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MEDIATING ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL LEARNING ACTION CELL AND LEARNING ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effectiveness of the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) as a collaborative professional development mechanism and its influence on teachers' professional competence and learner engagement. A three-phase mixed-method design was employed, consisting of a quantitative assessment of relationships among variables, a qualitative exploration of teachers' support needs, and the development and validation of SLAC-based collaborative practices. Findings revealed that SLAC is generally effective across leadership, collaboration, and professional support dimensions, with peer learning emerging as the strongest component. Teachers demonstrated high levels of professional competence, which significantly influenced learner engagement. The study highlights the importance of structured, collaborative professional learning in enhancing teaching quality and improving student engagement.

INTRODUCTION

The School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) is a school-based professional development strategy aimed at fostering collaboration among teachers to improve instructional practices and learner outcomes. While SLAC provides opportunities for reflection, shared learning, and collective problem-solving, its implementation varies across schools, resulting in differences in effectiveness. Teachers' professional competence, particularly in pedagogy, classroom management, and assessment, plays a crucial role in shaping learner engagement. When SLAC is effectively implemented, it strengthens teachers' competencies, which in turn enhances learners' behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement. This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of SLAC, determine teachers' professional competence, measure

learner engagement, examine the relationships among these variables, identify teachers' support needs, and propose collaborative professional learning practices grounded in SLAC.

METHODS

This study utilized a three-phase mixed-method research design. Phase 1 employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational approach to examine the levels, relationships, and influence among SLAC effectiveness, teachers' professional competence, and learning engagement. Data were collected through a structured survey questionnaire administered to elementary school teachers and analyzed using mean, standard deviation, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis. Phase 2 adopted a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews to explore teachers' support needs and challenges in improving professional competence and ensuring learner engagement, with data analyzed through thematic analysis. Phase 3 focused on the design and validation of collaborative professional learning practices through SLAC, where teachers evaluated the relevance, feasibility, and applicability of the proposed practices. Sampling techniques included stratified random sampling for the quantitative phase and purposive sampling for the qualitative and validation phases. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were strictly observed throughout the study.

RESULTS

The findings revealed that the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) is generally effective, with a grand mean of 4.07, indicating strong implementation across all dimensions, including leadership, collective commitment, collaborative inquiry, peer learning, and support for professional growth. Among these, peer learning obtained the highest rating, suggesting that collaboration among teachers is the most prominent strength of SLAC. Teachers demonstrated a high level of professional competence, with strong performance in pedagogical competence, learning environment management, and assessment and feedback practices. Statistical analysis showed significant relationships between SLAC effectiveness and teachers' professional competence, as well as between SLAC effectiveness and learner engagement. Furthermore, teachers' professional competence significantly influenced learner engagement and served as a mediating factor between SLAC effectiveness and engagement. Qualitative findings revealed that teachers require continuous professional support, access to relevant training, sufficient time for collaboration, and adequate instructional resources to enhance their teaching practices and sustain learner engagement. The proposed SLAC-based

collaborative professional learning practices were positively perceived by teachers as relevant, feasible, and applicable in their school contexts.

DISCUSSION

The results confirm that SLAC functions as an effective platform for collaborative professional learning, particularly in fostering peer interaction and shared instructional practices. The strong emphasis on peer learning highlights the importance of collegial support in enhancing teacher confidence and competence. The high level of teachers' professional competence indicates that SLAC contributes positively to instructional improvement, although there remains room for further development, especially in assessment and feedback practices. The significant relationships among SLAC effectiveness, teacher competence, and learner engagement support the view that professional development directly influences classroom outcomes. Competent teachers are better equipped to design engaging lessons, manage learning environments effectively, and provide meaningful feedback, all of which contribute to improved learner participation and engagement. However, challenges such as time constraints, limited resources, and inconsistent support suggest the need for stronger institutional commitment to sustain and enhance SLAC implementation. These findings emphasize the importance of structured, well-supported collaborative practices in maximizing the impact of SLAC on both teacher development and student engagement.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) is an effective and valuable professional development mechanism that promotes collaboration, reflection, and continuous learning among teachers. Teachers exhibit a high level of professional competence, which plays a significant role in enhancing learner engagement. SLAC effectiveness significantly influences both teacher competence and learner engagement, with professional competence acting as a key mediating factor. The findings highlight the need for sustained support, structured implementation, and adequate resources to further strengthen SLAC practices. The proposed SLAC-based collaborative professional learning practices are practical, relevant, and ready for implementation; however, future studies should focus on their long-term impact and effectiveness in improving educational outcomes.