



# USING VIRTUAL LAC SESSION TO IMPROVE TEACHING PRACTICE

<sup>1</sup>Patrociño C. de Vera II

<sup>1</sup>Post Graduate Student

<sup>1</sup>College of Teacher Education

<sup>1</sup>University of the Cordilleras, Baguio City, Philippines

*Abstract:* The shift from traditional classroom to virtual classroom had happened in a span of less than two years. It has made learners stay at home and thus, teachers have to make sure that learning still continues. This research will use the qualitative method. This study will be descriptive in nature. Virtual LAC sessions (VLAC) conducted in school is both advantageous and frequent. Unstable technology connection and miscommunication led to teachers' experiences in attending virtual LAC sessions. Teachers' perceptions on the flow of virtual LAC sessions include their awareness on the facilitator and the participants' attitudes, LAC duration, and LAC agenda. LAC session for teachers is supposed to be done every now and then. This is done with LAC session leaders and teachers who are collaborating in a virtual manner.

*Index Terms* – LAC session, Virtual LAC session, teaching practice

## I. INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

The shift from traditional classroom to virtual classroom had happened in a span of less than two years as of this writing. This is due to the pandemic caused by a virus called COVID-19 that had spread globally. It has made learners stay at home and thus, teachers have to make sure that learning still continues. Thus, virtual learning was made possible to be an alternative. Virtual learning as described by Racheva (2017) is utilized with computers and internet connections made possible in an online environment. Teachers, as they have been using computers for quite a time, may quite a few challenges with it. They may be knowledgeable with the software applications that are installed in it and may have used these in their traditional classrooms. However, with the influx of different online platforms available around the globe, the teacher may be confused on which are the best teaching materials to be used in their respective classes. This is may be the case, too, in the Philippines.

Teachers in the Philippines have been having a Learner-Action-Cell (LAC) session with fellow teachers to talk about challenges encountered inside the classroom or in the school related to learners per se. This is in response to the Department of Education's (DepEd) order No. 35, s. 2016 (Cabral, 2019). Just like the learners, teachers do this inside a classroom or in a venue set by the LAC leader and still located inside the campus. It is due to the pandemic that teachers also resorted to do this type of collaboration virtually.

In the school where the researcher is currently assigned which is one of the government schools in Baguio City, this virtual LAC session becomes a part of the week's activity rather than a month's or bi-monthly activity. This type of activity may then air a different view from the teachers that may affect their teaching and learning activities, too.

Vega (2020) investigated on the LAC session experiences of science teachers in the secondary schools. These schools were located in Leyte, Visayas, Philippines. It was found out these schools were conducting the LAC sessions in a different manner, that is, there was no evaluation and no model to pattern with. In addition, disruption of classes happens during LAC sessions. Therefore, the teachers are to find time to catch up with their missed classes.

Martin, Wang, & Sadaf (2020) have a study that facilitation matters. This is an instructor's perception of helpfulness of facilitation strategies on online courses. Participants were 115 instructors in the college level who participated in a survey on facilitation strategies. Results show that timely response to questions is the most helpful for instructor presence, engagement, and learning. It was also noted that there were 11 facilitation strategies used in their online sessions.

Cabral (2019) researched on the effects of their school's LAC session as they collaborate with other teachers. The school is located in Batangas, Luzon, Philippines and it happened during the traditional classroom setting. He found out that the LAC sessions for teachers help in their professional development. However, the objectives and the relevance of LAC sessions to their teaching and learning activities and strategies should be given emphasis. The teachers would like to have more collaborations in terms of research and innovation that it will be strengthened for their professional development, too.

Another LAC session for Science teachers were conducted by Suarez (2017). The school which the study took place was in Marinduque, Mimaropa region, Philippines. It was due to the spiral approach difficulty in teaching and learning process that the conduct of LAC session had become more often. That is, there was the before the conduct, during the conduct in terms of classroom observation, and after the conduct. It was found that the LAC sessions were effective and that the continuous process of doing it could be essential in the teaching – learning process.

Norris, Shelton, Dunsmuir, Duke-Williams, & Stamatakis (2015) had also findings in terms of virtual learning with learners doing it via virtual field trips. It was mentioned that the physically active lessons that shows interventions in the future. In any way, though, the virtual field trip was a learning worth knowing. Roblyer, Porter, Bielefeldt, & Donaldson (2009) had earlier conducted online teaching which was described as teachers' effective teaching strategy. This research paper states that online teaching has improved their teaching course experiences. As teachers take advantage of what technologies could provide to them, they are encouraged to use it to build connections, reflections, and instructions for their learners and for the environment they may have.

This study, then, focuses on the virtual LAC sessions conducted in a government school in Baguio City, Luzon, Philippines. A number of teachers are the participants of this study in which the whole teaching staff of the school may benefit. The techniques and strategies that could be found in the discussion of this paper may be of great value to these teachers as they continue to teach virtually.

Wong & Fong (2014) investigated on learners' attitude on using the traditional or online methods. Results show that the learners are still more reliable on the traditional methods than on online learning. Though they may be happy with the use of technology, they also have low motivation and assessment outputs in their online learning that they prefer to have social interaction.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This research paper aims to identify the use of the virtual Learner-Action-Cell (LAC) to improve the online teaching practice.

Below are the specific research questions to be answered.

1. How is virtual LAC session conducted in schools?
2. What are the teachers' experiences in attending virtual LAC sessions?
3. How challenges were encountered in virtual LAC sessions?

## **II. DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

This chapter presents the research design and methodology, population of the study, data gathering tool, data gathering procedure, and treatment of data.

### **2.1 Research Design and Methodology**

This research will use the qualitative method. This study will be descriptive in nature. It involves one-on-one interviews to describe the process of conducting LAC sessions virtually in schools, to illicit teachers' experiences in attending to these virtual LAC sessions, and to gain insights from these teachers after attending these virtual LAC sessions.

### **2.2 Population and Locale of the Study**

There will be five participants in this research paper. Three teachers will be coming from the junior high school and the two will be coming from the senior high school. This is the case because there are more teachers in the junior high than in the senior high. These participants will be selected based on their availability to take part in the research. In instances that there are teachers who also would like to take part but was / were not identified, they may be included in the research so long as they will not reach ten participants. It is because

they might saturate the whole research and they might repeat what the other participants may have mentioned earlier. These participants will be teaching in the same academic year as the researcher. They will be coming from the same school as the researcher, too. It is in Guisad Valley National High School, Baguio City, Philippines.

These participants will be asked the same questions as referred to the three specific research questions.

### **2.3 Data Gathering Instrument**

The researcher will use guide questions from the three specific questions to get the necessary information from the participants. These guide questions will include: a.) how do you find the virtual LAC sessions?; b.) how are the LAC sessions being conducted?; c.) what insights do you get from the virtual LAC sessions in terms of teaching? of learning? of both? of other methods or strategies?

There will be no validation nor reliability tests to be used for this research as it will only guide questions to answer the specific questions.

### **2.4 Treatment of Data**

This research will use the thematic analysis form. That is, after the interview from the participants, the researcher will collate the data. These data are the responses of the participants. After collating, the researcher will transcribe the data to get the themes or the common answers to make up with the codes. These codes are the general terms that will make up one idea for these themes encountered from the responses. Upon coding, the researcher will expand these responses in the discussion section to better understand their meanings and conditions.

In addition, the responses of the participants will be taken virtually, too. That is, the researcher will make a zoom link and send it to the participant for the scheduled interview. It is because these times are virtual times for teaching and learning which is also the same for researching so long as these participants consented to the having their responses recorded. The researcher will first state this to the participant. Then, if there are no qualms about the research procedure, interview will proceed. Recording of the interview will happen. Transcribing of the responses and actions that were done during the interview will also be done.

## **III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter presents the answers of the three research questions indicated.

### **3.1 Perceptions on conducted virtual lac session**

Virtual LAC sessions (VLAC) conducted in school is both advantageous and frequent. Virtual LAC session is advantageous in the sense that, it is 'very beneficial to teachers since issues encountered are discussed (Participant 1 or P1)'. It could have been possible that the virtual LAC session is an avenue for teachers to present to other teachers the issues and concerns in terms of teaching strategies, learners' concerns inside the classroom or outside of it, and others. This was agreed by Participant 2 (P2) who also mentioned that 'it is really helpful to use for those who are new in the teaching profession'. Indeed, new teachers are part of the LAC session and they are the ones who should be guided accordingly on its proceedings. This is for them to benefit more and that they will probably learn more of how to handle these concerned issues. In so doing, the teachers attending the LAC sessions 'impart knowledge and addressing problems (P5)'. It is therefore viable that teachers impart knowledge not only to their learners but to their peers as well who are the teachers. Teachers do not neglect anyone who asks for answers regarding issues that concern them. Teachers, then, are noted to be sharers of any information they have, any experiences they may have had to those willing to listen and reach out so long as they could address their own problems.

Cabral (2019), in her research of LAC sessions with Science teachers, she expressed that the teachers involved have improved their professional development. They particularly focused on teaching and learning activities and strategies and would like to have more collaboration on research and innovations. This research paper will have to agree with Cabral's (2019) research on having the teachers improve on their professional development as teachers are also expressing their thoughts on what they know and what they have experienced. It would have been possible, however, that LAC sessions should have its own focused topic so as teachers will be able to be focused on these concerns, too.

LAC sessions were conducted in a frequent manner in school. It is because this is conducted as often as necessary. Especially during these times of pandemic where the majority of the platform in conducting classes and online sessions with teachers are online, the more time virtual LAC sessions are implemented. It is possible that time for classes may be moved for LAC sessions to give way. In the same manner, these virtual LAC sessions could be done in as short time as possible of 20 minutes to 40 minutes since the zoom application, which is the commonly used online platform. The longest might be more than one hour but not more than two hours. With the 'issues and concerns (P1)' of teachers, having more LAC sessions could have mean having more of these issues / concerns / problems solved.

### 3.2 Teachers' perception on the challenges encountered in virtual LAC sessions

Unstable technology connection and miscommunication led to teachers' experiences in attending virtual LAC sessions. This unstable technology connection means 'poor internet connection' which is 'difficult to focus on what is being talked about' (P2). This could mean that virtual LAC sessions' experiences are not on matters of discussed but on how connections were made due to instability of the media used to conduct the session. This was agreed by one of the participants, too, saying that, the unstable internet connection is 'inevitable' (P1). This could mean that poor connection usually happens during virtual LAC sessions which could be at fault by both sides. It is because internet connections vary with the different internet services both parties use. It could be on the part of the virtual LAC session facilitator or on the part of the teachers. It could also be both if both are on the same setting while the virtual LAC sessions commence.

It would be possible that due to these poor connections, the result is miscommunication among teachers in virtual LAC sessions. Miscommunication, according to P3, 'impedes the smooth and effective implementation of the LAC session'. This may have been possible since the onset of the session is progressing without any interruptions but as it went, disconnections on either end may happen. Thus, the description above on miscommunication of the participant may have been the result. It may have been possible that when the participant was able to get back on the session again, there were already ideas mentioned and that the participant was not able to understand. On the other hand, the facilitator may have given instructions and the participant was currently connecting and the facilitator may have not been aware of it. This is possible, especially; if there are a number of participants in the session that the facilitator continuously does the task for benefit of many.

These experiences of teachers are totally different from the research findings of Roblyer, Porter, Bielefeldt, & Donaldson (2009). Their findings reveal that teachers' experiences with technologies have provided them with better connections, reflections, and instructions with their learners and their environments. Though there are no learners participated in the virtual LAC sessions yet, it may have been the same experiences when teachers are also dealing with their learners that they may have experienced unstable internet connection and miscommunication. Though these experiences differ, they still are the same as they use same media devices even with different participants. With the least, the teachers involved were able to experience what the learners may have experienced it, too, given the time that they may be having that same virtual class.

### 3.3 Perceptions on the flow of virtual LAC sessions

Teachers' perceptions on the flow of virtual LAC sessions include their awareness on the facilitator and the participants' attitudes, LAC duration, and LAC agenda.

It is quite interesting to know that teachers attending virtual LAC sessions consider who conducts the session. P1 said that 'it depends on the one conducting and the participants' attitude'. It may have been possible that the facilitator has a different attitude in conducting virtual LAC sessions compared with conducting it in-person. This may be the same with the participants' attitude. It would have been possible that they have a different manner of accepting the activity regarding 'the topic, the time the LAC was conducted' (P1). This type of attitude may not be feasible when other activities were being presented by the same facilitator. This also signifies the importance of attitude in attending virtual sessions. It would have been possible that mere attendance is not enough but attitude as well counts. As of this writing, there was not a research found to have researched on facilitator's perception in facilitation strategies in online courses (Martin, Wang, & Sadaf, 2020). Their research found that instructor is also called a facilitator in which connection, in terms of being contacted in multiple ways was rated satisfactorily in their online courses. Though this research was done with teachers as instructors or facilitators and college learners as participants, the result with this study may not be far from what is expected since the medium used is the same. This may be another form of research in the future which is on the facilitation strategies of colleagues with their colleagues.

On the other hand, these participants' attitude may not have much difference to the study of Wong & Fong (2014). They have investigated the perception of learners on online and traditional method. These learners who were investigated have shown that their reliance on online learning is low. This could mean that they still prefer the traditional method of learning. However, these learners are happy with using the technology in learning. This happiness may be possible, too, with the participants of this LAC session study because they may have focus on the attitude of the people they are interacting with rather than on the technology they may be using.

LAC duration is described by the participants as 'more time than having a face-to-face session' (P1) and 'keep up with the due dates' (P4). With these quotes, it would have been possible that they are time conscious and that they really make use of the time given during LAC sessions. This is to the extent that they are mindful of the 'technical interruptions/distractions' (P1) that is happening during virtual LAC sessions.

These happenings may have led the participants in irritation as time is consuming to be able to beat deadlines of what they may have to finish.

LAC session duration, may it frequent in the school where the participants are situated, is also with the same occurrence in the study of Suarez (2017). The study of Suarez (2017) also stated that LAC session in the area where the study was situated had become more often. The conduct of LAC session in a frequent manner has proved to be effective in the continuous process of their teaching and learning. It would have been possible that LAC duration should be in a timely basis that learners may focus on the session and not be mindful, for that time being, of the tasks they may have set aside just to attend the said virtual session. Therefore, it may have been possible, too, that the participants may have stated that LAC Agenda is one of the perceptions that has put an impact on them during the virtual LAC sessions.

LAC agenda, as described by the participants, is 'the flow of the virtual session that could be better if participants are given the agenda beforehand' (P3). Giving the agenda beforehand may have been a possibility that the teachers are ready on what they have to expect and do and bring when they attend the LAC session. However, this may not be a practice with the teachers. It may have been possible that the agenda to be talked about is more than what to be expected. The strategy of the LAC facilitator may be like what is done inside the classroom in which the objective was presented before the lesson starts. Cabral (2019) mentioned that the objectives and the relevance of LAC sessions should be given emphasis. It may have been possible that the general topic is mentioned before the session starts. However, its emphasis is given during the session as well as on the post session. Teachers may have been expecting for that these are the agenda and that the LAC facilitator should 'stick to the plan to reduce confusion' (P4).

#### IV. CONCLUSION

LAC session for teachers is supposed to be done every now and then. This is done with LAC session leaders and teachers who are collaborating in a virtual manner. This type of sessions with teachers is an avenue to reflect on what learners have done in terms of what the teacher had given them. These are in terms of teaching strategies, hearing learners' concerns, and being aware of the learners' experiences as well as the teachers' facilitating skills virtually.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Cabral, J. & Millando, M. (2019). School learning action cell (SLAC) sessions and teachers' professional development in Buhaynasapa National High School. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331789567\\_School\\_Learning\\_Action\\_Cell\\_SLAC\\_Sessions\\_and\\_Teachers'\\_Professional\\_Development\\_in\\_Buhaynasapa\\_National\\_High\\_School](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331789567_School_Learning_Action_Cell_SLAC_Sessions_and_Teachers'_Professional_Development_in_Buhaynasapa_National_High_School)
- [2] Department of Education. (2016). DO 35, s. 2016- The learning action cell as a K to 12 Basic Education Program school-based continuing professional development strategy for the improvement of teaching and learning. Retrieved from <https://www.deped.gov.ph/2016/06/07/do-35-s-2016-the-learning-action-cell-as-a-k-to-12-basic-education-program-school-based-continuing-professional-development-strategy-for-the-improvement-of-teaching-and-learning/>
- [3] Martin, F., Wang, C., & Sadaf, A. (2020). Facilitation matters: instructor perception of helpfulness of facilitation strategies in online courses. *Online learning journal*, 24 (1), 28 – 49.
- [4] Norris, E., Shelton, N., Dunsmuir, S., Duke-Williams, O. & Stamatakis, E. (2015). Virtual field trips as physically active lessons for children: a pilot study. *BMC Public Health*, 15, 366. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-015-1706-5>
- [5] Racheva, V. (2017). What is virtual learning? Retrieved from <https://www.vedamo.com/knowledge/tag/virtual-learning/>
- [6] Roblyer, M. D., Porter, M., Bielefeldt, T., & Donaldson, M. (2009). Teaching online made me a better teacher: studying the impact of virtual course experience on teachers' face – to –face practice. *Journal of Computing in Teacher Education*, 25, (4), 121-126.
- [7] Suarez, M. S. R. (2017). The effectiveness of cluster Learning Action Cell (CLAC) Science on improving teaching- learning process. Department of Education, Division of Marinduque. An Action Research Funded through Basic Education Research Fund (BERF).
- [8] Vega, M. (2020). Investigating the Learning Action Cell (LAC) experiences of Science teachers in Secondary schools: a multiple case study. *International multidisciplinary research journal*, 2 (1), 20-27.
- [9] Wong, L. & Fong, M. (2014). Student attitudes to traditional and online methods of delivery. *Journal of Information Technology Education: Research*, 13, 1-13. Retrieved from [http://www.jite.org/documents/Vol13/JITEv13\\_ResearchP001\\_013Wong0515.pdf](http://www.jite.org/documents/Vol13/JITEv13_ResearchP001_013Wong0515.pdf)