

School Learning Action Cell Practices in Focus: An Empirical Assessment of Teacher Support and Instructional Enhancement

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the extent of implementation of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) practices in indigenous schools, focusing on five key dimensions: assessing teachers' needs, providing coaching and mentoring, supporting the teaching and learning process, facilitating evaluation and feedback, and availability of resources. Utilizing a quantitative descriptive design, data were gathered from teachers and teacher-in-charge respondents to determine the level of SLAC implementation as a school-based professional learning mechanism. Findings revealed that SLAC practices were generally often implemented, with an overall mean of 3.76, indicating that SLAC functions as an active platform for collaborative professional development and instructional improvement. Among the dimensions, assessing teachers' needs and supporting the teaching and learning process emerged as the most strongly implemented practices, suggesting that SLAC sessions effectively address classroom challenges and promote context-responsive pedagogy, particularly in culturally diverse and indigenous learning environments. However, relatively lower ratings were observed in coaching and mentoring, as well as resource availability, indicating gaps in structured professional support and access to instructional materials. These limitations may hinder the full realization of SLAC as a transformative professional learning community. The findings highlight the importance of strengthening mentoring systems, enhancing resource provision, and reinforcing leadership support to maximize the impact of SLAC. Overall, the study underscores the role of SLAC as a sustainable and context-sensitive strategy for fostering teacher collaboration, reflective practice, and continuous instructional improvement in resource-constrained educational settings.

Keywords: School Learning Action Cell (SLAC), teacher professional development, instructional support, indigenous education, collaborative learning, coaching and mentoring

INTRODUCTION:

This study examines the extent of implementation of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) practices in indigenous school contexts, with particular focus on assessing teachers' needs, providing coaching and mentoring, supporting the teaching and learning process, facilitating evaluation and feedback, and ensuring the availability of resources. SLAC is a school-based professional development mechanism institutionalized by the Department of Education to promote collaborative learning among teachers and improve classroom instruction. In geographically and culturally diverse settings, such as indigenous communities, SLAC serves as a practical and context-sensitive platform where teachers can reflect on their practices, share strategies, and respond to learners' unique needs. This study specifically explores how these practices are implemented in Inadan Elementary School, San Miguel, Surigao del Sur, as a basis for strengthening teacher support systems and instructional effectiveness.

A growing body of literature highlights the critical role of professional learning communities (PLCs), such as School Learning Action Cells (SLAC), in enhancing teacher development and instructional quality. Studies consistently show that collaborative professional learning fosters reflective practice, shared accountability, and improved teaching performance across diverse educational settings (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Vescio et al., 2008; Wei, 2025). In both global and local contexts, PLCs have been associated with increased teacher

efficacy, instructional innovation, and student achievement, as they provide structured opportunities for peer collaboration and continuous learning (Mydin, 2024; Liu et al., 2022; Moè et al., 2024). In the Philippine setting, SLAC has been recognized as an essential school-based mechanism that promotes contextualized and collaborative professional development, particularly in addressing localized teaching challenges (Barrot, 2019; Bajar et al., 2023; Garcia et al., 2024).

Furthermore, research indicates that SLAC and similar PLC structures contribute to improved teacher performance, enhanced pedagogical practices, and stronger school-based support systems through shared learning and collective problem-solving (Handayani, 2025; Amtu et al., 2021; Prenger et al., 2021). However, despite these benefits, several studies emphasize that the effectiveness of PLCs depends heavily on enabling conditions such as leadership support, availability of resources, and structured mentoring systems (Schnellert & Butler, 2021; Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017; Auben-Alfonso, 2023). In resource-constrained and geographically isolated contexts, challenges such as limited access to materials, inadequate mentoring, and contextual barriers may hinder the full realization of PLCs' potential (Bajar et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2021; Anderson et al., 2020).

While existing literature affirms the value of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) and professional learning communities (PLCs) as transformative professional development strategies, there remains a critical need to examine their implementation across specific dimensions and contexts to better understand how they can be strengthened to support teachers effectively. This need becomes more pronounced in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas, where access to formal training, external experts, and instructional resources is often limited compared to urban settings. In such contexts, SLAC serves as a vital bridge by bringing professional learning directly into the school, enabling teachers to collaboratively address instructional challenges, share localized strategies, and co-construct knowledge without relying on external interventions. However, despite these advantages, gaps remain in the implementation of SLAC, particularly in resource-constrained environments. In the case of Inadan Elementary School, San Miguel, Surigao del Sur, there is limited empirical evidence on how SLAC practices are operationalized across key dimensions such as mentoring systems and resource availability. While SLAC sessions may be regularly conducted, the depth and quality of implementation, especially in terms of structured coaching and access to instructional materials, remain uncertain. This gap underscores the need for a context-specific investigation to determine whether SLAC truly functions as a bridge for professional growth in geographically isolated settings or remains primarily a compliance-driven activity.

The findings of this study are significant for multiple stakeholders. For school leaders and teachers, the results provide insights into strengths and areas for improvement in SLAC implementation, guiding more effective planning and support mechanisms. For policymakers and educational administrators, the study offers evidence-based inputs for enhancing SLAC frameworks, particularly in marginalized and indigenous communities. Furthermore, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on school-based professional development by highlighting contextual realities that influence implementation. Ultimately, this research aims to strengthen SLAC as a sustainable strategy for improving teacher practice, fostering collaborative learning, and enhancing educational outcomes in diverse learning environments.

Statement of the Problem:

This study aims to assess the extent of implementation of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) practices in the district of San Miguel II, Surigao del Sur for School Year 2022-2025, as a school-based professional learning mechanism that supports teacher development and instructional improvement.

Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

To what extent are School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) practices implemented in terms of:

- 1.1 Assessing teachers' needs;
- 1.2 Providing coaching and mentoring;
- 1.3 Supporting the teaching and learning process;
- 1.4 Facilitating evaluation and feedback; and
- 1.5 Availability of resources?

What is the overall extent of implementation of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) practices as perceived by teachers and teacher-in-charge?

Which among the identified dimensions of SLAC practices are most and least implemented?

What areas of SLAC implementation require enhancement to strengthen teacher support and instructional processes?

METHODOLOGY:

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed methods design to comprehensively examine the extent of implementation of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) practices in indigenous schools. The research was conducted in San Miguel II District, San Miguel, Surigao del Sur, a geographically isolated and culturally diverse area where several schools implement the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) program. A total of 54 respondents, consisting of 39 teachers and 15 teachers-in-charge, were selected through complete enumeration, while 10 key informants were purposively chosen for the qualitative phase based on relevant criteria such as experience, SLAC participation, and willingness to share insights. Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire, which measured the extent of SLAC practices across five dimensions: assessing teachers' needs, coaching and mentoring, instructional support, evaluation and feedback, and resource availability. The instrument underwent expert validation and reliability testing, yielding acceptable Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.805 to 0.899, indicating strong internal consistency. Following the quantitative phase, in-depth interviews were conducted to further explain and contextualize the findings.

Data collection procedures were carried out with proper authorization from relevant educational authorities and adherence to ethical standards, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, and weighted mean to determine the extent of implementation, as well as inferential statistics including ANOVA, t-test, and Pearson correlation to examine differences and relationships among variables. Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's framework, allowing for the identification of patterns and themes that reflect participants' lived experiences. Ethical considerations were strictly observed in line with the principles of the Belmont Report, ensuring respect for participants, protection from harm, and equitable treatment. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings enabled a deeper and more nuanced understanding of SLAC practices and their role in supporting teacher development and instructional processes in indigenous educational contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Table 1. Extent of Implementation of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) Practices

Indicators	Teacher-In-Charge Mean	Teachers Mean	Overall Mean	Adjectival Rating
Assessing Teachers' Needs	3.95	3.92	3.94	Often Implemented
Providing Coaching and Mentoring	3.56	3.70	3.63	Often Implemented
Supporting the Teaching and Learning Process	3.94	3.90	3.92	Often Implemented
Facilitating Evaluation and Feedback	3.77	3.72	3.74	Often Implemented
Availability of Resources	3.59	3.54	3.56	Often Implemented
Overall Mean	3.76	3.75	3.76	Often Implemented

Table 1 presents the extent of implementation of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) practices across five key dimensions. The overall mean of 3.76, interpreted as *often implemented*, indicates that SLAC has been effectively institutionalized as a school-based professional learning mechanism in indigenous school contexts. This suggests that SLAC sessions are regularly conducted and serve as collaborative platforms where teachers engage in reflective practice, share instructional strategies, and address classroom challenges. This finding supports Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who emphasized that sustained and collaborative professional development enhances teaching quality and student outcomes.

Among the indicators, assessing teachers’ needs ($M = 3.94$) and supporting the teaching and learning process ($M = 3.92$) obtained the highest ratings, both described as *often implemented*. This implies that SLAC sessions are effectively utilized to identify instructional gaps and support context-responsive teaching practices, particularly in culturally diverse and indigenous settings. Teachers appear to benefit from collaborative discussions that align instructional strategies with learners’ needs. This finding is consistent with Wei (2025), who noted that collaborative professional learning environments strengthen teacher competence and instructional effectiveness. The implication of this result highlights the importance of sustaining needs-based and context-driven professional development practices.

On the other hand, providing coaching and mentoring ($M = 3.63$) and availability of resources ($M = 3.56$) received the lowest mean scores, although still within the *often implemented* range. These findings suggest that while SLAC is functional, its full potential as a professional learning community may be constrained by limited structured mentoring systems and insufficient instructional resources. This aligns with the study of Vescio, Ross, and Adams (2008), which emphasized that the effectiveness of professional learning communities depends on strong mentoring structures and institutional support. Similarly, Bajar, Alarcon, and Ferro (2023) highlighted that resource limitations in rural schools may hinder the sustainability of collaborative learning initiatives. The implication is that strengthening mentoring frameworks and improving access to resources are essential to maximize the impact of SLAC.

Furthermore, facilitating evaluation and feedback ($M = 3.74$) indicates that SLAC provides opportunities for reflective dialogue and peer feedback, although there is still room for improvement in systematizing these processes. According to Ramli and Mohamad Arsad (2023), structured feedback mechanisms within professional learning communities are critical for continuous instructional improvement. Overall, while SLAC practices are consistently implemented, enhancing coaching systems, resource provision, and feedback mechanisms can further strengthen its role as a sustainable and transformative professional development strategy in indigenous educational contexts.

Table 2. Overall Extent of Implementation of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) Practices as Perceived by Teachers and Teachers-in-Charge

Respondents	Mean	Adjectival Rating
Teacher-In-Charge	3.76	Often Implemented
Teachers	3.75	Often Implemented
Overall Mean	3.76	Often Implemented

Table 2 presents the overall extent of implementation of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) practices as perceived by teachers and teachers-in-charge. The findings reveal an overall mean of 3.76, interpreted as *often implemented*, indicating that SLAC is consistently practiced as a school-based professional development mechanism. Both groups of respondents demonstrated nearly identical perceptions, with teachers-in-charge obtaining a mean of 3.76 and teachers a mean of 3.75. This minimal variation suggests a shared understanding and agreement on the regular conduct and relevance of SLAC within the school system.

The results imply that SLAC has been effectively institutionalized and is functioning as an active platform for collaborative learning, reflective practice, and instructional improvement. Teachers and school leaders appear to engage in SLAC not merely as a compliance requirement but as a meaningful professional activity where instructional concerns are discussed, best practices are shared, and context-based solutions are developed. This aligns with the view that sustained and collaborative professional development initiatives enhance teacher effectiveness and instructional quality (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Furthermore, the consistency in perception between teachers and teachers-in-charge reflects a cohesive professional culture, where both leadership and teaching personnel recognize the value of SLAC as a tool for continuous improvement.

Despite the positive findings, the data also suggest that while SLAC is frequently implemented, the focus may be more on regularity rather than depth or quality of engagement. As emphasized in the literature, the effectiveness of professional learning communities depends not only on their consistent implementation but also on the presence of structured support systems such as mentoring, feedback mechanisms, and adequate resources

(Vescio et al., 2008; Wei, 2025). Thus, the overall rating, while favorable, should be interpreted with consideration of underlying factors that may influence the depth of SLAC practices.

The findings indicate that SLAC is a well-established and consistently implemented professional learning mechanism; however, there is a need to strengthen the quality and depth of its implementation. Schools should focus on enhancing structured mentoring, improving resource support, and ensuring meaningful engagement during SLAC sessions. By doing so, SLAC can move beyond routine practice and become a more transformative tool for teacher development and instructional excellence.

Table 3. Ranking of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) Practices According to Extent of Implementation

Rank	Indicators	Mean	Adjectival Rating
1	Assessing Teachers' Needs	3.94	Often Implemented
2	Supporting the Teaching and Learning Process	3.92	Often Implemented
3	Facilitating Evaluation and Feedback	3.74	Often Implemented
4	Providing Coaching and Mentoring	3.63	Often Implemented
5	Availability of Resources	3.56	Often Implemented

Table 3 presents the ranking of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) practices according to their extent of implementation. The results show that assessing teachers' needs ($M = 3.94$) ranked first, followed closely by supporting the teaching and learning process ($M = 3.92$), both interpreted as *often implemented*. These findings indicate that SLAC sessions are highly effective in identifying teachers' professional needs and in facilitating instructional support through collaborative discussions. Teachers appear to actively engage in reflective practices and share context-based strategies to address classroom challenges, particularly in diverse and indigenous learning environments. This supports the view that professional development initiatives are most impactful when they are grounded in teachers' needs and directly linked to instructional improvement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Meanwhile, facilitating evaluation and feedback ($M = 3.74$) ranked third, suggesting that SLAC provides opportunities for reflective dialogue and peer feedback, although there is still room to strengthen the consistency and depth of these practices. On the other hand, providing coaching and mentoring ($M = 3.63$) and availability of resources ($M = 3.56$) ranked lowest among the dimensions, although still interpreted as *often implemented*. These relatively lower ratings indicate that structured mentoring systems and access to instructional resources may not be fully optimized. This finding aligns with research emphasizing that the effectiveness of professional learning communities is influenced by the presence of strong mentoring support and sufficient resources (Vescio et al., 2008; Bajar et al., 2023).

The ranking further suggests that while SLAC is functioning effectively as a collaborative and needs-based professional learning platform, its impact may be constrained by systemic limitations related to mentoring and resource provision. Teachers may be able to identify challenges and share strategies; however, without adequate support systems and materials, the translation of these discussions into improved classroom practices may be limited. As noted by Wei (2025), collaborative learning environments enhance teacher competence, but their effectiveness is maximized when supported by structured systems and enabling conditions.

The findings imply that SLAC is strongest in promoting needs-based and collaborative instructional support, but it requires enhancement in mentoring structures and resource availability to achieve its full potential. Strengthening these areas will enable SLAC to move beyond routine implementation and function as a more comprehensive and transformative professional development mechanism, particularly in resource-constrained and indigenous educational settings.

Table 4. Areas of SLAC Implementation Requiring Enhancement

Rank	Indicators	Mean	Adjectival Rating	Interpretation
1	Availability of Resources	3.56	Often Implemented	Needs Enhancement (Lowest)
2	Providing Coaching and Mentoring	3.63	Often Implemented	Needs Enhancement
3	Facilitating Evaluation and Feedback	3.74	Often Implemented	Needs Strengthening

Table 4 presents the areas of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) implementation that require enhancement to strengthen teacher support and instructional processes. Although all dimensions were generally rated as *often implemented*, the findings indicate that availability of resources ($M = 3.56$) and providing coaching and mentoring ($M = 3.63$) emerged as the most critical areas needing improvement. These relatively lower mean scores suggest that while SLAC is actively practiced, its effectiveness may be constrained by limited access to instructional materials, technological tools, and structured mentoring systems. In geographically isolated and indigenous school contexts, such limitations are more pronounced, affecting the ability of teachers to fully engage in collaborative and evidence-based instructional practices.

The limited availability of resources implies that teachers may struggle to translate SLAC discussions into practical classroom applications. Instructional materials, data tools, and technological support are essential components of effective professional learning communities. Without these, the impact of SLAC on improving teaching strategies and student learning outcomes may be diminished. This finding is consistent with Bajar, Alarcon, and Ferro (2023), who emphasized that resource constraints in rural schools hinder the sustainability and effectiveness of SLAC and similar collaborative learning initiatives. Thus, strengthening resource provision is necessary to ensure that SLAC functions as a fully supportive professional learning environment.

Similarly, the lower rating in coaching and mentoring highlights the need for more structured and sustained support systems for teachers, particularly for novice educators. While peer collaboration exists within SLAC, the absence of formal mentoring frameworks may limit deeper professional growth and skill development. According to Vescio, Ross, and Adams (2008), professional learning communities are most effective when supported by systematic coaching, modeling, and feedback mechanisms that guide teachers toward improved instructional practices. The lack of such structures may result in inconsistent implementation and reduced impact on teaching quality.

Additionally, facilitating evaluation and feedback ($M = 3.74$), although moderately implemented, also requires strengthening to ensure continuous improvement in teaching practices. Effective feedback mechanisms enable teachers to reflect critically on their performance and make informed instructional decisions. As noted by Ramli and Mohamad Arsad (2023), structured evaluation and feedback processes are essential in sustaining the effectiveness of professional learning communities and fostering a culture of accountability and growth.

The findings underscore the need to enhance key support structures within SLAC, particularly in resource provision, mentoring systems, and feedback mechanisms. Strengthening these areas will enable SLAC to move beyond routine implementation and function as a more robust and transformative professional development strategy. In indigenous and resource-constrained contexts, targeted interventions in these dimensions are essential to ensure that teachers are adequately supported in delivering quality, inclusive, and context-responsive instruction.

CONCLUSIONS

The study revealed that School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) practices in indigenous schools are consistently implemented, with an overall rating interpreted as *often implemented*. This indicates that SLAC has been effectively institutionalized as a school-based professional learning mechanism that supports teacher collaboration, reflective practice, and instructional improvement. Teachers and teachers-in-charge share a common perception regarding the regular conduct and relevance of SLAC sessions, suggesting a strong culture of collective engagement in professional development.

Among the dimensions, SLAC practices are most effective in assessing teachers' needs and supporting the teaching and learning process, highlighting its role as a responsive and context-driven platform for addressing classroom challenges. These strengths demonstrate that teachers are actively engaged in identifying instructional gaps and collaboratively developing strategies suited to the needs of indigenous learners. However, the findings also revealed that coaching and mentoring and availability of resources are the least implemented areas, indicating limitations in structured professional support and access to essential instructional materials.

Furthermore, while SLAC facilitates evaluation and feedback, there remains a need to enhance the depth and consistency of these processes. Overall, the study concludes that although SLAC is functioning as an effective

professional learning community, its full potential as a transformative mechanism for teacher development is constrained by gaps in mentoring systems, resource provision, and structured feedback mechanisms.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that schools strengthen the implementation of School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) practices by institutionalizing structured coaching and mentoring programs, particularly through the designation of experienced teachers as mentors who can provide sustained and context-sensitive professional support to novice educators. There is also a need to enhance resource allocation and accessibility by ensuring that teachers, especially those in geographically isolated and indigenous schools, are provided with adequate instructional materials, technological tools, and relevant learning resources to support effective SLAC engagement.

Furthermore, SLAC sessions should incorporate more systematic and structured feedback and evaluation mechanisms, such as peer observations, reflective discussions, and data-driven assessments, to deepen instructional practices. Schools are likewise encouraged to sustain needs-based and context-responsive SLAC activities by continuously aligning discussions with the unique cultural, linguistic, and pedagogical realities of indigenous learners. Strong leadership support and monitoring from school heads and district supervisors remain essential to ensure the consistency, quality, and sustainability of SLAC implementation, including the provision of technical assistance and policy reinforcement.

In light of these findings, the study proposes an “Enhanced SLAC Model for Indigenous Schools” as a strategic framework to strengthen school-based professional development. This model is anchored on four key components: (1) Needs-Based Planning, which ensures that SLAC topics are grounded in teachers’ actual classroom challenges; (2) Structured Coaching and Mentoring, which institutionalizes peer coaching, mentoring cycles, and guided instructional support; (3) Resource Augmentation and Accessibility, which focuses on the provision and contextualization of instructional materials suited to indigenous settings; and (4) Reflective Feedback and Continuous Improvement, which integrates systematic evaluation, peer feedback, and data-informed decision-making.

These components are supported by strong instructional leadership and community engagement, ensuring that SLAC becomes a responsive, inclusive, and sustainable professional learning mechanism. This proposed model provides a concrete guide for policymakers and school leaders in enhancing SLAC implementation, particularly in geographically isolated and resource-constrained environments, where school-based professional learning serves as a critical bridge to improving teaching quality and learner outcomes. Lastly, future research may be conducted to validate and refine this model and to further examine its impact on student achievement and teacher professional growth across diverse educational context

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