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Level of Implementation of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) in Gumaca East and West Districts, Division of Quezon: Basis for a Proposed Program Implementation Enhancement

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Index Terms:

school learning action cell (SLAC), program enhancement, mixed method

Abstract. This study examined the level of implementation of the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) in Gumaca East and West Districts, Division of Quezon, Philippines, as a basis for developing a program enhancement plan. A mixed-methods design was employed, combining descriptive quantitative analysis and qualitative thematic analysis for comprehensive interpretation. The quantitative phase assessed SLAC implementation in terms of learning areas priority, cost, and monitoring and evaluation using a five-point Likert scale administered to 23 school heads and 373 teachers through total enumeration. The qualitative phase explored implementation challenges and recommendations using open-ended responses analyzed through thematic coding. Findings revealed that SLAC is highly institutionalized and consistently implemented across all domains, with very high ratings in pedagogical practices, assessment strategies, ICT integration, and curriculum contextualization. These results indicate that SLAC functions as an effective professional learning community supporting teacher development and instructional improvement. Cost indicators showed strong financial support primarily through Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE), supplemented by local and alternative funding sources. Monitoring and evaluation practices were also highly implemented, particularly in feedback utilization and progress tracking, although gaps were identified in standardization, documentation, and consistency. Thematic analysis identified key challenges, including limited financial resources, absence of standardized monitoring tools, and inconsistent scheduling. Respondents recommended strengthening financial sustainability, institutionalizing a unified monitoring framework, ensuring regular scheduling, enhancing leadership and collaboration, and establishing continuous feedback mechanisms. The study concludes that while SLAC is effectively implemented, its long-term sustainability requires strengthened systems, resources, and instructional leadership.

Introduction

In contemporary education systems, teacher quality is widely recognized as the most significant in-school factor influencing student achievement. Global evidence consistently emphasizes that effective teachers require continuous professional learning to sustain instructional competence, adapt to curriculum reforms, and respond to diverse learner needs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; OECD, 2019). In this regard, teacher professional development (TPD) is no longer viewed as a one-time training activity but as an ongoing, school-embedded process that directly shapes instructional quality and learner outcomes.

Recent international assessments further reinforce the urgency of strengthening teacher capacity. The OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) reports that while more than 90% of teachers participate in some form of professional development, only a smaller proportion experience sustained, collaborative, and practice-based learning that directly improves classroom instruction (OECD, 2019). Similarly, UNESCO (2022) highlights persistent global gaps in teacher professional support systems, particularly in developing countries, where limited resources and weak

institutionalization of professional learning communities continue to affect teaching quality and student performance outcomes.

In the Philippine context, the Department of Education (DepEd) has institutionalized the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) through DepEd Order No. 35, s. 2016 as a school-based Continuing Professional Development (CPD) strategy aligned with Republic Act No. 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013. SLAC is designed as a collaborative learning structure where teachers engage in regular, structured discussions focused on improving instructional practices, addressing learner diversity, strengthening assessment strategies, and integrating ICT in teaching and learning.

Despite its policy strength, recent field-based reports and studies indicate that SLAC implementation remains uneven across schools. Findings from local studies suggest that while SLAC is widely conducted, its effectiveness is often constrained by limited funding, inconsistent monitoring, scheduling conflicts, and varying levels of teacher engagement (Vega, 2020; Reazo, 2021; Silva, 2021). In some contexts, SLAC sessions are conducted primarily for compliance rather than as meaningful professional learning engagements, raising concerns about implementation fidelity and sustainability.

Furthermore, empirical studies over the past decade emphasize that the effectiveness of school-based professional development depends heavily on key implementation factors such as needs-based content selection, adequate resource allocation, strong instructional leadership, and systematic monitoring and evaluation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Leithwood et al., 2020). However, gaps persist in how these components are operationalized at the school level, particularly in rural and semi-urban districts where contextual constraints are more pronounced.

In the Division of Quezon, particularly in Gumaca East and West Districts, schools continue to implement SLAC as part of mandated professional development activities. However, there is limited empirical evidence documenting the actual level of implementation across critical dimensions such as learning area prioritization, cost management, and monitoring and evaluation. Likewise, challenges encountered by teachers and school heads, as well as the effectiveness of existing implementation practices, remain underexplored.

Given these realities, there is a pressing need to assess how SLAC is implemented in actual school contexts and to determine whether it is achieving its intended purpose as a collaborative and transformative professional learning strategy. This study therefore seeks to examine the level of SLAC implementation in Gumaca East and West Districts, identify implementation challenges, and generate evidence-based inputs for a program enhancement framework that can strengthen teacher professional development and improve instructional effectiveness.

Research Questions

This study aims to determine the implementation of School Learning Cell (SLAC) in Gumaca East and West Districts, Division of Quezon.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of implementation of the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) in Gumaca East and West Districts as assessed by the Teachers and School Heads in terms of:
   1.1 Learning Areas Priority;
   1.2 Cost ;
   1.3 Monitoring and Evaluation ?
2. What are the challenges encountered in the implementation of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC)?
3. What are the recommendations to effectively implement the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC)?
4. What implementation enhancement program could be developed based on the findings of the study?

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-method research design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) in the Division of Quezon. The use of mixed methods enabled the triangulation of data, thereby enhancing the depth, validity, and overall rigor of the findings.

The quantitative component employed a descriptive research design to determine the level of SLAC implementation in terms of learning areas priority, cost, and monitoring and evaluation. Data were collected using a structured survey questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale, allowing respondents to indicate the extent of implementation across specified

indicators. This approach facilitated the generation of quantifiable data suitable for statistical analysis and supported the generalization of findings within the study population.

In parallel, the qualitative component explored the challenges encountered in SLAC implementation, as well as the suggestions and recommendations provided by respondents. Qualitative data were gathered through open-ended items in the questionnaire and analyzed using thematic analysis, involving systematic coding, categorization, and identification of emerging themes. This process enabled the capture of nuanced perspectives and context-specific insights that complemented the quantitative results.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provided a more holistic understanding of SLAC implementation and strengthened the empirical basis for developing a context-responsive and evidence-based implementation enhancement program.

Respondents/Participants

The population of this study comprised all teachers and school heads in Gumaca East and West Districts, Division of Quezon, during the School Year 2023–2024. Specifically, the study included three hundred seventy-three (373) regular or permanent teachers and twenty-three (23) school heads who were officially employed and assigned to their respective public elementary schools in accordance with the standards set by the Department of Education. These respondents were selected due to their direct involvement in the implementation and supervision of the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC), making them key informants capable of providing reliable and context-specific data aligned with the objectives of the study. The teacher-respondents consisted of classroom teachers handling various grade levels and subject areas. As primary implementers of instruction and active participants in SLAC sessions, they play a central role in collaborative professional learning, instructional planning, assessment practices, and classroom application. Their inclusion ensured that the study captured firsthand insights into the level of SLAC implementation, particularly in terms of learning areas priority, cost considerations, monitoring and evaluation practices, and the challenges encountered during implementation.

Meanwhile, the school heads served as instructional leaders and administrators responsible for the organization, supervision, and monitoring of SLAC activities in their respective schools. Their roles include ensuring alignment of SLAC implementation with institutional goals, resource allocation, policy directives, and teachers' professional development needs. Including school heads provided essential administrative and leadership perspectives, particularly in relation to decision-making processes, program management, and evaluation mechanisms.

A purposive sampling technique (total enumeration) was employed, wherein all members of the target population were included in the study. This approach was adopted due to the manageable size of the population and to ensure comprehensive data collection, thereby minimizing sampling bias and enhancing the representativeness and reliability of the findings. The nearly equal distribution of teacher-respondents between Gumaca West (184) and Gumaca East (189) districts further ensured balanced representation, while the inclusion of all school heads strengthened the validity of administrative insights.

Instrument of the Study

The primary data-gathering tool used in this study was a researcher-developed survey questionnaire designed to assess the implementation of the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) in Gumaca East and West Districts. The instrument was constructed based on an extensive review of related literature, empirical studies, and established concepts relevant to SLAC implementation, ensuring alignment with the variables identified in the study, particularly learning areas priority, cost, and monitoring and evaluation.

The questionnaire consisted of two (2) parts. Part I elicited responses from school heads regarding the level of SLAC implementation in their respective schools, focusing on administrative, supervisory, and monitoring dimensions. Part II gathered data from teachers concerning their experiences and perceptions of SLAC implementation, particularly in relation to instructional practices, participation, and challenges encountered.

To ensure the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was subjected to expert validation, wherein specialists in educational management and research evaluated the clarity, relevance, and alignment of the items with the study objectives. Subsequently, the instrument underwent pilot testing involving ten (10) respondents who were not included in the actual sample. The pilot test aimed to assess the reliability, clarity, and internal consistency of the instrument, as well as to identify items requiring revision.

Responses to the questionnaire were measured using a five-point Likert scale, allowing respondents to indicate the degree to which each statement reflects their experience or perception. The scale was accompanied by corresponding verbal interpretations to facilitate consistent and objective analysis of the data. Overall, these procedures ensured that the instrument was both valid and reliable for measuring the constructs under investigation.

Procedure

This study employed a systematic and ethically guided procedure for data collection. Following the pre-oral defense, the research instrument was revised in accordance with the evaluators' comments and recommendations. Ambiguous and misleading items were refined to enhance clarity and alignment with the study objectives. The revised instrument was then submitted to experts for validation and final approval, ensuring its content validity and suitability for data collection.

Upon approval of the instrument, the researcher formally requested permission to conduct the study from the Schools Division Office of Quezon. Prior to data collection, the research protocol and instruments were reviewed to ensure compliance with institutional requirements. Informed consent was secured from all participants, and ethical standards, including voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality, were strictly observed throughout the study.

Data were collected primarily through a survey questionnaire administered via **Google Forms**, allowing efficient and accessible participation of respondents across Gumaca East and West Districts. This method facilitated timely data gathering while ensuring accuracy in response recording.

After the completion of data collection, all responses were systematically organized, coded, and tabulated. The collected data were then subjected to appropriate statistical and qualitative analyses to ensure accurate interpretation. This structured procedure ensured the reliability, validity, and integrity of the data gathered for the study.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data gathered in this study, both quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques were employed in alignment with the research objectives, ensuring a comprehensive and methodologically robust interpretation of the findings.

For the level of implementation of the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC), descriptive statistical measures were utilized. The mean was computed to determine the average level of implementation across the dimensions of learning areas priority, cost, and monitoring and evaluation. Furthermore, ranking was applied to establish the relative importance and comparative standing of each indicator, thereby identifying priority areas for improvement.

Meanwhile, the challenges encountered and the suggestions and recommendations provided by the respondents were analyzed using qualitative methods. Specifically, thematic analysis was employed, wherein responses were systematically coded, categorized, and organized into emerging themes. This analytical process facilitated the identification of recurring patterns, salient issues, and context-specific insights relevant to SLAC implementation.

The integration of descriptive statistics and thematic analysis enabled a more nuanced and holistic understanding of the data, thereby providing a strong empirical foundation for the development of an evidence-based SLAC implementation enhancement program.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were followed by the school heads and teachers in conducting the study. The research was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of Marinduque State University for ethical review. The following rights of the participants were considered:

1. Voluntary participation of participants is ensured. Their participation in the data-gathering procedure was completely voluntary. The teacher-participants may withdraw at any time or skip any question if they are uncomfortable.
2. There were no known risks experienced by the participants in the conduct of the data gathering.
3. Confidentiality of information was observed during the conduct of the study, such as identifying information about the learners.
4. Participants are fully informed about the procedures that were utilized. Their consent to participate was secured.
5. Further, unethical activities were not done in this study, especially the failure to acknowledge the contributions of other people in the field.

Results and Discussion

Indicators	Mean		Total	VI	Rank
A. Learner's Diversity	**SH**	**T**			
Differentiated Instruction	4.75	4.33	4.54	VHP	4
Inclusive Teaching Strategies	4.15	4.33	4.24	HP	11
Management of Learner Behavior	4.70	4.43	4.57	VHP	3
Management of Classroom Structure and Activities	4.60	4.28	4.44	VHP	8
Fair Learning Environment	4.65	4.28	4.47	VHP	7
Learner Safely and Security	4.90	4.34	4.62	VHP	1
Gender Issues and GAD Inclusion	4.65	4.25	4.45	VHP	6
Teaching Strategies for Learners under Difficult Circumstances	4.65	4.41	4.53	VHP	5
Promotion of Purposive Learning	4.50	4.25	4.38	VHP	9
Racial, Ethnic, Linguistic, Religious and Cultural Diversity	4.50	4.18	4.34	VHP	10
Teaching Students with Special Needs	4.65	4.55	4.60	VHP	2
Composite Mean	**4.61**	**4.33**	**4.47**	**VHP**	
B. Pedagogies					
Strategy for Promoting Literacy and Numeracy	5.00	4.50	4.75	VHP	1
Classroom Communication Strategies	4.60	4.55	4.58	VHP	3
Strategies for Critical and Creative Thinking	4.80	4.43	4.62	VHP	2
Proficient Use of Language in Instruction	4.60	4.36	4.48	VHP	4
Composite Mean	**4.68**	**4.46**	**4.52**	**VHP**	
C. Assessment and Reporting					
Designing Formative and Summative Assessment	4.70	4.34	4.52	VHP	1
Utilization of Feedback to improve Learning	4.65	4.36	4.51	VHP	2.5
Selection and Organization of Assessment Methods	4.65	4.33	4.49	VHP	4
Utilization of Assessment Strategies	4.70	4.32	4.51	VHP	2.5
Composite Mean	**4.69**	**4.34**	**4.55**	**VHP**	
D. 21st Century Skills ICT Integration					
Teaching and Learning Resources Integrating ICT	4.55	4.44	4.50	VHP	3
Positive Use of ICT	4.75	4.43	4.59	VHP	1
Technology and Media Literacy	4.50	4.46	4.48	VHP	4
Collaboration and Communication Strategies	4.60	4.43	4.52	VHP	2
Composite Mean	**4.60**	**4.44**	**4.52**	**VHP**	
E. Curriculum Contextualization					
Lesson Planning	4.80	4.30	4.55	VHP	3
Localization and Indigenization of Learning Materials	4.90	4.33	4.62	VHP	1
Planning and Management of Teaching- Learning Process	4.75	4.36	4.56	VHP	2
Composite Mean	**4.69**	**4.33**	4.51	**VHP**	4
GRAND MEAN	**4.67**	**4.38**	**4.54**	**VHP**	

Table 1. Level of Implementation of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) as assessed by the School Heads and Teachers in Gumaca East and West Districts, Division of Quezon in terms of Learning Areas Priority

Table 1 reveals that the implementation of the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) in Gumaca East and West Districts is generally perceived as very highly implemented (grand mean = 4.54) across all assessed dimensions, namely learning areas priority, pedagogical practices, assessment and reporting, ICT integration, and curriculum contextualization. This indicates that SLAC has been institutionalized as a functional school-based professional development mechanism, consistent with its mandate under DepEd Order No. 35, s. 2016. The result aligns with the assertions of Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) and Desimone and Garet (2015), who emphasized that effective professional development is sustained, collaborative, and embedded in teachers' daily instructional contexts. The high composite ratings further suggest that SLAC is not merely implemented as a compliance requirement but is operationalized as a meaningful platform for instructional enhancement a*nd reflective practice.

Among the dimensions, pedagogical strategies for literacy and numeracy (m = 4.75) and positive use of ICT (m = 4.75) emerged as the highest-rated indicators, indicating strong emphasis on foundational skills and technology integration. This finding is consistent with Silva (2021) and Voogt et al. (2015), who underscored the increasing importance of 21st-century competencies such as digital literacy, critical thinking, and communication in teacher development programs. Likewise, the high rating on assessment design and utilization (composite m = 4.69) reflects teachers' growing competence in formative

and summative assessment practices, supporting Hattie's (2017) assertion that assessment-informed instruction significantly improves learning outcomes. However, relatively lower mean scores in inclusive education and cultural diversity (m = 4.24–4.45 range) suggest that while SLAC addresses instructional effectiveness, there remains a developmental gap in strengthening equity-oriented pedagogies, which is critical in diverse learning contexts.

The prominence of curriculum contextualization, particularly localization and indigenization (m = 4.90) highlights strong alignment with Republic Act No. 10533 (Enhanced Basic Education Act), which promotes contextualized and localized instruction. This supports Llego (2019), who emphasized that teacher learning must be grounded in contextual realities to ensure relevance and applicability. Nonetheless, despite these high ratings, the literature indicates that many schools still experience inconsistencies in translating identified priorities into structured SLAC plans (Kraft et al., 2018), suggesting that high perceived implementation does not necessarily guarantee uniform quality of execution across schools.

From a theoretical standpoint, the overall strong implementation of SLAC reflects the effectiveness of professional learning communities (PLCs), as emphasized by Vangrieken et al. (2017), where collaborative learning, peer interaction, and shared responsibility enhance teacher competence. However, the findings also echo Admiraal et al. (2021), who noted that variations in teacher engagement and motivation can affect the depth of collaboration within professional learning structures. This implies that while SLAC is structurally established, its impact is still contingent upon the quality of facilitation, leadership support, and sustained teacher engagement.
When situated within the broader literature, the results confirm that SLAC functions as a cost-effective, school-based CPD model, yet its sustainability remains influenced by resource allocation and administrative support, as highlighted by Vega (2020) and Bruns and Luque (2015). The strong implementation ratings contrast with reported systemic challenges in funding and monitoring, suggesting a possible gap between perceived implementation quality and structural constraints. Moreover, consistent with Hamilton et al. (2020), the study underscores the importance of robust monitoring and evaluation systems, as the high ratings in implementation dimensions may not fully capture variations in fidelity and long-term impact.

Generally, the findings indicate that SLAC in the studied districts is well-implemented and functionally operational, particularly in pedagogy, ICT integration, and curriculum contextualization. However, aligning with Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) and OECD (2019), the effectiveness of SLAC must be continuously strengthened through improved inclusivity practices, standardized monitoring systems, and sustained leadership support. These results provide empirical evidence that, while SLAC is a strong professional development framework, its optimization requires addressing gaps in equity-focused instruction and implementation consistency to fully realize its intended impact on teacher development and learner outcomes.

Indicators	**M**		**Total**	**VI**	**Rank**
Cost	**SH**	**T**			
The budget shall come from the school's respective MOOE	4.80	4.56	4.68	AP	1
The budget shall come from local fund	4.80	4.50	4.65	AP	2.5
Material resources should be provided	4.75	4.48	4.62	AP	4
Material resources could be the supplies, worksheets, videos, equipment, budget, food, venues and other things needed in the conduct of a LAC session.	4.80	4.50	4.65	AP	2.5
The SLAC fund come from canteen fund	4.70	4.50	4.60	AP	5
Composite Mean	**4.77**	**4.51**	**4.64**	**AP**	

Table 2. Level of Implementation of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) as assessed by the School Heads and Teachers in Gumaca East and West Districts, Division of Quezon in terms of Cost

Table 2 reveals that findings on the cost dimension of SLAC implementation indicate an overall very high level of practice (composite mean = 4.64) as assessed by both school heads and teachers in Gumaca East and West Districts. This suggests that SLAC activities are financially supported through multiple funding sources and are consistently sustained at the school level. The highest-rated indicator, allocation of budget from the school's MOOE (m = 4.68), reflects strong institutional dependence on government-allocated operational funds, affirming the policy-driven financing structure of SLAC implementation. This aligns with DepEd's decentralization of school-based program funding and supports Vega (2020), who emphasized that SLAC sustainability largely depends on effective utilization of MOOE allocations.

Closely related, the use of local funds (m = 4.65) and provision of material resources such as instructional supplies, ICT materials, and logistical support (m = 4.62–4.65) further indicate that schools adopt diversified resource mobilization strategies to sustain SLAC activities. This finding is consistent with Bruns and Luque (2015), who underscored that effective school-based professional development programs require multi-source funding mechanisms to ensure continuity and quality implementation. The relatively consistent high ratings across indicators also suggest that resource adequacy is not a major limiting factor in SLAC execution within the studied districts.

Notably, the inclusion of canteen funds as a supplementary source (m = 4.60), although ranked lowest, still reflects a proactive approach by schools in addressing funding gaps. This demonstrates adaptive financial management practices at the school level, which aligns with Leithwood et al. (2020), who highlighted the importance of school leadership in optimizing available resources to support instructional programs. However, reliance on internally generated funds may also indicate potential sustainability concerns, particularly in schools with limited revenue streams.

From a broader perspective, the results support the literature asserting that well-resourced professional development initiatives significantly enhance implementation fidelity and teacher engagement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). However, despite the high level of perceived adequacy in cost-related factors, international evidence from the World Bank (2018) suggests that funding consistency and strategic allocation remain critical determinants of long-term program effectiveness. This implies that while SLAC is financially supported at the operational level, continuous improvement in budgeting transparency and resource planning is necessary to ensure sustainability.

These findings demonstrate that SLAC implementation in terms of cost is institutionally supported, resource-diversified, and highly practiced, reflecting strong administrative commitment at the school level. Nevertheless, consistent with the RRL, the sustainability of such financial arrangements requires continued strengthening of financial planning systems, improved allocation efficiency, and enhanced accountability mechanisms to ensure that SLAC remains an effective and enduring professional development strategy.

Indicators	**Mean**		**Total**		**Rank**
Monitoring And Evaluation	**SH**	**T**	**Mean**	**VI**	
Progress Checking of LAC Plan was done to ensure implementation plan is progressing and that LAC sessions are of quality	4.51	4.60	4.56	AP	2
LAC Narrative Reports are consolidated and analyzed for provision of appropriate interventions	4.50	4.53	4.52	AP	3
Results of monitoring and evaluation was used to review the LAC implementation cycle to be used as basis for improvement	4.65	4.48	4.57	AP	1
LAC Session Evaluation Tool was used, and results were assessed to ensure mastery and delivery of LACs	4.55	4.44	4.50	AP	4
Monitoring and Evaluation in the conduct of LAC was done regularly	4.50	4.44	4.47	AP	5.5
Best practices and innovations from LAC were documented and shared across schools and districts for adoption of other schools.	4.45	4.44	4.45	AP	7
Program Implementation Review (PIR) and learning Forum was conducted at the end of the school year to share challenges, innovations and outcomes and celebrating success of LAC.	4.50	4.44	4.47	AP	5.5
Composite Mean	**4.52**	**4.48**	**4.50**	**AP**	
GRAND MEAN	**4.65**	**4.49**	**4.57**	**AP**	

Table 3 indicates that SLAC implementation in Gumaca East and West Districts is perceived as highly practiced (grand mean = 4.57), suggesting that SLAC has been institutionalized as a functional school-based professional development mechanism. The highest-rated indicator, the utilization of monitoring results to refine the LAC implementation cycle (m = 4.57), underscores the presence of feedback-driven improvement processes. This is closely followed by progress monitoring of LAC plans (m = 4.56) and consolidation of narrative reports for intervention planning (m = 4.52), indicating that schools are engaging in systematic documentation and reflective analysis to support instructional enhancement. These findings corroborate Hamilton et al. (2020), who emphasized that data-informed monitoring systems strengthen adaptive decision-making and enhance the responsiveness of school-based programs.

Despite these positive results, relatively lower ratings in the documentation and dissemination of best practices (m = 4.45) and regularity of monitoring activities (m = 4.47) point to emerging gaps in the full institutionalization of a standardized M&E system. This aligns with Paler et al. (2020), who identified inconsistencies in SLAC monitoring practices arising from limited standardization and varying interpretations of implementation procedures among stakeholders. In addition, while feedback mechanisms are evident, their uneven application supports Hattie's (2017) argument that feedback systems are

most effective only when they are systematic, timely, and action-oriented, suggesting that the current feedback loop in SLAC requires further strengthening to maximize its instructional impact.

The conduct of Program Implementation Reviews (PIR) and learning forums (m = 4.47) reflects compliance with DepEd's collaborative evaluation structures; however, the moderate rating suggests that reflective practice may still be largely episodic rather than embedded as a continuous improvement cycle. This observation is consistent with Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who emphasized that professional learning yields greater impact when sustained through iterative inquiry processes rather than isolated evaluative events. Similarly, the relatively limited emphasis on cross-school dissemination of innovations indicates constrained knowledge sharing, which OECD (2019) identifies as a common limitation in professional learning communities where best practices often remain localized rather than system-wide.

These findings affirm that SLAC monitoring and evaluation is functionally operational and aligned with its intended policy framework as a reflective and developmental professional learning system. Nevertheless, consistent with Leithwood et al. (2020), its long-term effectiveness depends on strengthened instructional leadership, standardized monitoring tools, and sustained feedback mechanisms. The results therefore position SLAC in a transitional stage—already institutionalized but still requiring enhanced systematization to fully achieve its potential as a data-driven, collaborative, and continuously improving professional development framework.

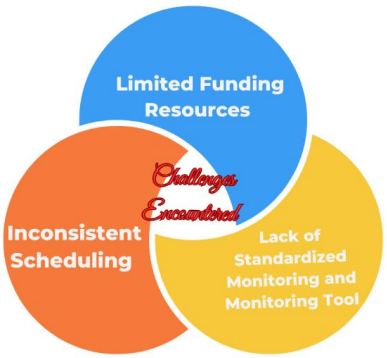

Figure 1. Thematic Presentation of the Challenges Encountered

Theme 1: Limited Funding Resources

This theme refers to insufficient and unstable financial support that limits the effective implementation and sustainability of SLAC activities.

Findings reveal that schools operate under constrained budgets primarily dependent on Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE). This limitation affects the provision of instructional materials, engagement of external experts, reproduction of learning resources, and logistical support such as food and venue preparation during SLAC sessions. Consequently, the quality and continuity of SLAC implementation are compromised.

This finding is consistent with Vega (2020) and Bruns and Luque (2015), who emphasized that inadequate funding remains a persistent barrier in sustaining school-based professional development programs. The result highlights that financial constraints are foundational challenges that influence other implementation dimensions, including monitoring quality and session regularity.

Theme 2: Lack of Standardized Monitoring and Evaluation Tool

This theme refers to the absence of a unified and standardized system for assessing, documenting, and evaluating SLAC implementation outcomes.

Participants reported that monitoring and evaluation practices vary across schools due to the absence of a standardized SLAC assessment tool. Schools rely on informal mechanisms such as reflection journals, anecdotal records, and teacher-made evaluation forms, resulting in inconsistent documentation and assessment practices.

This aligns with Hamilton et al. (2020), who stressed that structured, data-driven monitoring systems are essential for program accountability and continuous improvement. Similarly, Hattie (2017) emphasized that feedback systems must be

systematic and evidence-based to effectively improve instructional practice. The absence of standardized M&E tools therefore limits comparability, weakens accountability, and constrains evidence-based decision-making across schools.

Theme 3: Inconsistent Scheduling
This theme refers to irregular and non-uniform scheduling of SLAC sessions due to competing academic and administrative demands.

Respondents identified scheduling conflicts as a major operational barrier, primarily caused by heavy teaching loads, varied class schedules, and overlapping administrative responsibilities. The availability of facilitators and resource persons further contributes to irregular SLAC session implementation.

This finding supports OECD (2019), which identified time constraints as a critical limitation in teacher professional development systems. Likewise, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) emphasized that effective professional learning requires protected, structured, and sustained time for collaboration. The inconsistency in scheduling therefore reduces the continuity and effectiveness of SLAC as a sustained professional learning mechanism.

Integrated Interpretation of the Thematic Structure (Figure-Based Analysis)

As reflected in the figure, the three themes are interconnected rather than independent. Limited funding resources directly influence the ability to conduct regularly scheduled SLAC sessions and to develop standardized monitoring tools. Similarly, the absence of a structured M&E system limits the ability to justify and optimize resource allocation, while inconsistent scheduling reduces opportunities for effective monitoring and feedback.

This interconnectedness suggests that SLAC implementation challenges operate as a systemic triad, where weaknesses in one domain amplify constraints in the others. Consistent with Leithwood et al. (2020), effective program implementation requires alignment of resources, leadership structures, and monitoring systems to ensure sustainability and impact.

Generally, the thematic findings, as visually represented in the figure, indicate that SLAC implementation challenges in the studied districts are primarily driven by three interrelated systemic constraints: financial limitations, weak standardization of monitoring tools, and inconsistent scheduling practices. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic and integrated approach that simultaneously strengthens funding mechanisms, institutionalizes standardized evaluation systems, and enforces structured scheduling to enhance SLAC effectiveness and sustainability.

Figure 2. Thematic Presentation of the Recommendations of the Respondents to Effectively Implement SLAC

Theme 1: Sustainable Financial Support

This theme refers to the provision of adequate, stable, and strategically managed financial resources to ensure the continuous implementation of SLAC activities.

Respondents emphasized that SLAC sustainability largely depends on the proper allocation of Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) and the timely release of funds. Schools are encouraged to adopt strategic budgeting practices to ensure that essential SLAC needs—such as learning materials, training resources, and logistical support—are consistently provided. In addition, participants highlighted the importance of exploring external funding sources, including partnerships with local government units, stakeholders, and external agencies, to augment limited school resources. This

finding reinforces the importance of financial sustainability as a core determinant of effective school-based professional development.

Theme 2: Standardized Monitoring and Evaluation Tool

This theme refers to the development and implementation of a unified framework and instrument for assessing SLAC processes, outputs, and outcomes across schools.

Participants strongly recommended the creation of a standardized monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tool to ensure consistency, accountability, and comparability of SLAC implementation. Collaboration among school heads, master teachers, and SLAC coordinators was identified as essential in developing clear indicators of success and performance measures. A unified tool is expected to improve data-driven decision-making, strengthen instructional feedback, and enhance program quality. This aligns with the need for structured evaluation systems in professional learning programs to ensure evidence-based improvement.

Theme 3: Consistent Schedule and Planning

This theme refers to the establishment of a systematic, predictable, and collaboratively agreed-upon schedule and planning process for SLAC sessions.

Respondents emphasized that inconsistent scheduling remains a barrier to effective SLAC implementation. They recommended the development of a fixed schedule integrated into the school calendar, ensuring minimal disruption to instructional time. Teachers' participation in identifying relevant SLAC topics was also highlighted as a critical component of planning, ensuring that sessions are responsive to actual classroom needs. This participatory planning approach enhances ownership, relevance, and continuity of professional learning activities.

Theme 4: Effective Leadership and Collaboration

This theme refers to the strengthening of leadership capacity and collaborative engagement among school leaders, teachers, and external stakeholders in SLAC implementation.

Findings indicate that effective SLAC implementation requires competent school leaders and well-trained facilitators who can guide, mentor, and sustain teacher engagement. Respondents also emphasized the importance of collaborative partnerships among teachers, school heads, and community stakeholders to address resource gaps and enhance implementation quality. Leadership training and stakeholder engagement were identified as key strategies for improving coordination, resource mobilization, and instructional support, consistent with the principles of collaborative professional learning communities.

Theme 5: Continuous Feedback Mechanism

This theme refers to the ongoing collection, analysis, and utilization of feedback to improve SLAC implementation and instructional practices.

Respondents underscored the importance of establishing a continuous feedback system to evaluate SLAC effectiveness even in the absence of formal standardized tools. Regular reflection, sharing of best practices, and collaborative evaluation were identified as essential for improving future sessions. Continuous feedback fosters reflective practice, supports instructional refinement, and promotes a culture of continuous improvement within schools.

The Proposed Enhanced SLAC Implementation and Capacity-Building Program for Instructional Quality, Accountability, and Sustainability was developed based on the findings of the study on the level of implementation of the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) in Gumaca East and West Districts, Division of Quezon. It is anchored on DepEd Order No. 35, s. 2016, Republic Act No. 10533, the RPMS framework, and the Professional Learning Community (PLC) model, ensuring alignment with national standards for teacher professional development and school-based management.

Findings show that SLAC is highly implemented in terms of instructional practices, cost support, and monitoring and evaluation. However, gaps remain in financial sustainability, standardization of monitoring and evaluation tools, scheduling consistency, inclusivity practices, and dissemination of best practices. These indicate the need to strengthen SLAC as a more structured, systematic, and sustainable professional learning mechanism.

In response, the program aims to enhance SLAC implementation by improving leadership capacity, strengthening financial and resource management, institutionalizing standardized monitoring and evaluation systems, ensuring consistent scheduling, and reinforcing collaborative professional learning among teachers and school leaders.

The intervention consists of five key components: (1) sustainable financial support through optimized MOOE utilization and stakeholder partnerships; (2) a standardized monitoring and evaluation system using unified tools and data-driven processes; (3) an institutionalized SLAC scheduling system integrated into school calendars; (4) strengthened leadership and professional learning communities; and (5) continuous feedback and knowledge-sharing mechanisms through Program Implementation Reviews, peer mentoring, and dissemination of best practices.

The program will be implemented at the school level with division support and monitored through quarterly SLAC reviews, standardized evaluation tools, school reports, and validation activities. Success indicators include session regularity, improved instructional practices, complete documentation, and active stakeholder participation.

For sustainability, the program will be embedded in SIP, AIP, and RPMS frameworks, supported by continuous capacity building, LGU and stakeholder engagement, and digital reporting systems.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusions

1. The study concludes that the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) in the Gumaca East and West Districts, Division of Quezon, is implemented at a very high level, particularly in pedagogical practices and assessment and reporting, demonstrating its effectiveness in enhancing teachers' professional development and classroom instruction. Financially, SLAC is sustainably supported through MOOE, local funds, and school-generated resources, reflecting strong institutional commitment; however, dependence on internal funding poses potential risks to long-term sustainability and underscores the need for diversified financial support. Furthermore, while monitoring and evaluation practices are highly implemented and contribute to continuous improvement, the lack of standardized tools and limited sharing of best practices result in inconsistencies, highlighting the need for a unified monitoring system and stronger collaborative mechanisms.

2. The study further concludes that the major challenges encountered in SLAC implementation—limited funding resources, absence of standardized monitoring tools, and inconsistent scheduling—are interrelated and significantly affect program efficiency and sustainability. These challenges highlight the need for more structured systems and coordinated efforts to ensure effective and consistent implementation across schools.

3. The findings indicate that effective SLAC implementation is influenced by key factors such as sustainable financial support, standardized monitoring and evaluation, organized scheduling, strong leadership, collaborative engagement, and continuous feedback mechanisms. These elements are essential in sustaining program effectiveness, enhancing teacher participation, and ensuring continuous improvement in instructional practices.

4.Study concludes that the proposed SLAC implementation enhancement program provides a comprehensive and strategic framework to address the identified gaps in sustainability, structure, and consistency. By focusing on financial support, standardized monitoring and evaluation, institutionalized scheduling, leadership and collaboration enhancement, and continuous feedback mechanisms, the program has strong potential to improve the overall effectiveness and long-term impact of SLAC, ultimately contributing to enhanced teacher competence and improved learner outcomes.

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Data Availability Statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study; all data used were obtained from previously published sources as cited in the reference list.

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Appendices

No appendices are attached to this study.