

EXPLORING THE PREDICTORS OF SUCCESSFUL LEARNING ACTION CELL PRACTICES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

ABSTRACT

Learning action cell as quality learning circle for teacher takes a big part in the lives of teachers as it promotes professional development, with the end goal of improving the teachers' teaching skills and pupils' performance inside the classroom. This endeavor empowers them to become agents of change, able to meet both local needs alongside national agenda wherein teachers are active constructors of their own knowledge as they facilitate and share ideas with the group. This study aimed to explore the variables that contribute to the effective implementation of Learning Action Cell among Elementary Special Education (SPED) Teachers. Specifically, it determined the extent of LAC session practices and the extent of self-efficacy of SPED teachers in Davao City. Regression was used to analyze the corresponding data gathered. Respondents were 115 elementary school SPED teachers. Meanwhile, the model explains that the percentage of the variance of LAC session practices was explained by the independent variable. However, certain percentage of the variance can be attributed to other factors aside from the variables explored in the study. Thus, LAC session practices significantly influence the SPED teachers' self-efficacy. As revealed in the study, SPED teachers performed their task well in the learning action cell implementation in terms of context, process and content. It also revealed that SPED teachers were great in the different indicators of self-efficacy in terms of classroom management, students' engagement, instructional practices and commitment. There was a significant difference in the conduct of the learning action cell and SPED teachers' self-efficacy. The results proved the effectiveness of the conduct of the learning action cell among SPED teachers in the different public schools of Davao City with the end in view of developing competent teachers to provide quality learning outcomes among learners. The results suggested the continuous conduct of the Learning Action Cell, considering the proposed activities to intensify the 21st century skills integration while assigning each of the members of the LAC team in doing different roles to stretch out their expertise. Considerably, other researchers may conduct a related study with different set of respondents.

Keywords: Learning action cell, professional learning community, collaboration, Philippines

1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers who reported feeling ill-equipped to manage challenging behaviors experienced higher stress levels, more frequent negative interactions with children, and demonstrated less tolerance and fewer interventions for such behaviors. This, in turn, contributed to a more negative classroom climate and an increase in challenging behaviors among students. Conversely, teachers with strong self-efficacy were better able to understand the emotional underpinnings of children's behavior, respond effectively to their emotional needs, and foster a positive classroom environment. This environment was particularly conducive to social-emotional instruction and support, especially for children exhibiting challenging behaviors.

The global movement towards inclusive education has been underscored by key international frameworks, such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [1]. Despite the widespread recognition of the need for inclusive education, ensuring equal educational opportunities for all individuals remains a challenge worldwide. This issue persists despite the right of persons with disabilities to access general education and lifelong learning without discrimination [2].

While inclusive education is a global concern, its implementation varies significantly across different countries [3]. In Japan, the government promotes educational reforms encouraging an inclusive approach within its dual regular and special education systems [4]. In contrast, Finland, despite its success in offering flexible education for all students, continues to face challenges in the implementation of inclusive education, partly due to a lack of strong demand for such reforms, despite legal and curriculum support [5].

Following the publication of the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Education Needs (SEN) by UNESCO in 1994, which promoted the goal of "Education for All" through inclusive practices, many national education systems began advancing toward inclusive education [6]. Inclusive education seeks to provide appropriate learning opportunities, fair assessments, and qualifications for all students, ensuring their full and active participation in the learning process [7].

Inclusive education has the potential to promote social transformation by instilling confidence, values, and support among students with disabilities, thereby empowering them to become capable citizens [8]. As such, the wide implementation of inclusive education is both necessary and urgent. Studies have shown that teacher self-efficacy directly influences student performance [9]. For example, students taught by highly self-efficacious teachers report higher levels of academic achievement and better academic adjustment [10]. Teacher self-efficacy not only improves teachers' efforts to enhance their skills but also strengthens their belief in their ability to teach effectively [11]. Consequently, improving teacher preparation is essential, as self-efficacy is crucial to successfully educating both students with and without disabilities in inclusive settings [12].

Moreover, no teacher is an expert in all areas of the curriculum. Collaboration with colleagues enriches teachers' knowledge, skills, and competencies. Ronfeldt et al. [13], found that teachers who collaborate report improved attitudes towards teaching, enhanced teacher efficacy, and a better understanding of student learning. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and other forms of organized teacher collaboration have gained global recognition as effective strategies for improving instructional practices and learning outcomes [14]. Research indicates that building PLCs fosters greater teacher collaboration, which contributes to improved school performance and transformation of school culture [15]. International scholarship further supports the idea that PLCs can build capacity and drive sustainable development, leading to improved student learning outcomes [16].

Bajar et al. [17] stated, “the era of isolated teachers, working alone to meet the myriad needs of all their students, is neither educationally effective nor economically viable in the 21st century.” Today's educational landscape compels teachers to collaborate to address instructional needs collectively. Effective teacher collaboration involves engaging in regular routines where teachers share classroom experiences to strengthen pedagogical expertise and encourage one another to try new strategies [18]. To enable effective collaboration, teachers must engage in structured routines that allow them to work together on common instructional challenges and collaboratively find solutions [19].

Recognizing this need, the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd) issued DepEd Order, which institutionalizes Learning Action Cells (LACs) as an approach to professional development. This initiative aims to enhance teachers' knowledge, skills, and competencies in curriculum, instruction, and assessment through school-based collaboration. The LAC policy promotes the idea that the locus of teacher learning is in the school, where teachers actively participate in collegial discussions facilitated by a school head or LAC leader. These discussions are designed to address shared challenges and improve teaching quality [20].

In 2017, DepEd reported that only 648 special education (SpEd) centers and regular schools had implemented the inclusive education program, covering 471 elementary schools and 177 secondary schools. These schools served approximately 250,000 students with exceptionalities in elementary schools and around 100,000 in secondary [21]. This highlights the importance of investigating factors that foster the self-efficacy of special education teachers to design programs that build educators' capacity to teach learners with special needs. Furthermore, LAC sessions provide a space for teachers to reflect critically on their teaching challenges and collaboratively devise strategies to address them.

Thus, this study on the predictors of teacher self-efficacy in special education aims to contribute to the improvement of inclusive education at the school level. The researcher intends to disseminate the findings through local, national, and international publications and research summits, ensuring that the results reach a broad audience, from district to division levels, through seminars, training, and meetings.

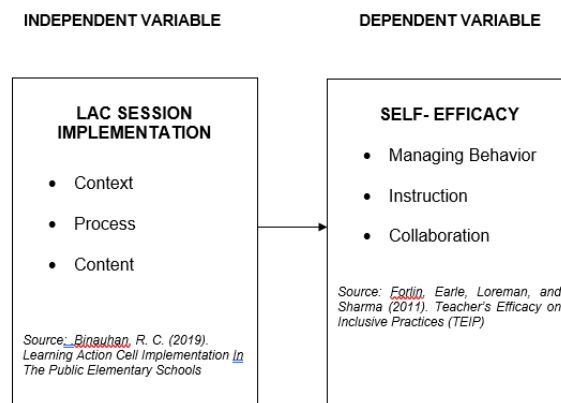


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study made use the non-experimental quantitative research design utilizing correlational method. Descriptive correlational method is use to determine the relationship between two or more variables and to ascertain their relationship [22]. More to the point, Mõttus[23] emphasized that this method was used since the study provides a description of individuals and aimed to explain the nature of the data. This study was descriptive in nature since it evaluated the LAC session practices and self-efficacy of special education teachers in Davao City.

2.2 Research Respondents

Special Education Teachers in public elementary schools in Marilog District, Davao City, Region XI were the respondents of the study. A total of not less than 115 public elementary school teachers were selected using the purposive sampling technique because it allowed the researcher to decide what needs to be known and with this the researcher set out to find people who could and were willing to provide the information by knowledge or experience.

For this study, certain inclusion criteria were implemented in determining the teacher respondents of the study. The primary consideration of this study was to choose teacher respondents who could provide information to achieve the purpose of this study. Hence, only those full-time SPED teachers who had been teaching in the public elementary schools with at least three years in service were selected. Moreover, the study was delimited only to the nature of the problem based on the research questions and thus it did not consider the rank status and performance ratings of the teachers.

2.3 Research Instrument

To gather quantitative data, two adapted survey questionnaires were utilized. Both tools underwent content validity assessment by a panel of experts and were pilot-tested to ensure reliability. The first part of the instrument consisted of the LAC Session Practices questionnaire, adapted from Binauhan [24].

This questionnaire was designed for teachers to evaluate the established practices of the Learning Action Cell (LAC) Sessions. It specifically focused on how teachers and staff collaborate within the LAC framework, encompassing context, process, and content. The questionnaire included questions regarding whether SPED teachers received the necessary guidance and support through the conduct of LAC Sessions to enhance their professional skills. Additionally, the self-efficacy component comprised a self-made questionnaire aimed at assessing three key areas: managing behavior, instructional practices, and collaboration.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

Permission to conduct the study. The researcher wrote a letter asking permission from the Dean of Graduate School to conduct this research study. Upon the receipt of the letter from the dean of the graduate school, the researcher secured a permit to conduct the study from the Office of the School principals.

Distribution and retrieval of the questionnaire. Upon approval of the permit to conduct the study, the sets of questionnaires were sent to the respondents via google forms and through email-add of the school heads and teachers. The questionnaires were retrieved right after

the respondents were through answering the questions and sent them back through researcher's email-add or messenger.

For some respondents who missed answering the questionnaire, the video call, via messenger, viber, zoom or goggle meet were used to gather the data or responses of the respondents.

Collation and statistical treatment of the data. The data were collated from the Google forms. It took some time for the researcher to collect all the necessary submitted questionnaire. Some of the submitted data were not complete, thus these were rejected. Despite the rejected and incomplete forms submitted, the total number of respondents still met the required number to proceed with the statistical data analysis.

2.5 Data Analysis

The following statistical tools was used in the analysis and interpretation of the responses in this study:

Mean. It was used to determine the extent of LAC Session Practices and self-efficacy of SPED teachers in Davao City.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson-r). This statistical tool was used to determine if there is a significant relationship between LAC Session Practices and self-efficacy of SPED teachers in Davao City.

Simple Linear Regression. This statistical tool was used to determine which domains of LAC Session Practices significantly influence the self-efficacy of SPED teachers in Davao City.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 LAC Session practices of special education teachers

Table 1. *Extent of LAC Session Practices of Special Education Teachers*

No	Statements	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1	Context	4.28	Very High
2	Process	4.27	Very High
3	Content	4.42	Very High
Overall Mean		4.32	Very High

As reflected in table 1 is the summary on the extent of LAC Session practices of special education teachers. The mean scores of each indicator are shown in a tabular and textual format. The presentation was chronologically arranged from highest to lowest to convey meaning and clarity: Content (4.42) which described as Always Manifested; Context (4.28) which described as Always Manifested and Process (4.27) which described as Always Manifested. The overall mean rating on this variable marked (4.32) which described as Always Manifested. This means that the LAC session practices of SPED teachers is always manifested.

This finding supports the study of Reños and Pontillas et al. [25], which emphasized that teachers who engage in regular collaboration and professional development activities, such

as LAC sessions, report improved attitudes towards teaching and higher levels of efficacy. Additionally, it aligns with Voelkel Jr and Chrispeels[26], who highlighted that professional learning communities and other collaborative practices lead to improved instructional outcomes. Moreover, Aquino et al. [27] noted that such professional development strategies contribute to sustainable growth in teacher capacity and positively influence student learning outcomes, reinforcing the relevance and effectiveness of LAC sessions in fostering teacher development.

3.2 Self-Efficacy of Special Education Teachers in Public Schools of Davao City

Table 2. *Extent of Self-Efficacy of Special Education Teachers in Public Schools of Davao City*

No	Statements	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1	Managing Behavior	4.27	Very Extensive
2	Instruction	4.28	Very Extensive
3	Collaboration	4.34	Very Extensive
Overall Mean		4.30	Very Extensive

As revealed in table 2 were the Summary of the findings on the Extent of self-efficacy of special education teachers in Public Schools of Davao City. The mean scores of each indicator are shown in a tabular and textual format. The presentation was chronologically arrange from highest to lowest to convey meaning and clarity: Collaboration (4.34) which described as Always Manifested; Instruction (4.28) which described as Always Manifested; Managing Behavior (4.27) which described as Always Manifested. The overall mean rating on this variable marked (4.30) which described as Always Manifested. This means that the self-efficacy of the SPED teachers is Always Manifested.

This finding corroborates with the study of Sehgal et al. [28], which demonstrated that teachers with high levels of self-efficacy are more capable of effectively managing classroom dynamics and collaborating with colleagues. Similarly, the research by Poulouet al. [29], found that teachers with a strong sense of efficacy tend to exhibit more effective instructional practices and classroom management, leading to better student outcomes. Moreover, the study of Wilson et al. [30], support this findings by showing that teacher self-efficacy is crucial in inclusive educational settings, contributing to improved teaching performance and better educational experiences for students with special needs.

3.3 Significant Relationship between LAC Session Practices and Self-Efficacy of Special Education Teachers in Public Schools of Davao City

Table 3. *Significant Relationship between LAC Session Practices and Self-Efficacy of Special Education Teachers in Public Schools of Davao City*

LAC Session Practices	Dependent Variable	r-value	p-value	Decision
Context	Self - Efficacy	0.731	.000	H ₀ is rejected
Process		0.728	.000	H ₀ is rejected
Content		0.737	.000	H ₀ is rejected
Overall		0.732	.000	H₀ is rejected

Table 3 illustrates the significant relationship between LAC (Learning Action Cell) session practices and the self-efficacy of special education teachers in public schools of Davao City. The correlation values (r-values) between the different aspects of LAC session practices and teacher self-efficacy are all strong, ranging from 0.728 to 0.737. Specifically, the relationship between Context and self-efficacy is reflected by an r-value of 0.731, Process and self-efficacy by an r-value of 0.728, and Content and self-efficacy by an r-value of 0.737. The overall correlation between LAC session practices and self-efficacy is 0.732.

All of these r-values indicate a strong positive relationship, suggesting that the more frequently LAC session practices are implemented, the higher the self-efficacy of SPED teachers. Furthermore, the p-values for each relationship are reported as .000, which is highly significant. This means that there is a statistically significant correlation between LAC session practices and teacher self-efficacy, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (Ho) that there is no relationship between these variables. This implies that LAC session practices are an important factor in enhancing the self-efficacy of SPED teachers.

This finding coincides with the study of Sehgal et al. [28], which also identified a significant positive relationship between collaborative practices and teacher self-efficacy. Similar to the current research, their findings indicated that effective collaboration within professional learning communities enhances teachers' confidence in managing classroom challenges and supporting diverse learners. Additionally, the study emphasizes that when educators engage in structured collaborative practices, such as Learning Action Cells, they are more likely to develop a greater sense of efficacy in their teaching abilities. Thus, this aligns with the notion that the implementation of LAC session practices contributes positively to the self-efficacy of special education teachers.

3.4 Domains of LAC Session Practices that Significantly Influence the Self - Efficacy of Special Education Teachers in Public Schools of Davao City

Table 4. Domains of LAC Session Practices that Significantly Influence the Self - Efficacy of Special Education Teachers in Public Schools of Davao City

LAC Session Practices	Self-efficacy					
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standard Coefficient s			
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	p-value	Decision @= 0.05
Constant	3.891	.205		18.609	.000	
Context	.432	.063	.408	2.821	.004	Reject H ₀
Process	.621	.075	1.841	3.913	.000	Reject H ₀
Content	.819	.083	.891	4.634	.000	Reject H ₀

Dependent Variable: **Self efficacy**

R= 0.859, R²=0.732, F-ratio=66.844 p-value= 0.000

Table 4 presents the analysis of the domains of Learning Action Cell (LAC) session practices that significantly influence the self-efficacy of special education teachers in public schools in

Davao City. The results indicate that all three domains—Context, Process, and Content—have a statistically significant positive effect on teachers' self-efficacy, as evidenced by the p-values (all less than 0.05) and the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0) for each domain.

The unstandardized coefficients suggest that for every unit increase in the Context domain, self-efficacy increases by 0.432, while an increase in the Process domain results in a 0.621 increase in self-efficacy. The Content domain shows the most substantial impact, with an increase of 0.819 in self-efficacy for each unit increase in Content practices. The standardized coefficients (Beta) indicate that the Content domain has the strongest influence (Beta = 0.891), followed by the Context (Beta = 0.408) and Process (Beta = 1.841) domains.

The overall model demonstrates a strong influence between LAC session practices and self-efficacy, with an R-value of 0.859 and an R-squared (R^2) value of 0.732, indicating that approximately 73.2% of the variability in self-efficacy can be explained by the LAC session practices. The F-ratio of 66.844, with a p-value of 0.000, suggests that the model is statistically significant. This finding underscores the importance of effectively implementing LAC session practices in enhancing the self-efficacy of special education teachers, particularly emphasizing the critical role of Content practices.

This finding aligns with the study of Reams [31], which demonstrated that effective professional development practices significantly influence teachers' self-efficacy in special education. Their research emphasized that structured collaborative environments, such as Learning Action Cells, not only enhance teachers' skills but also empower them to feel more confident in their instructional abilities. This underscores the critical role that well-implemented LAC session practices play in fostering greater self-efficacy among special education teachers, ultimately contributing to more effective teaching strategies and improved outcomes for students. Additionally, the finding validates the theory that effective professional development practices enhance teachers' self-efficacy in special education, supporting Bandura's Social Learning Theory. This theory posits that individuals develop self-efficacy through observational learning and social interactions, reinforcing the importance of collaborative professional development in building teachers' confidence and competence [32].

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions can be drawn: The extent of LAC session practices was rated very high across all dimensions: context, process, and content. Similarly, the self-efficacy of special education (SPED) teachers was assessed as very high in managing behavior, instruction, and collaboration. These results suggest a significant relationship between LAC session practices and the self-efficacy of SPED teachers.

Moreover, the analysis indicates that the domains of LAC session practices—context, process, and content—significantly influence the self-efficacy of SPED teachers, as evidenced by a p-value of .000, which is below the 0.05 significance threshold. This finding supports the rejection of the null hypothesis. Additionally, the results suggest that for every unit increase in any of the three domains of LAC session practices, the self-efficacy of SPED teachers is expected to increase by 3.891, assuming that other factors remain constant. This highlights the critical importance of effective LAC session practices in enhancing the confidence and competence of SPED teachers.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following suggestions are proposed based on the conclusions of the study. First, the Department of Education should establish new policies aimed at digitizing the Learning Action Cell (LAC) session process. This initiative would enhance the self-efficacy of SPED teachers while minimizing classroom disruptions and ensuring low-cost implementation. Additionally, school heads should conduct thorough assessments of the LAC implementation to improve leadership skills and project outcomes; regular evaluations will help identify areas for enhancement and foster effective practices. Teachers are also encouraged to cultivate a positive work attitude and demonstrate a strong commitment to fulfilling their duties and responsibilities. With the intensified implementation of the LAC, they will gain valuable knowledge, which will lead to improved educational service delivery and enhance the overall quality of basic education. Finally, to gain a broader understanding of the topic, future researchers should consider exploring other aspects of LAC implementation that were not covered in this study. Investigating diverse areas may provide new insights and contribute to the ongoing development of effective practices in special education.

CONSENT (WHEREEVER APPLICABLE)

In conducting this quantitative study, strict ethical protocols were observed to ensure the privacy and protection of all participants. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection, with participants fully briefed on the study's objectives and the confidentiality measures in place. To maintain anonymity, personal identifiers were not collected, and each respondent was assigned a unique code to be used in data analysis. All data were securely stored on encrypted servers, accessible only to the research team. Results were reported in aggregate form, ensuring that individual responses could not be traced back to any specific participant. Additionally, statistical analysis was conducted in a manner that minimized any risk of re-identification, further safeguarding the participants' privacy.

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