

Teachers' Experiences in Learning Action Cells (LAC) as a Basis for Enhancing Professional Growth at Lagundi-CCL National High School

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Abstract

This study explored the lived experiences of 31 teachers participating in Learning Action Cells (LAC) at Lagundi-CCL National High School, using a phenomenological research approach. The findings revealed that the LAC served as a platform for collaborative learning, where teachers actively engaged in meaningful discussions, shared professional knowledge, and fostered a supportive and enriching learning environment. The action-oriented nature of the LAC enabled teachers to translate learning into practice by applying strategies in real classroom contexts, setting professional goals, and implementing interventions that created tangible instructional impact. Continuous reflection and improvement were also emphasized, allowing participants to critically analyze outcomes, identify areas for development, and share best teaching practices. However, the study also identified several challenges, including differences in participant perspectives, time constraints, and limited resources. Despite these issues, specific LAC strategies proved valuable in sustaining professional learning. Design thinking and action research strengthened problem-solving skills, while data-driven decision-making supported evidence-based instruction. Likewise, peer coaching and mentoring relationships significantly contributed to collaboration and professional growth. In conclusion, Learning Action Cells provide a meaningful structure for collaborative learning, reflective practice, and action-based professional development. Although challenges exist, the strategies embedded within the LAC framework effectively address these constraints and enhance teaching practice. The study underscores the vital role of LACs in promoting continuous professional growth, collaboration, and improved instructional outcomes among teachers.

Keywords: Learning Action Cell (LAC), Collaborative Learning, Action-Oriented Approach, Continuous Reflection, Challenges. Professional Growth And Development

Introduction

Learning Action Cells (LACs) have emerged as a collaborative professional development approach aimed at enhancing teachers' professional growth. LACs foster a supportive and reflective environment where teachers come together in groups to engage in collaborative problem-solving, share experiences, and engage in reflective practice. Teachers' narratives about LACs consistently highlight the positive impact of this approach on their professional growth. Through collaboration, reflective practice, peer learning, and networking opportunities, LACs provide teachers with valuable opportunities to expand their knowledge and skills, refine their instructional practices, and address common challenges in their teaching.

In accordance with DepEd Order No. 35, series of 2016, which aligns with the implementation of Republic Act No. 10533, also known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, the Department of Education (DepEd) has introduced the Learning Action Cell (LAC) as a School-Based Continuing Professional Development Strategy for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning. This policy reflects DepEd's dedication to the lifelong learning principle and its commitment to fostering the professional growth of its teaching personnel. By recognizing and supporting the potential development of teachers, DepEd aims to empower them for success in their profession.

According to Basingan (2016), the Learning Action Cell (LAC) is a school-based professional development approach that fosters instructional dialogues and serves as a platform for team learning among teachers. The responsibility of conducting LAC sessions lies with school heads and teachers. Prior to the meeting, teachers are required to gather and select a forthcoming lesson or topic. They prepare to orally share their experiences from the previous month's learning and bring along students' work or learning materials developed during that period. The sharing session, conducted in pairs, spans approximately 30 minutes, during which efforts are acknowledged and celebrated.

Following the sharing session, there is a 20-minute segment dedicated to the focal instructional practice. Here, a new topic is introduced, and guide questions are discussed and processed. The subsequent professional activity phase lasts around 50 minutes, involving tasks such as preparing instructional materials and planning lessons where the new topic may be applied.

Finally, there is a 20-minute sharing session, wherein each teacher shares their upcoming plans and engages in collaborative discussion and mutual assistance.

It is important to note that after the LAC session, teachers should be prepared for observations by their principals and head teachers, providing an opportunity for further feedback and support in implementing the discussed strategies (Basingan, 2016).

However, while implementing Learning Action Cells (LACs), several problems arise alongside scheduling difficulties and limited ICT knowledge among teachers. Time constraints often hinder the availability of dedicated LAC sessions due to teachers' heavy workloads and various school activities. Additionally, the lack of administrative support from school leaders can result in inadequate resources and insufficient time allocation for LACs, negatively impacting their effectiveness. Resistance to change among teachers can also impede successful LAC implementation, requiring effective communication and addressing concerns to encourage participation. Unequal participation among teachers and limited evaluation and monitoring of LACs further pose challenges to their implementation. Furthermore, research gaps exist in understanding factors such as teacher motivation and engagement, sustainability and scalability, impact on student learning outcomes, and innovative adaptations of LACs to diverse contexts. Addressing these gaps can provide valuable insights for enhancing the implementation and effectiveness of LACs as a professional development strategy for teachers (Reazo, 2021; Vega, 2020).

Thus, examining the narratives of teachers regarding their experiences with Learning Action Cells (LACs) is crucial for enhancing professional growth. By exploring the firsthand accounts and perspectives of teachers, valuable insights can be gained into the effectiveness and impact of LACs on their professional development. Teachers' narratives provide a rich understanding of the challenges they encounter, the benefits they perceive, and the factors that contribute to their growth within the LAC framework. Furthermore, these narratives offer contextual insights, enabling a deeper exploration of how various factors, such as school culture, administrative support, and available resources, influence the implementation and outcomes of LACs. By analyzing these narratives, educational policymakers, school leaders, and teachers themselves can identify best practices and strategies to optimize the use of LACs as a means of fostering professional

Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological approach, to explore and understand the lived experiences of teachers participating in Learning Action Cells (LAC) at Lagundi-CCL National High School. Phenomenology was deemed appropriate as it focuses on capturing the essence of participants' experiences, perceptions, and meanings derived from their involvement in a shared phenomenon.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at from Lagundi-CCL National High School under the Department of Education, Schools Division Office of Rizal.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The study involved 31 teachers who actively participated in LAC sessions. Through this approach, the research sought to gain in-depth insights into how LAC contributes to teachers' professional growth, collaborative learning, and reflective practice. It also examined the challenges encountered and the strategies employed to address these challenges within the LAC process.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

This study utilized a purposive sampling technique to select the 31 teacher-participants of Lagundi-CCL National High School who were actively engaged in Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions. Purposive sampling was deemed appropriate as it specifically targets individuals who have direct experience and in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon being studied. The participants were chosen based on their active participation in LAC activities and their willingness to share their lived experiences. The sampling procedure ensured that only information-rich cases were included in the study, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of teachers' experiences, challenges, and insights regarding LAC as a platform for professional growth and collaborative learning

2.5 Research Instrument

The primary research instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview guide, developed by the researcher to elicit in-depth responses from the 31 teacher-participants of Lagundi-CCL National High School. Questions included are probing and open-ended in nature so that sufficient data will be collected for the analysis. Questions are the following but not limited to: (1) Can you describe your overall experience with participating in a Learning Action Cell (LAC)? (2)Can

you describe any challenges or obstacles you encountered during your LAC participation? and (3) Can you identify any specific strategies or practices within the LAC that have been particularly beneficial for your continuous learning?

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering procedure began with the securing of permission from the school authorities of Lagundi-CCL National High School, followed by the identification of 31 teacher-participants actively involved in Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions through purposive sampling. After obtaining informed consent, the participants were oriented about the purpose of the study, ethical considerations, and their voluntary participation. Data were then collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews using a validated interview guide, conducted at a convenient time and place for the participants to ensure comfort and openness. With permission, responses were audio-recorded and supported with field notes to capture relevant observations. Finally, all data were transcribed, organized, and prepared for thematic analysis to identify emerging themes related to teachers' experiences in LAC and their professional growth.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The data gathered in this study were analyzed using thematic analysis, which is appropriate for qualitative and phenomenological research. After transcription of the interview recordings, the researcher carefully read and re-read the data to become familiar with the participants' responses. Significant statements were then identified, coded, and organized into meaningful categories. These categories were further examined to identify recurring patterns and emerging themes related to teachers' experiences in Learning Action Cells (LAC), including collaboration, reflective practice, action-oriented learning, challenges encountered, and strategies for professional growth. The identified themes were then interpreted to capture the essence of the participants' lived experiences and to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of LAC in enhancing teachers' professional development at Lagundi-CCL National High School.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

This study strictly adhered to ethical standards in the conduct of research. Prior to data collection, permission was sought from the school authorities and concerned officials to ensure proper coordination and approval. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, and their participation was entirely voluntary. Informed consent was obtained, assuring them that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents were strictly maintained by not disclosing their identities and ensuring that all collected data were used solely for academic purposes. Additionally, the researcher ensured that no harm, discomfort, or bias would affect the participants throughout the process. All information gathered was treated with utmost respect and integrity, and results were presented honestly and objectively.

Results and Discussion

3.1 Experiences of the teachers in participating in Learning Action Cell

The thematic analysis revealed that teachers' experiences in Learning Action Cells (LAC) are characterized by three key dimensions: collaborative learning, action-oriented practice, and continuous reflection and improvement. Participants highlighted that LAC sessions fostered meaningful collaboration, where ideas, experiences, and perspectives were openly shared in a dynamic and interactive environment (e.g., "nag-share kami ng knowledge and experiences kaya mas naging rich ang learning"). This collaboration enhanced collective understanding and professional exchange. In terms of action-oriented practice, teachers emphasized that learning was directly applied to real classroom situations through setting goals, identifying actionable steps, and implementing strategies that produced tangible instructional outcomes (e.g., "na-translate namin ang learning into practical outcomes sa classroom"). Lastly, continuous reflection and improvement emerged as a vital process, where teachers regularly evaluated their teaching experiences, discussed challenges, and shared best practices to enhance performance and promote professional growth (e.g., "we reflect on results and identify areas to improve"). Overall, these themes demonstrate that LAC serves as a meaningful platform for collaborative, practical, and reflective professional development among teachers.

Table 1
Experiences of the teachers in participating in Learning Action Cell

Themes	Responses	Meaning
Collaborative Learning	"Taking part in a LAC gave me the opportunity to engage in collaborative learning with a variety of people." – P1 "We shared our knowledge, experiences, and perspectives, kaya mas naging rich ang learning environment." – P4	Collaborative learning enhances the learning process by integrating multiple perspectives and promoting active exchange of ideas, knowledge, and insights among participants.

	“Yung discussions ay very dynamic and interactive, kaya lahat ng members ay active na nakikilahok.” – P6	
Action-Oriented Approach	“Sa LAC, very emphasized ang action-oriented approach kung saan focus kami sa application ng mga natutunan sa real situations.” – P5 “We identified actionable steps, nag-set ng goals, at nag-discuss ng implementation strategies.” – P3 “Nagawa naming i-translate ang learning into practical outcomes na may actual impact sa classroom.” – P7	The action-oriented approach ensures that learning is not purely theoretical but is applied in real-life teaching situations, promoting practical problem-solving and meaningful instructional impact.
Continuous Reflection and Improvement	“We regularly reflect on the results, challenges encountered, and lessons learned sa aming mga klase.” – P8 “We shared our reflections with the group, kaya mas na-analyze namin kung saan pa kailangan mag-improve.” – P11 “We also shared best practices with each other.” – P10	Continuous reflection and improvement promote a growth mindset among teachers by encouraging self-assessment, shared reflection, and the refinement of teaching strategies for better performance.

3.2 Challenges and Obstacles Encountered During LAC Participation

The thematic analysis of challenges encountered during Learning Action Cell (LAC) participation revealed three main issues: differing perspectives, time constraints, and limited resources. Participants expressed that diversity in experiences, backgrounds, and viewpoints sometimes leads to disagreements, confusion, and misunderstandings during discussions (e.g., “nagkakaroon ng confusion and misunderstanding”), although these differences also reflect the richness of ideas within the group. Time constraints were also consistently highlighted, as teachers reported insufficient time due to heavy workloads, paperwork, and multiple school responsibilities, which affect their participation in LAC activities, implementation, and reflection (e.g., “wala talaga kaming enough time”). Lastly, resource limitations emerged as a significant concern, particularly the lack of ICT tools, equipment, and funding, which hinder effective engagement and smooth implementation of LAC initiatives (e.g., “kulang sa ICT and other equipments”). Overall, these challenges indicate that while LAC is a valuable professional development mechanism, its effectiveness can be further improved through better scheduling, workload management, and provision of adequate resources.

Table 2
Challenges and Obstacles Encountered During LAC Participation

Themes	Responses	Meaning
Differing Perspectives	“We often disagree while debating since we have different viewpoints.” – P12 “We have various experiences and approaches to address issues in any areas.” – P14 “We have diverse perspectives sa mga subjects na dine-discuss namin since galing kami sa iba’t ibang backgrounds and cultures, kaya minsan nagkakaroon ng confusion and misunderstanding.” – P11	In the Learning Action Cell (LAC), participants come from diverse backgrounds, experiences, and cultures, which leads to different viewpoints. While these differences may result in disagreements, confusion, and misunderstanding during discussions, they also provide opportunities for deeper learning and collaboration.
Time Constraints	“We have limited time.” – P3 “In reality, wala talaga kaming enough time dahil sa paperworks at other	Participants commonly experience time constraints in LAC due to heavy workloads, paperwork, and multiple responsibilities. This affects the completion of activities, discussions, implementation, and reflection, highlighting

	workloads.” – P7 “Limited time sa implementation, activities, and reflection.” – P9	the need for effective time management and prioritization.
Resources	“As usual, lack of needed materials especially ICT.” – P2 “Funding and other resources needed.” – P11 “ICT and other equipments kulang.” – P12	Participants experience challenges related to insufficient resources such as ICT tools, equipment, and funding. The lack of these materials affects participation, engagement, and the effective implementation of LAC activities and objectives.

3.2 Specific strategies or practices within the LAC that have been particularly beneficial for continuous learning

The thematic analysis of strategies within Learning Action Cells (LAC) revealed three key practices that support continuous learning: design thinking/action research, data-driven decision-making, and peer coaching/mentoring. Participants emphasized that through design thinking and action research, they actively engage in identifying problems, implementing interventions, and developing collaborative project proposals that address curriculum and instructional needs (e.g., “project proposals na result ng teamwork”). In terms of data-driven decision-making, teachers consistently highlighted that all decisions are anchored on presented and documented data, ensuring that actions are evidence-based rather than assumption-driven, which strengthens accuracy and accountability in addressing school concerns (e.g., “no assumptions, everything is well-documented”). Lastly, peer coaching and mentoring emerged as a strong support system where teachers assist one another through guidance, feedback, and structured mentoring sessions facilitated by master teachers and group leaders, promoting shared expertise and professional growth (e.g., “we helped one another by doing peer coaching”). Overall, these strategies demonstrate that LAC fosters a collaborative, research-based, and evidence-driven environment that effectively sustains continuous professional development among teachers.

Table 3

Specific strategies or practices within the LAC that have been particularly beneficial for continuous learning

Themes	Responses	Meaning
Design Thinking / Action Research	“We approach problems using interventions.” – P4 “Integrating Action Research sa LAC lalo na sa curriculum area.” – P9 “We created project proposals na pwedeng implement, result ito ng teamwork during LAC.” – P10	Participants emphasize proactive problem-solving through interventions, integration of action research (especially in curriculum), and collaborative development of project proposals. These reflect a dynamic and collaborative process where teachers use research-based and team-driven strategies to improve teaching practices and address identified needs.
Data-Driven Decision Making	“All of the decisions are based on the data presented by each teacher.” – P7 “We presented data as basis of our decisions or actions towards a certain problem during LAC.” – P5 “No assumptions. Everything is well-documented and recorded.” – P1	Participants highlight the importance of using accurate and documented data as the foundation for decision-making. This ensures that actions are evidence-based rather than assumption-driven, promoting transparency, accuracy, and continuous improvement in addressing instructional concerns.
Peer Coaching / Mentoring	“TA is provided through Peer Coaching/Mentoring.” – P9 “We helped one another by doing peer coaching.” – P15 “Our MTs and GLs do the mentoring sessions one by one or by twos.” – P14	Participants recognize peer coaching and mentoring as key support systems within LAC. Teachers assist one another through guidance, feedback, and structured mentoring facilitated by master teachers and group leaders, strengthening collaboration and professional development.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Based on the findings, the Learning Action Cell (LAC) at Lagundi-CCL National High School plays a significant role in enhancing teachers' professional growth through collaborative learning, action-oriented practices, and continuous reflection. Teachers experienced meaningful engagement where ideas, experiences, and strategies were openly shared, leading to enriched professional learning. The LAC also strengthened instructional practices by encouraging the application of learned concepts in real classroom situations, goal-setting, and reflective evaluation of teaching practices. Despite these benefits, challenges such as differing perspectives, time constraints, and limited resources were evident, which sometimes hindered full participation and implementation of activities. Nevertheless, the presence of structured strategies such as design thinking, action research, data-driven decision-making, and peer coaching/mentoring helped sustain continuous learning and addressed some of these challenges.

In light of the results, it is recommended that school administrators strengthen the implementation of LAC by providing more structured schedules and workload adjustments to address time constraints among teachers. Adequate allocation of resources, particularly ICT tools, learning materials, and financial support, should also be prioritized to enhance the effectiveness of LAC sessions. Furthermore, sustaining and expanding collaborative practices such as peer coaching, mentoring, and action research initiatives is encouraged to further support professional development. Training on data-driven decision-making and design thinking may also be intensified to improve teachers' capacity for evidence-based and innovative instructional practices. Lastly, future studies may explore the long-term impact of LAC on student outcomes to further validate its effectiveness in improving teaching and learning quality.

Compliance with ethical standards

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