

Learning Action Cell as Professional Development of Public Teachers: Its Actual Practices and Lapses

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ABSTRACT:

The Learning Action Cell (LAC) is an avenue for teachers' professional development and for improving the teaching-learning process. Nevertheless, its implementation has many lapses, and faddism is an issue in professional development activities. This study then aimed to discover the usual practices of public schools when preparing, conducting, and post-evaluating LAC, employing a descriptive-phenomenological qualitative design. It also aims to determine whether these practices align with the DepEd memorandum on conducting LAC. The responses of the 14 public teachers selected via snowball sampling identified three themes: Actual LAC, ideal LAC, and Manacle of LAC. The study then found that the actual implementation of LAC was far from ideal due to barriers related to teachers, administrative control, and factors beyond their control. Teachers must also be oriented to the LAC DepED Order, and school heads' comments and experiences may also be considered.

Keywords: Learning Action Cell, Professional Development, DepEd Order 35 s. 2016

Background of Study

The teaching profession has been seen as the scaffold of all other professions. Teachers, especially in basic education, always prepare their lessons through written lesson plans. Writing and implementing such lesson plans were usually done individually (Lomibao, 2016), as working with other teachers is not easy to achieve (Imbernon, 2010, as cited by Lobo da Costa & Prado, 2012). Some teachers are unwilling to collaborate with other teachers (Kong, 2018). Teachers with a fixed mindset also devalue praxis, thereby impeding their learning (Chuckry, 2019).

Despite this, today's trend is to promote collaboration because it supports the teaching-

learning process (Brendefur et al., 2014) and makes a difference in a traditional classroom (Burns, Pierson & Reddy, 2017). Collaboration encourages dialogue and helps overcome barriers (Lobo da Costa & Prado, 2012; Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019). Konca and Tasdemir (2018) posited that collaboration is a means of observing and learning from others. Further, Tichenor and Tichenor (2019) oppose the concept of independent working. Instead, studies are proving the effectiveness of collaboration by teachers (Malik, Nasim & Tabassum, 2015, cited Luciano, 1978; Memdughu, Kotluk & Yayla, 2017; Cakir & Goven, 2019) and even preservice teachers (Waldman, Havel & Scwab, 2016; Rantavouri, Engestron & Lipponen, 2016; Altieri

et al., 2015) in improving their teaching skills and self-efficacy perception.

"Collaboration between schools and teachers aiming to improve the teaching-learning process is done in various forms" (Giordano, 2008; Wohlsletter et al., 2003). One form encourages teachers to engage in activities that promote their professional development since educators must not cease learning (Frick, Polizzi & Frick, 2010). Many countries prioritize the professional development of teachers (Jita & Mokhele, 2014). As Malik, Nasim & Tabassum (2015, p. 170) said, "Professional Development (PD) is an essential element of teacher education." Professional development can be divided into two types: formal and informal (Huiyin, 2019; Coldwell, 2017). Formal professional development includes formal education and other pieces of training. Informal professional development includes concerns in the classroom and the contextualized actions that could help teachers reflect on their teaching practices (Lobo da Costa & Prado, 2012) and address resistance to the needs of varied learners due to a lack of training (Livers et al., n.d.). Guskey's model (2002) hinted that PD brings positive change in the teaching-learning process, provided that the implementation is sustained.

With this, several studies in the implementation of Professional development programs used a partnership between high schools and universities (Richman, Haines & Fello, n.d.) or conducted research at the higher educational level (Malik, Nasim & Tabassum, 2015; Mendoza et al., 2017). Other researchers on PD examined empirical data supporting the implementation of PD (Philpott & Oates, 2015) and used online resources (Koukis & Jimoyiannis, 2018). However, it must be noted that traditional professional development, which is almost top-down approaches like 'preservice training, the orientation of new staff, in-service pieces of training, seminars, and mentoring programs (Wambuku, Stutchbury & Dickie, 2019), seemed not to address learners' needs and interests (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Capili-Balbalin, 2017).

One kind of bottom-up approach to professional development is the well-known Lesson Study, which thrived in Japan (Mhakure, 2019; Mendoza et al., 2017; Huang, Gong & Han, 2016; Fernandez, Cannon & Chokshi, 2002; Lomibao, 2016). Lesson Study is a strategy supported by the theory of action, in which what teachers do leads to better results in the classroom (City et al., 2009). It enables teachers to look beyond theories into practices (Garces & Granada, 2015). Lesson study examines the least learned competencies or learning difficulties (Norwich & Ylonen, 2015), and teachers come together to develop a lesson plan that will be taught, evaluated, and reflected on (Mhakure, 2019; Bradshaw & Hagell, 2017; Huang, Gong & Han, 2016). This concept uses lesson planning since there is no need for technology (Dudley, 2015). At the same time, it could employ advanced technologies such as wikis (Al-Shareef & Al-Qarni, 2016). Birkhead et al. (2017) used collaborative lesson planning to demonstrate its effectiveness in helping teachers better understand algebra. So, lesson study can be used even in far-flung areas. Lesson study can be employed at any year level and can be used for simple to complex subjects (Chong & Kong, 2012).

Several countries, including the Philippines, adopted lesson study. The concept of lesson study is almost the same as the Learning Action Cell (LAC) formulated for Basic Education, particularly in public schools. It was stipulated in DepEd Order 35, series of 2016, as part of the new curriculum implementation. Department of Education order 35 (2016) defined LAC as "a group of teachers who engage in collaborative learning sessions to solve shared challenges encountered in the school, facilitated by the school head or a designated LAC Leader." To add, this is a 'K to 12 basic education program school-based continuing strategy for improving teaching and learning' (DepEd Order 35 s 2016), a bottom-up strategy. The order further aims to 'improve the teaching-learning process, nurture successful teachers, enable teachers to support each other, and foster a collaborative spirit.'

To implement this, teachers must do a needs assessment first. Regarding needs assessment,

sample studies (Sapungan, Gabor & Garing, 2019; Lucero, 2018) recommended things to be done during SLAC. Sapungan, Gabor, and Garing (2019) found that modules will be designed to address the least-learned competencies if SLAC is conducted. On the one hand, Lucero (2018) recommended that LAC be conducted on instructional delivery and the art of questioning. After the needs assessment, teachers will choose a topic to focus on and form an LAC.

However, it must be noted that LAC is still young in its implementation since 2016, and implementers of such a strategy are at the hands of the school principals, school heads, or master teachers. Thus, training on proper LAC implementation was provided only to the individuals mentioned earlier. However, Mendoza et al. (2017) recommended that more extensive training on the implementation of LAC is needed. Also, there is a scarcity of research on LAC implementation. Implementing PDs like lesson study must be done in the long term (Drits-Esser & Stark, 2015). Mendoza et al. (2017) claimed that LAC is mandated for Basic Education, yet it is not fully institutionalized.

Additionally, Capili-Balbalin's (2017) study in the Philippines found a lack of continuing PD programs. Further, Dilshad, Hussain, and Batrol (2019) reported that a lack of time and pressure from other teachers' loads are barriers to implementing PDs. Also, studies show that faddism is an issue and PDs are short-lived (Lewis, Perry & Murata, 2006). With this, the discovery of the reasons behind the lapses in LAC implementation could help improve the DepEd Order, disseminate and monitor it correctly, and ensure that it will not be a mere fad.

Objectives

This study aims to identify and describe the usual practices and topics teachers discuss before, during, and after their Learning Action Cell sessions to enhance their professional development. It also aims to determine whether said practices and topics are based on the National Order, which is expected to serve as the basis for all LAC sessions. Finally, it explores why

there are gaps between what was stipulated in the National Order and what is being practiced.

Research questions

This study opts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the usual practices and topics that teachers do and discuss before, during, and after LAC sessions?
2. Do these practices and discussions reflect what is stipulated in DepEd Order 35 series 2016?
3. What are the reasons why DepEd Order 35 series 2016 is not being religiously followed?

Significance of the Study

The Learning Action Cell aims to promote the professional development of teachers. Despite this, performing LAC without the proper practices before, during, and after may defeat its sole purpose. Knowing such practices and reasons for deviating from DepEd Order 35 s. 2016 may help lead to the perfection of the said DepEd Order and to the crafting of new strategies by the authorities for properly disseminating and monitoring the application of LAC.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design to comprehensively summarize specific events experienced by individuals, which were drawn from naturalistic inquiry. This study is founded on the belief that the Learning Action Cell (LAC) may have a significant impact on the Professional Development of Teachers; at the same time, a better understanding of it may lead to its better actual implementation.

Settings and Participants

Purposive and snowball sampling were used to identify the 14 public teachers. High school teacher participants were divided into three categories: big, medium, and small. On the one hand, the elementary teacher participants also came from different categories: big schools with more than three sections per year level, small

schools with a maximum of two sections for chosen year levels only, and multigrade schools where teachers teach at least two-year level at the same time.

Of these, six are high school teachers, two are from the big school category, one is from the small school category, and the remaining three are from the medium school category. The eight elementary teachers also come from different school categories. Three came from the two large elementary schools of the Municipality, four from regular-sized schools, and one teacher from a multigrade-type school.

Ethical Consideration

Prior to collecting data for the study, participants were informed of the study's goals via the researcher's messenger. Participants' consent was obtained through their responses via messenger. Although the interviews were conducted online, respondents were encouraged to answer the questions at their convenience and in a place where they could type their responses. Before sending the questionnaire, the researcher reiterated the goal and nature of the research, even though they had been mentioned in the request letter sent to them. Further, the researcher assured respondents of their anonymity, and any information they shared was kept confidential.

Also, the interview's style and duration, and how the researcher would get in touch with them later in case any clarifications were needed. Next, the respondents were encouraged to ask questions about the study before the final interview questions were sent to them. Lastly, the researcher emphasized that each participant's involvement in the study is determined by their willingness to answer the questions, and each participant has the right to decline to answer any question. They were informed that they could terminate the interview if they thought it necessary. Doing this adheres to the eight principles of the preparation stage of interviewing before starting the interview, as crafted by McNamara (2009, as cited by Turner, 2010).

Data Collection Procedure

Upon the approval of the participants and the application of the eight principles of McNamara (2009), an unstructured interview started online by sending open-ended questions which respondents could answer either in Kankanaey, Ilocano, Filipino, or English only. Using their first language or Lingua Franca could help them further express their experiences freely. Also, giving out an unstructured interview and doing it online could encourage respondents to answer the questions freely and have ample time to reflect on their experiences regarding the study without waiting to be asked by the researcher (Calderon & Gonzales, 2008).

An interview guide was prepared prior to the interview. The guide contained items related to the research problems. The items were based on various literature on Professional Development and on Department Order 35, series 2016, regarding LAC. Also, the interview guide was pilot tested with two public teachers from the same municipality. This is to ensure that the interview guide is clear, elicits relevant data, and assesses the duration of the interview. After pilot testing, the actual data gathering commenced. Participants' responses were screenshot, and enough and precise data for analysis were achieved through probing. The transcription of the responses was managed to ensure utmost confidentiality. Member checking was conducted, during which data, interpretations, and findings were shared with the specific participants to confirm that the intended meanings, views, and experiences were captured accurately.

Data Management and Analysis

Participants' screenshot responses were the sole data for the study. Data collection ceased upon reaching saturation. This means that data gathered no longer hint at new ideas (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006), and there were no new codes or themes (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012); thus, saturation is achieved (Burmeister & Aitken, 2012).

From this, the themes were now derived. The themes described the participants' experiences,

their reasons, and observations regarding the study. The related themes were sent to the respective participants for validation and assurance that their responses were not misinterpreted by the researcher (Simon & Goes, 2011).

Results and Discussion

The answers given reflect three themes in this research. These are the actual LAC, ideal LAC, and manacle of LAC, and these generate the responses to the research questions of this study.

Figure 1. The Passing through the Manacle



Actual LAC

The actual learning action cell has usual topics and usual practices. These are common to all school levels- high school or elementary, and categories-big, medium, small, or multigrade.

Usual topics

Student-, teaching-, report-, and school- and facility-related topics were discussed during LAC sessions. Student-related topics include learners' failing grades or behaviors, and the interventions to help them pass. Most respondents claimed that these are always added agenda items in their LACs, which they usually discuss.

Teaching-related topics include strategies, lesson planning, ICT, and instructional materials. Respondents from a large school and a small school, including master teachers and department heads, said, "Our master teachers demonstrate to us how to write a lesson plan or make interventional materials."

Reports related include the IPCRF, DepEd forms, and other forms asked for by the Division Office. Also, report-related topics include reechoing topics learned in a training or seminar. The reechoed topics could be related to teaching; however, the researcher categorized them as under report-related topics because the Division Office requires the person who attended the seminar to submit a report. One teacher

respondent said, "The Division Office informed my principal that the report regarding the reecho of the seminar I attended is due. My principal asked me to conduct the LAC even if it is not included in the SIP and AIP. Also, enough planning was not done because it was a rush report. With this, I just chose the things I shared with my colleagues. It was just like compliance."

To add, another respondent has a different story. "Master teachers conduct LAC sessions because they need it in their reports or their IPCRF. At the end of the seminar, they will get our notes as their attachments."

Facility and school-related topics include beautification of the buildings and school programs. A respondent said, "Pati din iyat mi sin programs ya activities mi sin school no sino di iyat mi ya nu sino di nakinbetang sin maamag ay program" (Even the plans for school programs and school activities and the things we will do and who are assigned to do the program).

Usual practices

LAC involves the before, during, and after. Actual practices usually reflect the "during part" part and are rare in the "after" part. The preliminary activities to be done before the LAC sessions are missing. If there are preliminary activities, a few are doing them. The LAC facilitator/school head usually does the "before" part. In one case, if teachers are involved in the preliminary part, it depends on the school head.

Except for teachers who were allowed to reecho or master teachers and school heads who do action plans or prepare for the LAC, teachers are not involved in any pre-activities before the main LAC session. The teachers claim they are doing preliminary activities before the LAC session, yet they are done before the session. Some of their responses to the question, *"Are there initial plans you as teachers have before the LAC session?"*

"Yes, for example, things that we need to accomplish in our IPCRF, our master teacher discusses what we need to do to meet a certain requirement."

"Most of the time, it depends on the latest training attended by some teachers within the school who are asked to share it with the group."

"Yes, like how to come up with commonality in sub-tasking competencies in the CG (Curriculum Guide)."

"Yes, like about the teaching-learning process and student achievement."

"Yes, attendance is being checked."

"Yes, we had an opening prayer."

"Yes, students/updates/school reports."

Despite this, a respondent answered the question with "no." Another respondent said, *"a letter from a teacher requesting LAC and signed by the Department Head."* She has based this on the letter requesting their presence to join the LAC.

On the one hand, teachers who had the experience of becoming facilitators through reiterating their training responded differently. Given the teachers' background, they were exposed to seminars or training sessions, so they knew the papers needed to be submitted. Their responses are almost in unison.

"Yes, an action plan to know the persons involved, what to do, and the materials."

The other respondent teacher, who master teachers have always tapped to do reports, has a unique answer.

"Teachers in the higher ranks do plan and organize LACS for the sake of 'papers' and some for the betterment of teachers and students. However, in some cases, even a simple meeting can turn into an LAC session without the principal or head signing the required papers in advance."

The proper way of having an LAC is to have a project proposal before implementing it."

However, two respondents, both elementary teachers, have other responses. With further queries, the first respondent said that the two school heads, their previous school head, and their present school head are very strict. Further, she shared that their previous school head is the District's LAC coordinator, so the Division Office monitors her.

"Before conducting a SLAC, our school head will call us for a meeting. She will ask about our concerns in our classrooms. After that, she will assign a coordinator to set the next meeting, and she will be the speaker. By the way, we called a guest speaker twice because our boss could not attend the SLACS."

The other respondent, on the one hand, has a different case. She came from a school that had no school head; however, they have regular SLACs because they have a school LAC coordinator who is responsible enough to lead them.

"Action plan and activity plan are prepared for the smooth flow of LAC but flexible enough to cater to urgent topics....our coordinator is persistent, and it is good that even if we do not have a school head at that time, we conduct SLACS...we consume two hours only because we live far from the school...we do it twice a month, Wednesday."

On the "during" part, teachers have almost said they discuss and share their thoughts regarding issues. Although a respondent says that teachers of lower ranks are rarely solicited for their opinions. This is usually observed in more prominent schools, though it also occurs in small schools with new teachers.

In terms of reechoing, there are two sides to the coin. The first is on-the-spot sharing, while the other is given at least a day to prepare.

"During the session, teachers who attended seminars are given time to reecho."

"On my part, I have to choose what to share as it is a rush. I have prepared some of my materials."

Despite this, there are times when school heads or speakers do prepare activities. There is a

workshop. Teachers must make worksheets or some instructional materials as return demonstrations or activities. Also, mentoring happens. A respondent said, *"During the LAC session, our school head requires us to make IMS/SIM as output while the others are reporting."*

"No, sis, I think every month is too much. It depends on our agreement as to when the next LAC session is."

Another respondent said they rarely conduct LAC but are doing so today because it is stipulated in the IPCRF. It could then be observed that there are carefully planned LACs and rush LACs. The planned LACs are once-in-a-blue-moon style. The following statement of a respondent supports this.

"There are planned LACs with prepared action plans, and there are also unplanned topics, such as reports that need LACs. The school head or the teacher-in-charge will lead this if the teachers do not know how to do these reports."

The rush LACS is observed as a meeting type within the administrative meetings. This kind of LAC is what is expected in all schools. Several respondents explicitly mentioned it as a typical organizational meeting type. One respondent said, *"Here in school, LAC is like a typical meeting."* Another respondent said, ... *"we term it as LAC session even if it is only a department meeting with a little info drive"*.

After the LAC session, there are the application and monitoring parts. However, the teachers claimed that not all the things mentioned in the LAC are being applied. The things they do are to be submitted only to the District or the Division Office. These include reports and accomplishment reports that LACs were conducting. However, the accomplishment report is not the application of LAC.

Monitoring is also rare. This is because the next LAC session's topic would differ from the previous one. If there is any follow-up during the meeting, it will be shared orally by a teacher. The monitoring includes a scheduled monthly classroom observation regarding the application of lessons. However, a classroom observation is a monthly task for school heads as part of their OPCR, not solely for the LAC.

The following responses attest to these.

"Sometimes, (school heads) just trust the coordinators in the implementation."

"Most monitored are the outputs...especially the reports... the other (LAC topics) are not (being monitored). If it is included in the MOOE, there is a need to pass an accomplishment report."

"She will give us a task, but we do not accomplish the task because it is not being strictly monitored."

"Not all are implemented and monitored because the teachers and school heads have much work to do."

On the one hand, there are different responses regarding this. One respondent said that *"tapina, mabalin ilan da application na sin COT kasjay"* (part of it, they can see the application in the classroom observation tool used by the school head). Another respondent said their lesson is also checked, but the other items are not.

Another positive response comes from the district-wide LAC coordinator. She said that their *outputs are being monitored quarterly, and the action plans before and after are being submitted.*

Ideal LAC

The basis for the ideal LAC is DepEd Order 35, series 2016. It mentioned that teachers, under the guidance of their school heads, could determine the topics of the LAC. It must be based on a needs assessment. Further, the topics must be consistent with the broad topics of the K to 12 Basic Education Program. Also, the LAC implementation process is stipulated in this order.

Ideal Topics

The order mentioned the five general topics based on the Basic Education Program. These are learner diversity and student inclusion; content and pedagogy of the K to 12 basic education programs; assessment and reporting in the K to 12 basic education programs; 21st-century skills and ICT integration in instruction and assessment; and curriculum contextualization, localization, and indigenization. Simplified topics for general topics are differentiated instruction, interventional materials, and remediation.

Collaborative lesson planning is the second general topic.

In addition, the order stated that a lot of time should be spent discussing the role of community

linkages in curriculum improvement. Teachers discussed how LAC supports their professional development. Emerging issues in teaching and learning are also incorporated into the LAC session.

Table 1. Actual LAC topics counterchecked using DO35s2016

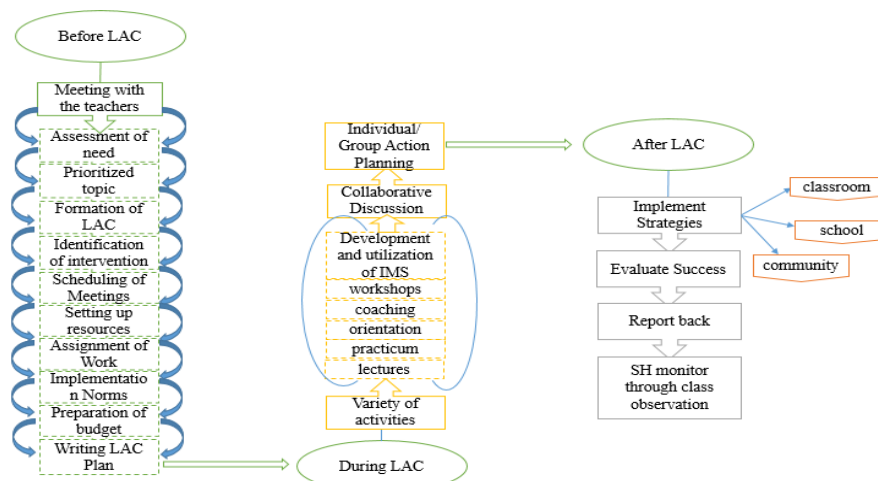
Statement/topic mentioned	LAC TOPIC?		If yes, Topic Category
	Yes	No	
RPMS & IPCRF making	√		Added agendum for prof dev
The new format of the Lesson Plan	√		Added agendum for prof dev
Regular school programs and activities like Nutrition Month		√	
Stakeholder's participation on school projects		√	
School issues/problems like facilities, projects		√	
Re-echo of trainings/seminars *ICT related *Content related *Teaching strategy related	√		*21 st Century Skills and ICT *Content and Pedagogy *Content and Pedagogy
Student problems *lack of participation *absenteeism *attitudes/ behavior	√		Learner diversity and student inclusion
Instructional Material making	√		Learner diversity and student inclusion
Strategic intervention making	√		Learner diversity and student inclusion
Innovation sharing and Action research	√		*Learner diversity and student inclusion *Curriculum contextualization, localization, and indigenization
Reports (from memos) SIP, AIP, WFP, APP		√	
Classroom Structuring		√	
Test Construction and Table of Specifications	√		Assessment and Reporting

The actual learning action cell topics align with the DepEd order and the given topics. However, some topics discussed in their LAC session are part of the administrative meetings, such as regular programs and activities, stakeholders' participation in school facility projects, and issues related to school facilities and classroom structuring.

The ideal implementation of LAC

There are three main parts of the implementation process in the DepEd order: before the LAC

session, during the LAC session, and after the LAC session. Before the LAC session, a meeting is held in which a LAC facilitator and a LAC leader call the LAC members (teachers) to a meeting (Cajkler, Wood, Norton & Pedder, 2013). During the meeting, they assess needs, prioritize topics or agenda, form LAC, identify appropriate interventions, schedule meetings, set up resources, assign work, and implement LAC norms, prepare a line-item budget, and write the LAC plan.

Figure 2. LAC implementation process flow

This part is not reflected in almost all the teachers' responses. Although some claim that an action plan or matrix, a budget, and the setting of resources are automatically done. These are being done by either the LAC leader or the school head. The action plan differs from the LAC plan, as it is carried out during the LAC session. The most important part, which is to know the teachers' needs, is not being practiced except in some schools. These schools have the principal, who is also the current District LAC Coordinator. In the case of the other elementary school, their LAC coordinator was fortunate to be trained by the Division Office, and she applied for it.

During the LAC session implementation, teachers claimed to have shared their thoughts. Some master teachers demonstrate their innovation, while others create instructional materials as their output. There are also speakers. However, rush LACs, which are the most usual LACs, are just reechoing and merely sharing ideas or thoughts. There is no making instructional materials or lesson planning. One noticeable thing is that all respondents said they had never tried collaborative lesson planning, one of the activities during LAC sessions. It would be understandable if the small schools could not do this, as there are only single sections per year. However, even big and medium-sized schools never tried doing collaborative lesson planning. Instead, most of their outputs are instructional materials or strategic instructional materials. Despite this, even small schools can do a vertical

collaboration where teachers can collaborate with teachers a grade below and above (Jacbos, 2010 as cited by Brendefur et al., 2014). In the study by Brendefur and colleagues (2014), the teachers developed their lesson plans individually; then they scored them using rubric. Afterward, they sat together to collaborate and revise the lesson plans.

They did no individual or group action planning except again with the school, where the school head is the District's LAC coordinator. The respondents claim that they prepare action plans before and after the LAC, which their school head checks at the end of the quarter.

After the LAC part, many teachers claimed to have completed their outputs for submission. Nevertheless, these are primarily reports. Other outputs are instructional materials. However, the DepEd order mentions implementing strategies or using IMs in the classroom, school, and community, as deemed appropriate. The after-LAC session does not merely ask for finished reports or instructional materials. It also requires an application, an evaluation, and a report on the success of the strategies. The reports will be submitted during the next LAC. Also, this could be monitored through classroom observation by the school head.

Manacle of LAC

A manacle is a shackle for the hand or wrist, and it is used to restrain someone from movement, progress, or action, as defined by Merriam-

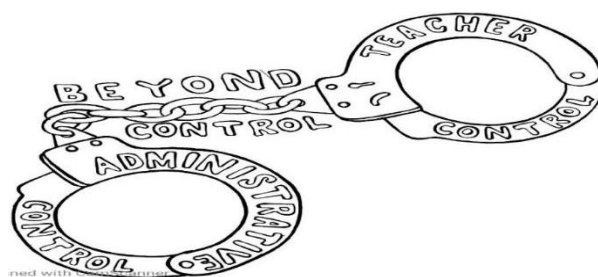
Webster. This is how several reasons restrain teachers from achieving the ideal LAC. The participants' responses are subdivided into three subthemes: teacher control, administrative control, and beyond control. These are the three main parts that compose the shackle.

Teacher Control

Teacher control includes the necessity, the unfamiliarity with the DepEd Order, and the

teachers' attitude towards LAC. LAC's conduct during short breaks or lunchtime results in teachers seeking excuses not to attend or to request a postponement of the activity. *"It is being delayed due to teachers' hunger."* However, if it is held after class, some teachers will also escape or say, *"Shall we cancel LAC today, as we reside far from school?"* to cancel the scheduled LAC session.

Figure 3. *The Manacle of LAC*



Teachers, especially in elementary and, worse, in multigrade schools, have the whole day looking after their learners. Because of this, the multigrade respondent claimed that *"SLAC indeed is helpful; however, the implementation is complex...it is exhausting to teach in multigrade."*

Other teachers cannot appreciate the importance of LAC. Instead, they see it as a burden. Some also blame it on their unfamiliarity with the Department Order. Even a selective respondent does not appreciate the topics during LAC except for the IM making, as she said.

"For me, ma'am, SLAC seems to be an additional burden at some point because a portfolio with many requirements is required. It is an additional task to our teaching loads."

"... because some teachers don't even know what is stipulated in the memo, like me...All I know is that there is an LAC session."

"What is the meaning of LAC? We are just saying LAC, but we do not know its meaning."

"...only the SIM making is good".

Moreover, some respondents do not religiously submit their outputs, such as SIMs, because they are not being monitored. They only rush things if they are checked. Indeed, changing teachers' practices for student learning improvement is a

challenge (Brendefur, et.al., 2014). This supports one of Capili-Balbalin's (2017) principal respondents, who claimed that teachers have negative attitudes and are overly conscious of when they rush home every afternoon.

"If the boss, the school head, checks, we scratch our heads because we have nothing to show her."

" Regarding the lesson plan, it is constantly being monitored."

Administrative Control

Proper implementation of LAC needs the full support of the school head, department head, teacher-in-charge, and master teachers. School heads either entrust LAC facilitators to conduct the LAC or monitor activities that need reports. As recommended by Lucero (2018), principals/school heads must strengthen monitoring and professional development activities to improve teachers' instructional competence.

With this, the leadership of the school heads matters for the program's success. This supports the principal respondent's claim in Capili-Balbalin (2017) that good leadership and role modeling are essential.

Beyond Control

Time, teaching loads, non-teaching workloads, and teacher-related reports are beyond the control of the teachers and principals. Once a memo accompanies a report, teachers need to comply. Further, they must make their daily lesson logs with their instructional materials. If big schools must prepare one or two lessons per day, small schools prepare more. They must teach at least six hours a day. The remaining two hours will be used to check and record the papers. However, small schools, especially elementary schools, must always be with their students. During break time, they also serve as canteen managers. In the afternoon, many teachers must travel home. Having another weekly LAC session becomes a burden for them or a time to rest and have "tsimis time," as a respondent said before they discussed it.

4 Conclusion

Reality does not always reflect the ideal. The actual application of LAC has many missing parts

compared to an ideal application. This is due to barriers that prevent the achievement of the ideal. Teachers have plenty of excuses for school heads and for the uncontrollable tasks given to either teachers or school heads. Despite this, all teachers recognize the importance of LAC in their professional development. They need time to adjust and adapt to the art of doing LAC.

Because some teachers are unaware of DepEd Orders, they do not fully understand the essence of LAC. It is recommended that teachers, not only school heads and master teachers, be oriented towards the DepEd order. This could also be included in the orientation seminar for newly hired teachers.

Further, it is recommended to conduct studies on school heads' comments on the implementation of LAC. This research further recommends conducting a future study on how the new IPCRF affects the implementation of LAC.

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