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San Fernando Masbate teachers on the implementation of Learning Action Cell (LAC): An inquiry

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Abstract

The study aimed to identify the beneficial help of Learning Action Cell (LAC) to teachers of the San Fernando District of Schools Division Office of Masbate Province. The problems encountered in the implementation, and teachers' awareness of its budget allocation from the Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE). The study utilized the quantitative design. The result reveals that the main beneficial help of LAC is the improvement of teacher's teaching strategies and teaching styles. Overloading work or tiredness is the primary problem encountered in its implementation. The majority of the teachers are aware and are enjoying the budget allocated for LAC but half of the teachers are not informed about the exact amount of the budget allocation. With this, school leaders are encouraged to practice transparency and accountability. This study also recommends the division of Masbate Province provide enough administration aid in the district to lessen teacher overload tasks which will help teachers focus on improving themselves by engaging in LAC sessions.

Keywords: LAC, MOOE, San Fernando District, budget allocation, transparency and accountability

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1. Introduction

The goal of the Department of Education (DepEd) is to improve the quality of teaching and learning by providing a Continuing Professional Development for teachers. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is a process by which individuals take control of their learning and development by engaging in an ongoing process of reflection and action (Megginson & Whitaker, 2007). CPD was considered crucial for all educators to provide quality education that the learners deserve, whereas the growth of the organization and improvement of the schools was based on the spectrum of CPD programs (Tribunalo et.al., 2023). RA no. 10912 of 2016 defines CPD as to the inculcation of advanced knowledge, skills and ethical values in a post-licensure specialization or in an inter- or multidisciplinary field of study, for assimilation into professional practice, self-directed research and/or lifelong learning. CPD Program refers to a set of learning activities accredited by the CPD Council such as seminars, workshops, technical lectures or subject matter meetings, non-degree training lectures and scientific meetings, modules, tours and visits, which equip the professionals with advanced knowledge, skills and values in specialized or in an inter- or multidisciplinary field of study, self-directed research and/or lifelong learning.

Learning Action Cell (LAC) is one of the programs of DepEd to support the continuing professional development of teachers. Most of the implemented professional development program of DepEd for teachers is top-down curriculum wherein education specialists, school leaders, or experts hand down knowledge directly to teachers through training, lectures, workshops, or short-term courses that will eventually be echoed and applied by the teachers in their respective schools. LAC is the opposite because it follows a bottom-up process. DepEd Order No. 35, s. 2016 shows that its framework is to create a school-based Professional Learning Community (PLC) in which teachers with their unique set-up meet together to study content and pedagogies, solve existing problems, plan lessons collaboratively, and conduct action research as a group. Organizing professional learning communities will aid teachers in the construction of new knowledge about instruction as well as in revising traditional beliefs and assumptions about education, community, teaching, and learning (Du Plessis & Muzaffar 2010) that will help improve student performance. Professional learning communities have been held up as powerful structures for teachers' continuing professional development (Servage, 2008).

There are very few to none when it comes to the number of studies about inquiring teachers' satisfaction and perspective on the implementation and effectiveness of the Learning Action Cell in the regions of the Philippines. The goal of this research is to inquire about the teachers of San Fernando Masbate teachers on their satisfaction with the beneficial help of LAC which includes self-management, teaching strategy or style, mastery of the lesson, teaching innovation, community project or community engagement, development or improvement of assessment strategies and assessment tools, professional and ethical conduct, approach to learner's holistic development, career promotion, and creation of programs, projects, and activities (PPAs). Moreover, the study aimed to identify possible hindrances to its implementation and know how aware or satisfied are the teachers with LAC's budget allocation from the MOOE.

This study aimed to inquire about teacher's satisfaction with how LAC is helping their teaching career, the hindrances encountered during the implementation, and how knowledgeable are the teachers about its budget allocation. This study was carried out to answer these specific questions:

1. What are the beneficial help of the Learning Action Cell (LAC) to the teachers of the San Fernando district?

2. What are the possible problems experienced in the implementation of the Learning Action Cell (LAC)

by the teachers of the San Fernando district?

3. Are the teachers of San Fernando district aware of the budget allocation in implementing the Learning Action Cell?

2. Theoretical Framework

This study is based on Richard DuFour and Robert Eaker's theory that Professional Learning Community (PLC) helps in improving students' learning. They defined PLC as an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve. PLCs operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators (DuFour and Eaker, 2010). This theoretical framework is illustrated below:

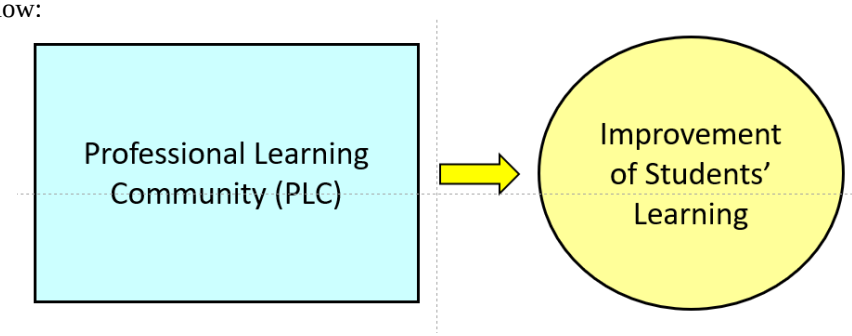


Figure 1. The Theoretical Framework of this Study is based on DuFour and Eaker (2010)

De Neve et al (2015) found that in schools with a genuine sense of community there was an increased sense of work efficacy, in turn leading to increased classroom motivation and work satisfaction, and greater collective responsibility for student learning. Bolam et. al (2005) also conclude that the idea of a professional learning community (PLC) is one well worth pursuing as a means of promoting school and system-wide capacity building for sustainable improvement and pupil learning. This has something to do with continuous professional learning of Teachers would be beneficial for students learning performance and outcomes.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

LAC's implementation varies in different districts, divisions, or even in the regions of the Philippines. DepEd Order No. 35, s. 2016 contains the provisions about the implementation of the Learning Action cell. The goal of this research paper was to collect data directly from the teachers of San Fernando district about how satisfied they are with the beneficial help of Learning Action Cell as a school-based continuing professional development for the improvement of teaching and learning. Also, this study seeks to find out the problems encountered in the implementation of LAC and teacher's awareness of LAC's budget allocation. The conceptual framework is illustrated below:

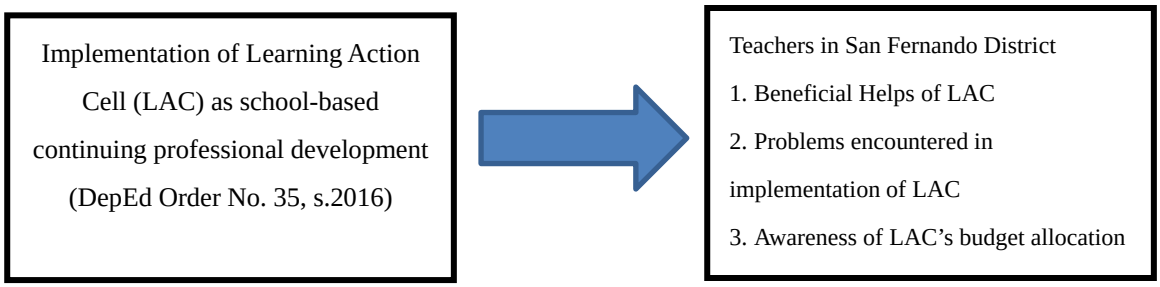


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of the Study

3. Methods

Research Design - The purpose of this study is to understand problems encountered and to its

implementation the awareness of the teachers with LAC's budget allocation from the MOOE. This study utilized the quantitative design through the use of survey method. This method was considered to collect data and serves as basis for analysis.

Respondents **-** Using Slovin's formula, the researchers generated the sample size to get the total number of respondents from the existing population of teachers in San Fernando district (Anugraheni et.al, 2023). The three hundred one (301) is the total population of teachers in the district. To determine the total number of teacher-respondents, the Statology webpage online was utilized and the result was 171.755. However, this study had 185 teacher-respondents. The researchers visited 25 schools in the San Fernando district.

Instruments **-** Survey questionnaires were administered face-to-face with the respondents. The questionnaire is divided into three parts. The first part consolidated data about teachers' satisfaction with the beneficial help of the Learning Action Cell. The second part collected data about the possible problems in implementing LAC. The third part gathered information to inquire about teacher's awareness of LAC's budget allocation. The instruments were validated by knowledgeable professionals in the field.

Data Analysis **-** Upon collecting the accomplished survey questionnaires, the data were tallied using Microsoft Excel 2021 to produce computer-generated analysis securing accuracy. Descriptive statistics were employed such as weighted mean and frequency. To elicit teachers' satisfaction with the beneficial help of LAC from the 5-point Likert, the researchers used a weighted mean. The result was ranked to determine the most beneficial and least beneficial help of LAC. To identify the problems encountered in the implementation of LAC, frequency was applied. To measure teachers' awareness of LAC's budget allocation from the MOOE, frequency was also applied. Below is the 5-point Likert scale indicator that was utilized:

Table 1

5-point Likert Scale Administered to the Respondents.

Numerical Rating	Qualitative Rating	Descriptive Interpretation
5	Extremely Satisfied	LAC is EXTREMELY BENEFICIAL to teachers.
4	Very Satisfied	LAC is VERY BENEFICIAL to teachers.
3	Satisfied	LAC is BENEFICIAL to teachers.
2	Unsatisfied	LAC is NOT BENEFICIAL to teachers.
1	Strongly Unsatisfied	LAC is STRONGLY NOT BENEFICIAL to the teacher.

4. Results and Discussion

Beneficial Help of Learning Action Cell (LAC) **-** The table below shows the weighted mean of each indicator. The mean was ranked to show the most and least beneficial indicators.

Table 2

Rank, Mean, and Descriptive Interpretation of LAC's Beneficial Help

Beneficial Help Of LAC	Rank	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
Self-Management	7	3.86	Very Beneficial
Teaching Style and Strategy	1	4.22	Extremely Beneficial
Mastery of the Lesson	3	4.12	Very Beneficial
Teaching Innovation	4	4.06	Very Beneficial
Community Engagement	9	3.73	Very Beneficial
Development of Assessment Strategies and Tools	5	4.03	Very Beneficial
Professional and Ethical Conduct	6	3.97	Very Beneficial
Approach to Learner's Holistic Development	2	4.13	Very Beneficial
Career Promotion	8	3.79	Very Beneficial
Creation of Programs, Projects, and Activities (PPAs)	6	3.97	Very Beneficial
Overall Mean		3.99	Very Beneficial

Legend: 4.20 – 5.00 = Extremely Beneficial, 1.80 – 2.59 = Not Beneficial, 3.40 – 4.19 = Very Beneficial, 1.00 – 1.79 = Strongly Not Beneficial, 2.60 – 3.39 = Beneficial.

Teaching Style and Strategy took the highest spot among all indicators. It means that the primary beneficial help of the Learning Action Cell is assisting the teachers to learn varied teaching styles and strategies. This result affirms LAC's goal based on the provision from DepEd order no. 35, s. 2016 that Teachers can collaboratively plan weekly lessons during the LAC and these can be implemented for the specified period, after which, teachers can share their experiences to improve subsequent lessons. While boosting teachers' own critical and creative thinking, their skill in translating curriculum content into relevant learning activities also grows. Student learning will improve because the teacher will be more systematic and better contextualized to the learning needs of students.

Career Promotion and Community Engagement were the last two indicators from the rank. However, the descriptive interpretation of both indicators is "Very Beneficial" which means that teachers in the San Fernando Masbate district find LAC helpful as a learning ground in reaching out to the community specifically to learners, parents, and other stakeholders. In addition, LAC also helps them to advance on their career path since its descriptive interpretation is also "Very Beneficial."

The overall mean of 3.99 with the descriptive interpretation "Very Beneficial" reveals that Learning Action Cell is helping teachers in their personal and teaching life which includes applying relevant approaches to learner's holistic development, mastery of the lesson, teaching innovation, development of assessment strategies and assessment tools, creation of programs, projects, and activities (PPAs), understanding and exercising professional and ethical conduct, and getting understanding on self-management.

The overall mean of 3.99, accompanied by the descriptive interpretation "Very Beneficial," suggests a highly positive impact of the Learning Action Cell (LAC) on teachers' personal and professional development. This finding aligns with existing literature emphasizing the importance of teacher professional growth in enhancing educational outcomes (Silva, 2021). The high mean score implies on the positive influence of the Learning Action Cell (LAC) on teachers, suggesting potential far-reaching benefits for students as well. A growing body of literature underscores the critical role of teacher professional development in shaping effective learning environments (Culajara, 2023).

Bajar et. al, (2023), the observed holistic development among teachers participating in the LAC, as indicated by the high mean score, suggests that educators are not only refining their pedagogical skills but also enhancing their ability to create engaging and student-centered classrooms. Research has consistently shown that teacher enthusiasm and commitment to ongoing professional growth contribute positively to student motivation and academic success (Silva, 2021).

Problems Encountered in Joining/Implementing Learning Action Cell (LAC) - The table below shows the tallied result of the problems encountered by San Fernando district teachers using the frequency table:

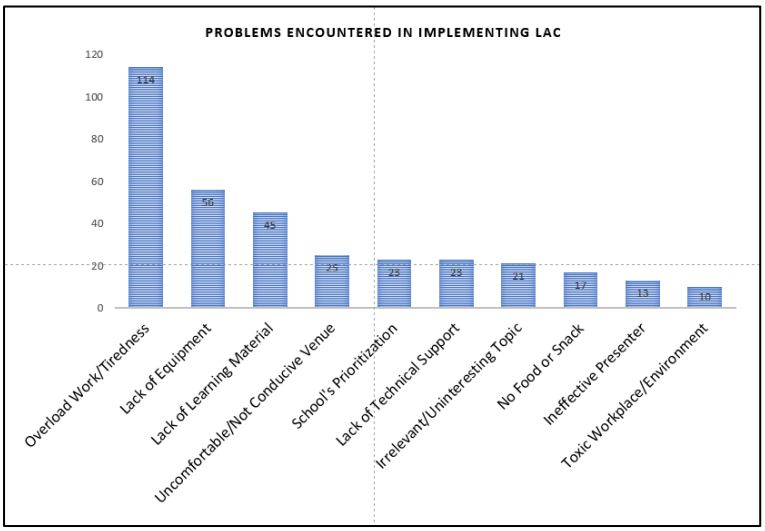
Table 3

Frequency Table of Problems Encountered

Problems Encountered	No. of Teachers	Percentage	Rank
Overload Work/Tiredness	114	61.62%	1
Irrelevant/Uninteresting Topic	21	11.35%	6
Ineffective Presenter	13	7.10%	8
School's Prioritization	23	12.43%	5
Toxic Workplace/Environment	10	5.41%	9
Uncomfortable/Not Conducive Venue	25	13.51%	4
No Food or Snack	17	9.19%	7
Lack of Equipment	56	30.27%	2
Lack of Learning Materials	45	24.32%	3
Lack of Technical Support	23	12.43%	5

The following graph was generated from Microsoft PowerPoint to show a concrete visual of problems encountered in the implementation of LAC organized in increasing order.

Graph 1. Problems Encountered in increasing order



Based on Table 3 and Graph 1, Overload Work/Tiredness has the highest percentage among all indicators. With 114 total number of teachers which is 61.62% of the total number of respondents reveals that the majority of teachers in this district find it hard to join or implement LAC because of too much workload and tiredness. On the other hand, Toxic Workplace/Environment has the lowest percentage among all indicators. With 10 total number of teachers equivalent to 5.41% of the total number of respondents, it reveals that toxicity among teachers is not the main problem in implementing LAC.

The findings implied that the prevalence of Overload Work/Tiredness as the most significant barrier to LAC participation, as evidenced by the highest percentage among all indicators, underscores the urgent need for strategies to address teachers' workload and fatigue. School administrators and policymakers should consider implementing measures such as workload distribution, professional development support, and time-management practices to alleviate the burden on teachers. By addressing these issues, educators can more effectively engage in LAC activities, leading to potential improvements in teaching methodologies and overall job satisfaction. However, the low percentage of teachers experiencing toxicity in the workplace indicates that, on the whole, the work environment is relatively positive. This positive aspect can contribute to a more collaborative and supportive atmosphere for teachers. Acknowledging and maintaining this positive work culture is crucial for fostering effective professional development initiatives like LAC, as teachers are more likely to engage and collaborate in a supportive environment.

LAC's Budget Allocation from the MOOE **-** The table below shows the percentage and total number of teachers in each indicator.

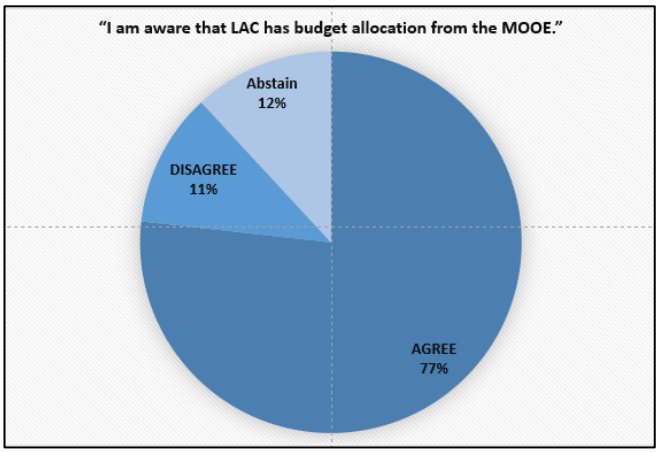
Table 4

Frequency Table of Teachers' Awareness of LAC's Budget Allocation

	No. of Teachers who **Agree**	**Percentage**	No. of Teachers who **Disagree**	**Percentage**	No. of Teachers who **Abstain**	**Percentage**
I am aware that LAC has budget allocation from the MOOE.	142	77%	21	11%	22	12%
I know the exact amount of the budget allocated for LAC.	86	46%	72	39%	27	15%
I enjoy the budget allocated for scheduled LAC.	108	58%	48	26%	29	16%

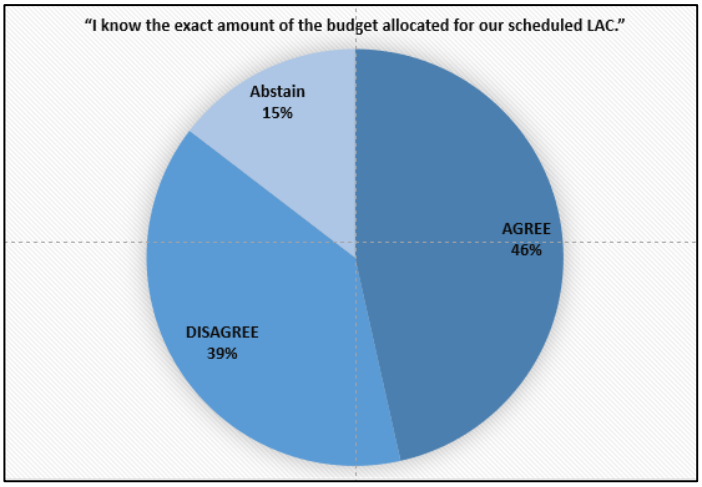
The following pie charts further illustrate the comparison between those who are affirmative and negative about the indicator and those who abstain from answering.

Pie Chart 1. Percentage of Teachers who Agree, Disagree, or Abstain about the Indicator: "I am aware that LAC has budget allocation from the MOOE."



As shown in the pie chart, 77% of the teachers in the San Fernando Masbate district agree that they are aware of LAC's budget allocation from the MOOE. It means that the majority are informed by the school leaders of the LAC coordinator that expenses during LAC are charged against MOOE. Pie chart 1 also shows that 11% disagree and 12% abstain from answering the indicator. The high percentage of teachers who are aware of LAC's budget allocation suggests effective communication practices by school leaders, particularly LAC coordinators. School leaders play a pivotal role in disseminating crucial information related to professional development opportunities. The success of LAC implementation, including financial aspects, is contingent upon the leadership's ability to provide clear and accessible information to teachers. The findings underscore the importance of continuous improvement in communication strategies. School leaders and LAC coordinators should explore ways to enhance communication channels, ensuring that all teachers have access to accurate and timely information regarding LAC budget allocation. This could involve regular meetings, workshops, or digital communication platforms.

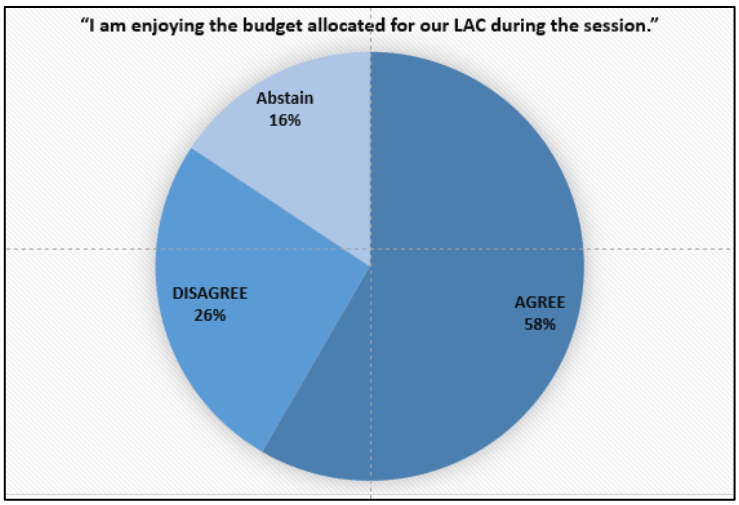
Pie Chart 2: *Percentage of Teachers who Agree, Disagree, or Abstain about the Indicator: "I know the exact amount of budget allocated for our scheduled LAC."*



As shown in Pie Chart 2, 46% of the teachers in the San Fernando Masbate district agree that they know the exact amount of the budget allocated for LAC. This means that only half of the teachers are informed by their school leaders about the specific amount of money allotted for each LAC session. Pie chart 2 also shows that 39% disagree and 15% abstain from answering the indicator. The data indicates that a significant portion, 46%, of the teachers agree that they know the exact amount of the budget allocated for LAC. However, this also

implies that more than half of the teachers do not possess detailed information about the specific financial allocation for each LAC session. This limited awareness might impact their ability to make informed decisions regarding resource utilization and could potentially hinder the effective planning of LAC activities. The data implies that there may be challenges in the communication strategies employed by school leaders or LAC coordinators regarding the specific budget details. It is essential to explore the factors contributing to these challenges, such as the effectiveness of communication channels, the frequency of information dissemination, and the clarity of the communicated details.

Pie Chart 3: *Percentage of Teachers who Agree, Disagree, or Abstain About the Indicator: "I am enjoying the budget allocated for our LAC during the session."*



As shown in Pie Chart 3, 58% of the teachers in the San Fernando district, which means more than half of the respondents agree that they enjoy the budget allocated for their scheduled LAC. Pie chart 3 also shows that 26% disagree and 16% abstain from answering the indicator. The data suggests a mixed sentiment among teachers regarding their enjoyment of the budget allocated for LAC sessions. Understanding the nuances of this sentiment and incorporating feedback into budgetary decisions can contribute to a more effective and teacher-centric professional development approach. Transparent communication about the budget allocation process is crucial for fostering a positive perception among teachers. Providing clarity on how budgets are determined, the considerations taken into account, and the expected outcomes can contribute to a better understanding and acceptance of the financial resources allocated for LAC sessions.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

This study finds that learning varied teaching styles and teaching strategies is the predominant beneficial help of the Learning Action Cell (LAC) to teachers of the San Fernando district. It implies that creating and developing a school-based professional learning community helps assist teachers in improving themselves in the teaching-learning process. Overloading work or tiredness is the main problem encountered by the teachers in this district to successfully implement or join in LAC session which is 61.62% of the total number of respondents. Only 46% of the teachers in the district agree that they know the exact amount of the budget allocated for the LAC while more than half are either disagree about it or abstain from answering the indicator.

After thorough assessment and considering the foregoing findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are presented:

1. School leaders are encouraged to transparency about LAC's budget allocation by posting the breakdown or monthly expenses on the bulletin board. Through this, accountability is practiced.
2. The division of Masbate province may provide enough adminstration aid to the schools in this district to

lessen teachers' tasks. In this way, teachers can give enough time to learn and improve by engaging themselves in LAC sessions.

3. Strengthening and supporting the implementation of LAC must continue so that teachers will continue to take on the path of life-long learning, promote a nurturing and caring community, and advance in their career path.

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