

Continuing Professional Development Opportunities of Teachers in School Learning Action Cell: A Qualitative Inquiry

Moses M. Amirol

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Abstract: In the heart of Paquibato District, public elementary school teachers gather not just as colleagues, but as a community of learners in their School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) sessions. This qualitative-phenomenological study sought to listen deeply to their stories, to understand the real-world opportunities and challenges they face in these crucial forums for continuous professional development (CPD). By exploring the lived experiences of ten teachers, this research uncovered the profound impact of SLAC sessions on their professional lives.

The data, gathered through in-depth interviews, revealed a narrative of growth amidst challenge. Teachers reported that SLAC sessions successfully fostered an enhanced collaborative learning environment and led to a tangible increase in their pedagogical skills and confidence. However, this growth was often tempered by the very real obstacles of time constraints and implementation hurdles. In response, teachers demonstrated resilience, developing coping mechanisms centered on strategic time management, robust peer collaboration, and the active seeking of administrative support.

From their experiences, valuable insights emerged: that continuous professional development is the bedrock of educational innovation; that collaboration is the engine of professional growth; and that supportive leadership is the essential catalyst that makes it all possible. This study concludes that the potential of SLAC is immense, but to fully realize it, targeted interventions are needed. Strengthening these professional development frameworks through practical support systems is key to fostering continuous teacher growth and, ultimately, enriching student learning.

Keywords: Teachers' Experiences, Continuous Professional Development, SLAC Sessions, Collaborative Learning, Phenomenology, Paquibato District, Davao City.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Education is not a static field; it is a living, evolving practice that demands teachers be perpetual learners. In the Philippines, the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) was established as a grassroots response to this need, creating a structured space for teachers to collaborate, solve problems, and grow together right within their own schools. But what is the true experience of this policy on the ground?

In the unique context of Paquibato District in Davao City, this study turns its attention to the voices of public elementary school teachers—the very individuals at the center of this initiative. While SLAC sessions hold great promise for enriching teaching practices, their effectiveness is not automatic. This research moves beyond policy documents to

capture the lived realities of teachers. It seeks to understand not only the professional opportunities SLAC provides but also the tangible challenges they navigate and the coping strategies they ingeniously develop. By listening to these stories, we can move towards a more supportive and effective model of professional development that truly empowers those who shape our classrooms.

II. METHODS

To truly honor the depth of teachers' experiences, this study employed a qualitative-phenomenological approach. This methodology is chosen not to count how many times something occurs, but to understand the deeper meaning behind it. Ten public elementary school teachers from various schools in Paquibato District were purposively selected to share their

journeys, ensuring their stories represented a rich diversity of perspectives.

The primary tool for data collection was the in-depth interview, a conversational yet focused method that allowed teachers to reflect openly and honestly on their SLAC experiences. These conversations were recorded, transcribed, and then meticulously analyzed through thematic analysis. This process involved immersing ourselves in the data, coding significant statements, and gradually identifying the essential themes that captured the core of what it means to participate in professional development as a teacher in Paquibato.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The teachers' narratives wove a compelling tapestry of professional growth, collaboration, and resilience. Their experiences crystallized around three central themes:

First, teachers consistently described SLAC as a vital space that created an enhanced collaborative learning environment. It broke down the traditional isolation of the classroom, transforming their school into a true learning community where they could freely exchange ideas, share successes, and dissect challenges.

Second, this collaboration directly translated into an increase in pedagogical skills and confidence. Teachers reported leaving sessions with new instructional strategies, a better understanding of curriculum, and the renewed courage to experiment in their classrooms. SLAC became an engine for innovation and professional self-assurance.

However, interwoven with these positive outcomes was a third theme: the significant challenges related to time constraints and implementation. Teachers spoke of the difficulty of dedicating time to SLAC amidst an overwhelming load of teaching duties, administrative paperwork, and personal responsibilities. The gap between a well-designed session and its practical application in a busy classroom was also a noted concern.

In response to these challenges, teachers revealed remarkable agency. Their coping mechanisms highlighted a proactive approach: mastering time management strategies, intentionally fostering peer collaboration and support networks that extended beyond formal meetings, and seeking understanding and concrete support from school administrators.

This discussion underscores a critical point: the success of SLAC and similar CPD initiatives cannot rest on teachers' shoulders alone. While their resilience is admirable, it is not a sustainable system. The study powerfully emphasizes that leadership support is the indispensable catalyst. When school heads actively facilitate, protect time, and participate as learners themselves, they unlock the full potential of their teachers. The findings argue for a structured, supportive, and responsive

professional development framework that recognizes and alleviates these challenges, allowing the profound benefits of collaboration to flourish.

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