub-theme is *"participation."* The school heads and teachers participate in the LAC implementation. The participants have positive views on the LAC implementation; they narrated-

"It is effective because, through the LAC sessions, the TPD needs are addressed. It is the time when they share their actual classroom experiences. They also share some best practices, for example, ICT integration." (Tito, KII).

"Yes, it is successful since its purpose is attained, which is to update and enrich teachers' teaching skills. Also, it is done regularly. It is not perfect because sometimes we miss some sessions due to overlapping activities, but about 80 percent is actualized" (Marie, KII).

"The conduct of LAC is successful; we are updated on the latest developments in the DepEd" (Anna, KII).

This sub-theme, "participation," is categorized as "During the LAC Session Activities." The priorities set out in the LAC Plan are implemented through various activities, including lectures, orientation, coaching, workshops, development and utilization of instructional materials, *and others,* followed by a collaborative discussion of possible ways forward. The final activity of the session involves individual and group action planning to implement agreed activities in the classroom (DO #35, s. 2016).

The *seventh* sub-theme is the *"conduct of monitoring and evaluation."* This sub-theme is "After the LAC Session Activities" (DO #35, s. 2016). LAC members are expected to implement what they learned from the LAC sessions in their teaching-learning environment. LAC facilitators and leaders monitor these activities and evaluate how they contribute to the learner's outcomes. School principals support the LAC sessions by doing class observations and encouraging teachers to improve instruction to improve student learning.

Monitoring and evaluation are essential to determine if the program has an impact, whether positive or negative. The teachers and school heads concur that monitoring and evaluation should be done to determine if the LAC has contributed to the development of the TPD, provided solutions to the problems, and improved student learning. They shared:

"The principal is the overseer of everything. They do regular monitoring" (Grace, FGD).

"[Principal] monitors if we conduct the LAC sessions accordingly; they remind me now and then. If they are not that busy, they join the session. The monitoring and supervision are done by the principal" (Anna, KII).

"The principal could be a resource person during the LAC session. Basically, they monitor the TPD" (Jane, KII).

"The monitoring and supervision by the principal are consistent" (Anna, KII).

"The principal monitors the development of the teachers through classroom observation. The principal checks the application of learning" (Jane, KII).

The PDCA Cycle model substantially harmonizes the sub-theme, "conduct of monitoring and evaluation." The concept of the PDCA cycle, like LAC, encourages school heads and teachers to implement LAC systematically and to discuss and refine the teaching needs for subsequent improvement of students' learning. This method requires everyone involved in the LAC implementation to

1) *Plan* the topic for the LAC session,
2) *do* (implement) the session according to the plan,
3) *Check* (discuss) ways to improve the session and
4) *act* (repeat) the session with the suggested changes.

Like the PDCA Cycle, the LAC facilitators/coordinators set goals and design plans in collaboration with the teachers. An example of a LAC activity is a teaching demonstration. Once the plan is designed and approved, a teacher could deliver a demonstration teaching perfecting the plan. The rest of the members observe the demonstration. After the demonstration, the group meets to analyze and reflect on what transpired and discuss ways to improve the lesson presentation. The revised lesson design is executed, observed, and reflected upon completing the cycle.

The Components of Effective and Efficient LAC Implementation

This section highlights the variables that make LAC implementation effective and efficient. Six (6) themes emerged- *"supportive leadership," "positive attitude," well-defined roles and responsibilities," "sufficient resources," systematic procedures,"* and *"well-disseminated policy."* Its central theme is *"components of effective and efficient LAC implementation."* Table 3 shows the central themes, sub-themes, and the participants' narratives on effective and efficient LAC implementation components.

Table 3. The components of effective and efficient LAC implementation.

Central theme	Sub-themes	Narratives
Components of effective and efficient LAC implementation	Supportive leadership	*"The principal directs, guides, and influences the teachers to conduct the LAC sessions according to its purpose. It is the primary concern of the principal to provide enabling and supporting mechanisms for the teacher to grow professionally"* (Marie, KII). *"The principal takes the lead being an instructional leader"* (Will, KII).
	Positive attitude	*"Teachers are positive and committed to their job"* (Nars, FGD). *"They are receptive and cooperative since the LAC activities need their participation."* (Jane, KII).
	Well-defined roles and responsibilities	*"LAC has a coordinator who takes charge in lieu of the principal. If teachers do not have the heart to cooperate, it will not be effective even if the coordinator or the principal has excellently done their part. If teachers will listen to the discussion without the application of the knowledge they have acquired, then LAC is useless"* (Gwen, FGD).
	Sufficient resources	*"The materials needed are available, like LCD projector, and notebook for the teachers' minutes. The food is usually taken from the school canteen fund"* (Grace, FGD).
	Systemic procedures	*"The principal monitors the development of the teachers if they apply their learning from the LAC through classroom observation"* (Jane, KII).
	Well-disseminated policy	*"There should be planning and information dissemination of the LAC policy"* (Will, KII).

The first sub-theme is *"supportive leadership."* Supportive leadership is one of the four types of leadership identified in the path-goal theory, a leadership style that focuses on the needs and well-being of followers and the facilitation of a desirable climate for interaction (House, 1971). Supportive leadership is a crucial aspect of effective leadership in path-goal theory (Shin *et al.,* 2016). The teacher participants are in accord in asserting that a successful LAC implementation needs supportive leaders. They shared:

>*"The principal makes an effort to know the needs of the teachers. The principal takes the lead in the advancement of the teachers' PD through the LAC implementation"* (Arnie, FGD).
>*"The principal is the head of the system, has the authority and power, the principal uses this authority and power to advance the interests of the learners through empowering the teachers"* (Lisa, FGD).

The school heads concur that they have a role to play in the LAC implementation. They reasoned:

>*"The principal is the instructional leader, meaning we have to take the initiative to provide an avenue for the teachers to hone their teaching skills"* (Tito, KII).
>*"The principal is the mastermind behind the conduct of LAC"* (Jane, KII).

In summary, providing administrative support and academic leadership strengthens the school's professional learning communities of practice in favor of students' holistic development (DO #35, s. 2016).

The second sub-theme is *"positive attitude."* This study describes a positive attitude as the optimistic behavior teachers must possess, such as being open-minded, responsive, and committed toward the conduct of LAC in their schools. Harrell (1998) argued that attitude is everything. It affects and influences a person's behavior, affecting performance. How successfully a person achieves his or her set goals is a function of the person's attitude. Commitment is one attitude that reflects feelings of like or dislike for the organization (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Prioritizing the interests of the organization rather than personal interests is a sign of one's commitment (Suharto *et al.,* 2019). Kurniadi *et al.* (2017) explain that teacher commitment is an internal interpretation of a teacher and how they absorb and interpret their work experience. In the LAC implementation, the teachers felt that the attitude of the teachers towards the activity is a factor in its success. When asked about the attitude of the teachers toward LAC, they shared:

>*"Responsive and proactive"* (Grace, FGD).
>*"Responsive and committed. We are public servants, and we are bound to obey, especially since we also demand obedience from our learners"* (Marie, KII).
>*"The teachers accept the LAC positively because it is a help for us"* (Arnie, FGD).

The school heads support the teachers' feelings; they spoke:

"If the teacher is interested in learning new skills, then the LAC session is beneficial and effective to the teachers" (Tito, KII).

The third sub-theme is *"well-defined roles and responsibilities."* According to the implementing guidelines of LAC (DO #35, s. 2016), the members are given specific roles to perform during LAC sessions. These roles could be rotated among the members of the group. Participating teachers are educators empowered to become school leaders who embody a sense of ownership and investment in the school community (Barth, 2001). Fullan (2007) and Ketelaar *et al.* (2014) discourse that structural involvement by all teachers in the program design process, through knowledge sharing, exchanging experiences, and reflection, may lead to satisfaction with the program products and the innovation process. Consequently, the teachers and school heads are aware that as members of LAC, they have distinct roles to perform to successfully implement the LAC. They spoke:

"Each of us has roles to play, but the principal takes the lead. He or she has the control; if he or she, does it correctly, the LAC session is a success" (Will, KII-2).

"Everybody is responsible. The role of the coordinator is to prepare the program and the training design with the principal's approval. Whatever is discussed during the LAC would be useless if the teachers will not apply what they have learned in their classes. So, everyone involved in the teaching and learning should be responsible" (Lisa, FGD).

"The LAC has a technical working group to do the preparations" (Jane, KII).

"Everybody must be responsible; it would be useless when the discussant keeps talking, but the participants do not do their part" (Anna, KII).

"It takes a village to raise a child. Hence, it needs to be participated by all stakeholders. But at the core of the LAC session are the teachers" (Marie, KII).

The fourth sub-theme is *"sufficient resources."* In this study, the resources could be human or material that is made available before the LAC implementation. The human resources could be individuals tapped as resource persons. Material resources could be worksheets, videos, equipment, budget, food, venues, and other things needed to conduct a LAC session. The LAC leader or school head shall lead in identifying the needed resources and ensuring their availability and sustainability. As shared:

"There should be hand-outs about the topic discussed during the LAC so that teacher-participants have something to review. The snacks should be just a sort of motivation for teachers to be more attentive" (Lisa, FGD).

"We have LCD projectors or other electronic devices, bond papers, and other school supplies. We also provide snacks. We have a canteen that can provide the budget as long as it is in their request" (Will, KII).

"The LCD projector for the PowerPoint presentation, printed teaching materials, and hand-outs for teacher participants are available. Print out of the DepEd orders related to the topic are also provided" (Jane, KII).

"The budget we use to conduct the LAC comes from our MOOE because it is in the approved proposal under the staff development" (Jane, KII).

"I hope there will be invited resource speakers from outside the school to discuss the topic" (Nars, FGD).

The fifth sub-theme is *"systematic procedures."* Systematic procedures are necessary to ensure that the LAC implementation is done accordingly. It should start with the needs assessment and ends with monitoring and evaluation (DO #35, s. 2016). The teachers and the school heads shared:

"Through the LAC, the needs of the teachers are addressed accordingly. So, it should be given enough time" (Arnie, FGD).

"First, the coordinator should ascertain whether the topic is relevant. Second, this should be supported and encouraged by the school heads. Third, the commitment of the teachers. Fourth, lessen the overlapping activities so we can focus" (Marie, KII).

"The needs should be identified at the start. There is a need for planning" (Tito, KII).

"By the succeeding school year, the LAC should be SMART. Hopefully, it will be given due preparation, and the schedule should be strictly followed based on the approved design. The principal should be there to lead. The teachers should not be negative regarding LAC" (Lisa, FGD).

The sixth sub-theme is *"well-disseminated policy."* The school community must be correctly oriented with the fundamentals of the LAC policy. Understanding the LAC's key objective would encourage more participation and application. According to Hairon and Tan (2017), one of the barriers to the successful implementation of professional learning communities (PLC) is the need for a thorough understanding of the concept and implementation. Relating to the experience of the teacher participants, they cannot fully grasp the meaning and purpose of LAC because the policy was not fully disseminated to them, they recounted-

> *"I know there is LAC, but what should be done about it? There should be intensified conduct*
> *of LAC, and that DO should be disseminated to all"* (Grace, FGD).
> *"Hopefully, the DO #35, s. 2016 should be strictly followed. The first LAC session will be*
> *about DO #35, s. 2016. The teachers in our school do not know about that DO"* (Arnie, FGD).

The Proposed LAC Implementation Model

This section highlights the output of this investigation, the proposed LAC implementation model (Figure 1). The emphasis of the proposed model is *"students' learning."* It could be attained through *"teachers' enhanced teaching skills," "established implementation," "supportive leadership," "school heads and teachers' positive attitude," "well-defined roles and responsibilities," "sufficient resources," "systematic procedures,"* and *"well-disseminated policy."*
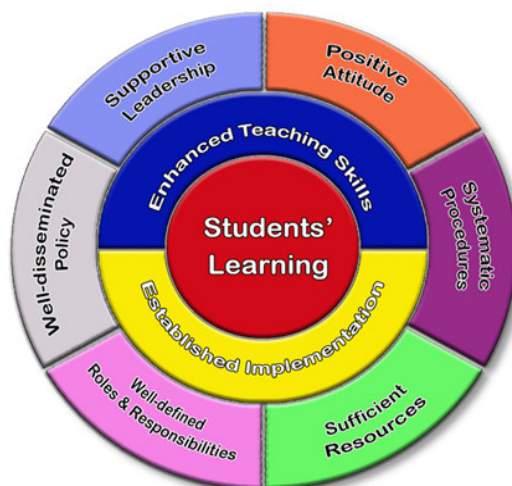

Figure 1. *The proposed LAC implementation model.*

The Model of Teacher Change (Guskey, 1986) discusses that the change in attitudes and beliefs should come first to gain acceptance, commitment, and enthusiasm from the teachers and school heads before implementing new practices or strategies (Al Salami *et al.,* 2015). Should the DO #35, s. 2016, and this proposed model be widely disseminated, *"well-disseminated policy;"* only then can the change in attitudes and beliefs among teachers be observable. A participant mentioned:

> *"DO that institutionalized LAC should be widely disseminated; the teachers are unaware of*
> *that order"* (Grace, FGD).

Adult Learning Theory (ALT) is also at play in the proposed model. Adult learners possess certain traits like high motivation, self-direction (Knowles, 1990), a keen awareness of their strengths, a propensity to select knowledge that is meaningful to them, and the ability to connect that knowledge with their experiences (Chuang *et al.,* 2013; Faizah, 2006; Hazadiah & Jamiah, 2006; Illeris, 2003). In adult learning, the learner's perspective is considered (Illeris, 2003). These learners enter the learning institutions to equip themselves with specific and immediate plans for applying the newly acquired knowledge and they want to put to immediate use what they have learned (Faizah, 2006).

The participants of the present investigation are observant of their behaviors; they select LAC topics relevant to them and connect the lessons learned and the academic performances of their learners, *"students learning."* Seeing this connection motivates them to participate in the succeeding LAC sessions. This connection is monitored by the school head during the classroom observation, *"supportive leadership."* Similarly, Vygotsky's (1978) collaborative learning is also evident as it considers each teacher a learner who continuously develops professional skills and knowledge through active participation and a *"positive attitude,"* in the LAC (Hudson, 2015).

Furthermore, House's (1971) Path-Goal Theory of leadership indicates that the leaders' primary objective is to provide guidance, support, and help for subordinates to achieve their own goals effectively; the teachers and the school heads want *"supportive leadership."* Moreover, the PDCA cycle (Deming, 1950) is applied, as expressed by the teachers; they identify their needs, plan, execute, and monitor.

The premise of this proposed model is to offer a guide on how to implement LAC for continuous quality improvement among DepEd schools. The crafting of this model was centered on the objectives of the LAC policy: (1) to improve the teaching-learning process that will lead to improved learning among the students; (2) to nurture successful teachers; (3) to enable teachers to support each other to continuously improve their content and pedagogical knowledge, practice, skills, and attitudes; and (4) to foster a professional collaborative spirit among school heads, teachers, and the community (DO #35, s. 2016).

The emphasis of the proposed LAC implementation model, *"students learning,"* highlights the core

objective of LAC (DO #35, s. 2016), the improvement of students learning. LAC allows teachers to work collaboratively and collectively to determine the strategies and interventions needed to improve students' academic performance. The sub-theme, *"enhanced teaching skills,"* emphasizes the importance of teachers' participation in LAC activities to improve teaching strategies and pedagogies. Teachers work in collaboration to probe, discover, and share best practices. They come together to learn and share ideas for their professional growth; the knowledge attained helps attain good students' academic performance. The sub-theme, *"established implementation,"* underscores the procedures in the conduct of LAC. Establishing LAC implementation procedures helps the teachers and school heads verify if the activity's goals and objectives are attained accordingly.

The proposed LAC implementation model was crafted from the perceptions and experiences of the teachers and school heads of the LAC implementation. Its objective is to promote, maintain, and sustain continuous quality improvement in the schools. Continuous improvement is one promising approach that public education can use to improve outcomes. Research has shown that such an approach has proven successful in healthcare, manufacturing, and technology. In these sectors, continuous improvement has been used to achieve significant advances, ranging from improved technologies to reductions in patient mortality (Grayson, 2009; Institute for Healthcare Improvement [IHI], 2003; Kabcenell *et al.,* 2010; Langley *et al.,* 2009). The organizations using this approach have been categorized as *"high-reliability organizations,"* which strive to operate error-free under high-risk conditions (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007).

In education, however, schools and districts have been slower to incorporate continuous improvement into their practices, and few are publicly referred to as *"highly reliable"* (Park *et al.,* 2013). Interestingly, schools and districts that use continuous improvement achieve impressive results (Flumerfelt & Green, 2013; Park *et al.,* 2013; Wilka & Cohen, 2013). Indeed, educational organizations that have pursued such a path have achieved a range of performance goals, including decreased failure rates, increased homework completion rates, increased advanced placement exam participation, increased kindergarten readiness, increased college enrollments, and more efficient use of funds (Flumerfelt & Green, 2013; Park *et al.,* 2013).

In summary, continuous improvement is an ongoing commitment to evidence-based quality improvement efforts integrated into individuals' daily work, contextualized within a system, and iterative (Park *et al.,* 2013). It uses timely, accurate data at the classroom level to regularly inform and improve teacher practice. At a school or district level, it connotes ongoing efforts to improve operational practices and processes related to efficiency, effectiveness, and student outcomes.

4. Recommendations for Future Research
The following issues need further consideration for future research:
1) To what extent does LAC improve the academic achievement of the students? One of the study participants wondered about the impact of LAC on the student's academic performance.
2) To determine how leadership skills significantly affect the outcome of the LAC implementation. Some of the participants in the study believed there are schools whose leaders could be more serious about implementing LAC.
3) To determine whether the teachers feel satisfied with LAC as a kind of professional development provided for them. One participant believed that the activity is irrelevant as it is only conducted because it is needed in the annual performance rating of the teachers, taking for granted the main issues and concerns encountered by the teachers that necessitate solutions.
4) A study delineating the views of the school heads from the teachers regarding the implementation of LAC could be considered.
5) To study the impact of continuous improvement models adopted in implementing LAC in DepEd schools on the students' learning quality and overall school improvement.

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