Continuing Professional Development through Utilization of Learning Action Cell (LAC) Sessions of Secondary Social Studies Teachers

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Abstract
The study investigated and analyzed the level of utilization of the contents of Learning Action Cell (LAC) Sessions - a school-based Continuing Professional Development (CPD) as perceived by Social Studies Teachers of Secondary Schools of Department of Education, Division of Zambales, Philippines during the academic year 2017-2018 among 130 teachers. The research design was descriptive and a standardized survey checklist was used as the main instrument of data collection. The reliability index of the adopted instrument of was .964 which is highly consistent for data gathered. For data analysis, descriptive and inferential statistics (ANOVA) using SPSS version 16 was utilized. The teacher-respondent perceived that the Learning Action Cell (LAC) Session Contents such as Learners Diversity and Student Inclusion mainly stressing that learners are the reason for all education process and modifies the instruction to foster harmony in the class; the Content and Pedagogy of the K to 12 Basic Education Program primarily planning and delivering effectively instructions; Content Assessment and Reporting in the K to 12 Basic Education Program particularly implementing the learner – centered assessment policies were highly utilized. Results of the analysis of variance revealed a no significant difference in the perception on the level of utilization of the explored Learning Action Cell (LAC) Session Contents when attributed according to teachers’ profile variables.

Keywords: Learning Action Cell (LAC), Social Studies Teachers, Learners Diversity and Inclusion, Content and Pedagogy, Kto12 Basic Education Program, Assessment and Reporting.

Introduction
Teachers have the capacity and responsibility to take charge of their own learning. Teacher can learn best through collaboration with peers and colleagues and worked-based learning. In this context, according to Lobo (2016), it is important that teachers in the various school systems need to consider the ultimate goal of their profession and the methods they can employ to be successful in their career and in preparing students for an uncertain and undetermined world. Sahlberg (2010), indicates that teachers around the world are taking a skills-based approach to education to prepare students to build careers and be active citizens after completing school. TheOrganization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) [2003], a competency is more than just knowledge and skills. It involves the ability to meet complex demands, by drawing on and mobilizing psychosocial resources (including skills and attitudes.

UNESCO noted in 2006 that teachers are expected to be reflective and change-oriented to meet the government and public demand for quality education and to consider the dynamic nature of the learners. This situation signifies the importance of continuous professional development of teacher aiming at improving the teaching learning process.
thereby improving quality of education. According to the 2010 Department of Education Discussion Paper on K to12, what the Basic Education in the Philippines needs are teachers whose ultimate aim is to help all students progress and grow.

In line with teachers’ continuous professional development, the Philippine government issued the Republic Act No. 10533, or The Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 which will be enforced by Department of Education (DepEd). The Department of Education issues the DepEd Order 35, series of 2016, enclosed the policy on the Learning Action Cell (LAC) as the Kto12 Basic Education Program School–Based Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Strategy for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning. The Learners Diversity and Student Inclusion; Content and Pedagogy of the K to 12 Basic Education Program; and Content Assessment and Reporting in the K to 12 Basic Education Program are some of the important contents of the learning action cell.

In every classroom, it commonly occurs that students’ learning progress is never at the same rate. The students with disabilities or learning difficulties especially need extra help (Wu, Tu, Wu, Le & Reynolds, 2012). It would be very difficult for the teacher to give lessons to the whole class when students do not progress at the same level. Each individual has his/her own preferred learning style and it would be very difficult for the teacher to cater for every student’s preference. Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) is an essential and critical element in determining a teacher’s success in handling the teaching and learning process and further produces effective teaching (Hill, 2004 as cited in Lucenario, Yangco, Punzalan & Espinosa, 2016). Global Economy and Development (2017), reported that DepEd also mandated the use of classroom assessment practices, effective during the 2015-2016 school year. The recent creation of Learning Action Cells, which function as professional learning communities for teachers will further develop teachers’ formative assessment expertise.

As an institution of learning, the DepEd works to protect and promote the right of Filipinos to quality basic education that is equitable, culture-based, and complete, and allows them to realize their potential and contribute meaningfully to building the nation. The investment of the DepEd in the development of human potential is a commitment it makes not only to its learners but also its teachers. This advocacy of the DepEd implies that every teacher should be properly guided and equipped with the know-how of teaching and learning process through revisiting and reviewing some areas or concerned in performing the duties and responsibilities of an effective and efficient teacher. Social Studies teachers are encouraged not only to be involved in the process of developing shared vision as a guide post in making decisions about teaching and learning in the school. Social Studies teachers should also take actions in learning and implementing well the curriculum; understand new concepts; try new innovation in pedagogies; and acknowledge learner diversity. Whatever the case, teachers need some directions when it comes to their professional development. Therefore, teachers sustained development in the teaching profession is crucial.

**Objectives of the Study**

The aim of the research study was to conduct an in-depth analysis on the level of utilization of Learning Action Cell (LAC) Session Contents - as a school-based Continuing Professional Development (CPD) among Social Studies teachers of Zone 2, Division of Zambales. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How may the profile of the teacher-respondents be described as to age, sex, civil status, field of specialization, academic position and highest educational attainment?
2. How may the teacher-respondents perceive the level of utilization of the Learning Action Cell (LAC) Session Contents such as:
   2.1. Learners Diversity and Student Inclusion;
   2.2. Content and Pedagogy of the K to 12 Basic Education Program; and
   2.3. Content Assessment and Reporting in the K to 12 Basic Education Program?

3. Is there a significant difference on the perceived level of utilization of Learning Action Cell (LAC) Session Contents when attributed to teachers’ profile variables?

Literature Review

Learner Action Cell (LAC) is the version of the Philippines of School-Based Continuing Professional development (CPD). It was mandated by the DepEd Order 35, s. 2016—also known as “Learner Action Cell as a Kto12 Basic Education Program School-Based Continuing Development Strategy for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning.” LAC implementation policy provides the framework and enabling mechanisms for the conduct and implementation of LACs in schools or in clusters if multi-grade schools prefer to conduct them by cluster. It is directed towards improving teacher knowledge, skills, and attitudes based on established competencies linked to the K to 12 Curriculum. LAC sessions, enable teachers to do collaborative planning, problem solving, and action implementation that will lead to improved teachers’ knowledge, skills and attitudes that will consequently and significantly improve student learning and development. Contents in LACs include (a) Learners Diversity and Student Inclusion; (b) Content and Pedagogy of the K to 12 Basic Education Program; and (c) Content Assessment and Reporting in the K to 12 Basic Education Program.

Increased competencies and professional effectiveness as perceived by educators as ultimately measured by the extent to which teaching enhances student learning. According to Desta, Chalchisa & Lemma (2014), the knowledge and skills obtained from teacher professional development play an instrumental role in mitigating problems encountered in the day-to-day professional life of teachers. The National Competency-Based Teacher Standards [NCBTS] (2011) stressed that teachers’ mastery is also towards the domain of diversity of learners which deals with respecting individual differences, using this knowledge to design sets of learning activities in which all students can attain desired learning goals. Jongewaard (2013) emphasized the need for educators to focus and understand diversity (e.g., cultural backgrounds and with exceptionalities) of learners in their instructional planning and process.

Murchan, Tohasa, Loxley & Johnston (2009) suggest that teaching is effective when process, pedagogy and approaches are planned. Public Education Leadership Program [PELP] (2009) focused on educators studying the complex processes, concepts and principles contained in standards using varied strategies and accessible to all students. However, according to O’Connor (2012) that collaboration is beneficial for it will provide opportunities to teachers to experience curricular organization and design unit lessons that can enhance instruction to engage diverse learners. Little & Veugelers (2005) on the other hand highly suggests collaboration among educators for it allows improvement of skills and knowledge, expertise exchange and professional dialogue.

Jongewaard’s (2013) study revealed that assessment should ensure the continuous intellectual, social and physical development of the learners. Giving of timely and appropriate feedback to students have to be intensified by the Social Studies teachers. PELP (2009) stressed that Social Studies teachers should provide regular and timely feedback to
students and parents that moves learners forward and allows students to use feedback to improve their work before a grade is assigned.

Theoretical Framework

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is said to have been coined in the mid-1970s (Gray 2005 as cited in Desta, Chalchisa & Lemma, 2014). Its notion is rooted in the Constructivist Philosophy/Theory which claims that a person’s constructions and views of the world are not stable, but are in continuous change. Accordingly, it is presumed that teachers have to engage themselves in planning and executing their professional development on a continuous basis to cope with continuous change. A number of models have been in use to address research in teacher professional development. Some of these models is Learning Action Cell (LAC). Learning Action Cell sessions (LACs) provide a way for teachers to support each other and continuously learn while they apply these changes in the classroom. This endeavor’s objective and purpose is stipulated in the DepEd Order 35, s. 2016, stressing that continuing school-based learning is key to effective teacher development and the mass training of teachers has to be supported also by school-based activities, sessions and conferences. This study therefore, is intended for teachers who wish to determine if the contents of school-based LAC sessions are appropriately and adequately utilized for teachers’ professional development.

Materials and Methods

This study utilized descriptive research method with the survey checklist as main research instrument. The respondents of the study are the Social Studies teachers of twelve (12) Secondary Schools of Zone 2 (Municipalities of Iba, Botolan and Palauig) Division of Zambales, Philippines. A total population of one hundred thirty (130) Social Studies teachers were the respondents. The instrument used is a standardized survey checklist adapted from the instrument of Ester L. Catimon’s (2017) and the contents of the DepEd Order 35, s. 2016 “Learner Action Cell as a Kto12 Basic Education Program School-Based Continuing Development Strategy for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning.” The instrument has a total of 30 indicators of LACs contents.

After making the final draft of the survey checklist, an approval to administer the instrument to the teacher respondents was sought from the Schools Division Superintendent Department of Education Division of Zambales, Philippines. After which, the researchers personally distributed the instrument to the participants during the Third Quarter of the academic Year 2017-2018. The confidentiality of teachers’ responses was assured. The instruments were collected a week after. The descriptive statistical tools (frequency count, percentage and mean) and inferential statistics (ANOVA) were used for the analysis of data gathered.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. Frequency, Percentage and Mean Distribution of Teacher-Respondents’ Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age (years)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>47</td>
<td>36.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>83</td>
<td>63.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 shows that the computed mean age of the Socials Studies teacher-respondents is 34.96 or 35 years old. This particular age is categorized into middle adulthood. Middle adulthood ranges from 35 to 40 years old who often accommodate bigger responsibilities in life. Of the 130 total respondents, 47 or 36.15% are males and 83 or 63.85% are females. This means that majority of the teacher-respondents of the present study is represented by women. The result on teachers’ area of specialization revealed that most (75 or 57.69%) of the teacher-respondents specializes in Social Studies. This result signifies that the respondents are teaching aligned with their specialization.

As for the result on the teachers’ present academic position, more than half (50.77%) are in the position Teacher 1. Teacher 1 constitute the largest percentage in the Deliquiña & de Guzman (2017). An overwhelming majority (94 or 72.31 %,) of the Social Studies teacher-respondents are Bachelor’s degree holder with Master’s units. This result suggests that the teachers of the present study are pursuing continuous professional development through engagement in advanced education.

### Level of Utilization of Learning Action Cell (LAC) Session Contents of the Social Studies Teachers

#### Learner Diversity and Student Inclusion

As shown in Table 2, indicator 2 stated as “Emphasizes that learners are the reason for all education process” and indicator 8 stated as “Adjusts the instruction to foster harmony in the class” obtained a weighted mean of 4.48 and ranked 1.5th respectively. Indicator 1 stated as “Includes learner diversity and student inclusion as topic for discussion in the session” obtained a weighted mean of 4.47 and ranked 3rd. The computed average weighted mean of the indicators 2, 8 and 1 gained a descriptive equivalent of Highly Utilized respectively.

**Table 2:** Level of Utilization of Learning Action Cell Session Content as to Learner Diversity and Student Inclusion
Of the indicators of Learner Diversity and Student Inclusion content of LAC session, giving emphasis on learners being the reason for all education and teachers’ effort to improve teaching and learning processes and making adjustments and showing flexibility on instruction to foster coordination and organization in the class were perceived by the Social Studies teacher-respondents as highly utilized and employed (ranked 1.5). These results signify that the teacher-respondents highly implements instructional activities that considers or makes the learners the core of all educational processes. Whitehouse (2011) concluded that the effectiveness of CPD for teachers tends to be measured by teachers’ competency and efficacy on planning learning activities in the classroom that centers around learners. Bansal & Kumar (2012) highly encouraged Social Studies teachers to execute appropriate activity-based teaching for learners to experience interesting, interdisciplinary and collaborative learning.

Moreover, the teacher respondents assessed highly utilized in including the subject learners’ diversity and student inclusion in the session/conference (ranked 3rd). DepEd Order 35, s. 2016 emphasized that it is the central role of teachers to establish learning environments that are responsive to learner diversity. Oregon Journal of the Social Studies, (2013) suggests to Social Studies teachers utilize instructional activities in which the students are engaged in discussions and working with groups. The overall weighted mean of the perception was 4.42 interpreted as Highly Utilized (HU).

**Content and Pedagogy of the K to 12 Basic Education Program**

**Table 3:** Level of Utilization of Learning Action Cell Session Content as to Content and Pedagogy of the K to 12 Basic Education Program
As shown in Table 3, indicator 6 stated as “Plans lessons and delivers instructions effectively” obtained a weighted mean of 4.56 and ranked 1st. Indicator 7 stated as “Studies and analyzes the K to 12 Curriculum” and indicator 2 stated as “Prepares for lessons and be more relaxed in executing lesson plans” obtained a weighted mean of 4.54 and ranked 2.5th respectively. The computed average weighted mean of the indicators 6, 1 and 2 gained a descriptive equivalent of Highly Utilized (HU) respectively. Of the indicators of Content and Pedagogy of the K to 12 Basic Education Program content of LAC session, planning of lessons and delivering instructions effectively was perceived by the Social Studies teacher-respondents as highly utilized and implemented (ranked 1st). This particular result signifies that the teachers highly valued and utilized instructional process such as planning and delivering instruction and assessing expectation of learning outcomes. In parallel to this result. Jongewaard’s (2013) study claimed that planning instruction will give teachers the opportunity to manage instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students and curriculum goals.

Moreover, the teacher respondents reported they highly utilized analyzing and studying the Kto12 Curriculum and in executing well prepared lessons guided by daily plans. The respondents study and implements the curriculum guide (long term plan) which will allow them and the students to purposefully prioritize actions towards ultimate goal. The domain curriculum under the NCBTS (2011) requires that the teachers have to master the elements of the teaching-learning process that work in convergence to help students achieve the curricular goals. The overall weighted mean was 4.47 interpreted as Highly Utilized (HU).

**Assessment and Reporting in the K to 12 Basic Education Program**

**Table 4:** Level of Utilization of Learning Action Cell Session Content as to Assessment and Reporting in the K to 12 Basic Education Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Weighted Mean</th>
<th>Descriptive Rating</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Implements the learner – centered assessment policies</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>Highly Utilized</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Includes ways in assessing the learning of students during the LAC session 4.38 Highly Utilized 7.5
3. Discusses how data from formative assessment can improve subsequent in lessons. 4.38 Highly Utilized 7.5
4. Conducts assessment that provides teachers and learners with necessary feedback about learning outcomes. 4.35 Highly Utilized 10
5. Selects, organizes and uses sound assessment continually 4.36 Highly Utilized 9
6. Measures teaching effectiveness based on student’s result 4.42 Highly Utilized 3.5
7. Uses evidence of student learning to inform and improve professional practice 4.45 Highly Utilized 2
8. Sets target on desired students’ progress 4.42 Highly Utilized 3.5
9. Identifies the evidence needed to show student’s understanding 4.41 Highly Utilized 5.5
10. Reflects on teaching methodologies and-what does and doesn’t work and why 4.41 Highly Utilized 5.5

| Overall Weighted Mean | 4.41 | Highly Utilized (HU) |

Indicator 1 from Table 4, stated as “Implements the learner – centered assessment policies for the Kto12 curriculum” obtained a weighted mean of 4.52 and ranked 1st.Indicator 7 stated as “Uses evidence of student learning to inform and improve professional practice”, 4.45 (WM) and ranked 2nd. Indicator 6 stated as “Measures teaching effectiveness based on student’s result” and indicator 8 stated as “Sets target on desired students’ progress” obtained a weighted mean of 4.42 and ranked 3.5th respectively. The computed average weighted mean of the indicators 1, 7, 6 and 8 gained a descriptive equivalent of Highly Utilized (HU) respectively.

The learner – centered assessment policies and strategies for the Kto12 curriculum was perceived by the Social Studies teacher-respondents as highly utilized and implemented (ranked 1st) among the indicators of Assessment and Reporting in the K to 12 Basic Education Program content of LAC session. This result signifies that the teachers establish, design, administer appropriate classroom assessment which allows learners to have realistic expectations of own performances. The USAID Teacher Education Project (2012) argued that Social Studies teachers should focus on utilizing assessment and evaluation of students’ learning through the use of varied assessment techniques.

Moreover, the teacher-respondents also highly utilized and practiced the use of evidence-based assessment of student learning, the use of assessment results that measures own teaching effectiveness and to set target of desired students’ progress. As to being effective in teaching and assessment, accordingly, PELP (2009) requires teachers to utilize and implement varied ways of data collection about students’ understanding and skill; that the teachers co-develops alternative assessment tools; and use student’s output, observations and tasks indications to assess performances. The overall weighted mean was 4.41 interpreted as Highly Utilized (HU).

Analysis of Variance on the Difference in the Perceived Level of Utilization of Learning Action Cell (LAC) Session Contents When Grouped According to Respondents’ Profile Variables
Table 5 shows that the significant values for age (0.51), sex (0.14), field of specialization (0.42), academic position (0.88), and highest educational attainment (0.67) were higher than (0.05) alpha level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. There is no significant difference on the perception teachers’ profile. The teachers have likeness of knowledge and of understanding how LAC session content - Learner Diversity and Student Inclusion - can be utilized in the teaching profession and in delivering quality Social Studies instruction.

Table 5. Difference in the Level of Utilization of Learning Action Cell Session Contents when grouped according to their profile variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>Learner Diversity and Student Inclusion</th>
<th>Content and Pedagogy of the K to 12 Basic Education Program</th>
<th>Assessment and Reporting in the K to 12 Basic Education Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>F: 0.88, Sig: 0.51</td>
<td>F: 1.56, Sig: 0.16</td>
<td>F: 1.99, Sig: 0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>F: 2.17, Sig: 0.14</td>
<td>F: 0.23, Sig: 0.63</td>
<td>F: 0.20, Sig: 0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field of Specialization</td>
<td>F: 0.99, Sig: 0.42</td>
<td>F: 1.38, Sig: 0.25</td>
<td>F: 0.48, Sig: 0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Position</td>
<td>F: 0.23, Sig: 0.88</td>
<td>F: 1.54, Sig: 0.21</td>
<td>F: 1.84, Sig: 0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Educational Attainment</td>
<td>F: 0.51, Sig: 0.67</td>
<td>F: 0.21, Sig: 0.89</td>
<td>F: 0.79, Sig: 0.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant

For the result on the Content and Pedagogy of the K to 12 Basic Education Program, the significant values for age (0.16), sex (0.63), field of specialization (0.25), academic position (0.21) and highest educational attainment (0.89) were higher than (0.05) alpha level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. There is no significant difference on the perception as to teachers’ profile. Results revealed that whether the respondents vary in their personal profile, their perception on the level of utilization of Content and Pedagogy of the K to 12 Basic Education Program have similarity.

As for the Assessment and Reporting in the K to 12 Basic Education Program, the significant values for age (0.07), sex (0.65), field of specialization (0.75), academic position (0.50) were higher than (0.05) alpha level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. There is no significant difference on the perception. This results could be attributed on the teachers’ likeness of knowledge and of understanding how this content of LAC session can be utilized for quality Social Studies instruction and growth of the chosen profession/career.

Conclusion

The researchers have found that majority of the Social Studies teacher-respondent are typical female, in their middle adulthood, Teacher I in academic position and holds Bachelor’s degree with Master’s units. The teacher-respondent perceived that the Learning Action Cell (LAC) Session Contents such as Learners Diversity and Student Inclusion mainly stressing that learners are the reason for all education process and modifies the instruction to foster harmony in the class; the Content and Pedagogy of the K to 12 Basic Education Program primarily planning and delivering effectively instructions; Content
Assessment and Reporting in the K to 12 Basic Education Program particularly implementing the learner – centered assessment policies were highly utilized. Results of the analysis of variance revealed a no significant difference in the perception on the level of utilization of the Learning Action Cell (LAC) Session Contents - Learners Diversity and Student Inclusion; Content and Pedagogy of the K to 12 Basic Education Program; Assessment and Reporting in the K to 12 Basic Education Program when grouped according to teachers’ profile variables.

**Recommendations**

In the light of the foregoing findings and conclusions, the researchers recommend that

1. The faculty and the head of the Social Studies Department of Secondary Schools of Zone 2 Division of Zambales, Philippines should further facilitates a learning process which uses knowledge about students’ differences to design varied sets of learning activities to ensure that all students can attain desired learning goals.

2. The Social Studies teachers should maximize the benefits of collaboration among educators by creating a professional learning community.

3. Social Studies teachers’ utilization and conduct of assessment should consider the development of creative and appropriate instructional plan, development and usage of variety of appropriate assessment strategies, providing feedback on learners’ understanding of content and communicating promptly and clearly to learners, parents and supervisors about learners’ progress.

**References**


