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School Heads' Testimonies on School Based Management Success: Concurrent Triangulation Study

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Abstract

School-Based Management (SBM) empowers school communities by granting principals, teachers, students, and parents' greater authority over budgeting, human resources, and curriculum decisions. This study evaluated SBM implementation in public secondary schools from 2021 to 2024 across four domains: Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Learning, Accountability and Continuous Improvement, and Management of Resources. All domains achieved a Very High Level of success, with Leadership and Governance ranking highest due to strong administrative practices and strategic direction.

Curriculum and Learning reflected high-quality educational practices, while Accountability and Continuous Improvement demonstrated effective monitoring and responsiveness. Management of Resources showcased efficient utilization despite constraints. Participants highlighted the critical role of community engagement and project-based interventions. Initiatives such as SAVE LARDO, FEAT, and Project Achieve Numeracy significantly reduced dropout rates and improved student performance. Testimonies emphasized proactive leadership, collaboration with Local Government Units (LGUs), and continuous monitoring. Stakeholder involvement—from parents to LGUs and external organizations—supported decision-making and resource provision. Schools addressed pandemic-related learning gaps through student- centered approaches and data-driven strategies, ensuring targeted interventions despite limited resources.

Based on these findings, the proposed action plan focuses on four priorities: strengthening leadership and governance, enhancing curriculum and learning, improving accountability and continuous improvement, and optimizing resource management. Key activities include leadership development workshops, stakeholder engagement forums, technology integration training, and data management training. These initiatives aim to modernize teaching approaches, foster transparent communication, and ensure equitable resource allocation.

In conclusion, SBM implementation achieved exceptional performance across all domains, driven by strong leadership, effective management, and continuous improvement efforts. Community engagement and targeted projects proved vital in improving educational outcomes. Despite resource limitations, schools' innovation and partnerships sustained key initiatives. The proposed action plan provides a strategic roadmap to maintain high SBM performance through empowered leadership, curriculum innovation, and efficient resource use.

Keywords: *Accountability, Curriculum, Leadership, Resources, and School*

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INTRODUCTION

School-Based Management (SBM) emerged as a strategic approach aimed at creating more effective learning environments and improving student learning outcomes. Through this reform, internal stakeholders such as school principals, teachers, students, and parents were granted greater authority over the educational process. This empowerment included decision-making responsibilities related to budgeting, human resources, curriculum development, and other essential school operations (Handoko et al., 2021). By shifting decision-making closer to the school level, SBM sought to ensure that those directly engaged in education were better positioned to address the specific needs of their communities, ultimately fostering responsiveness and innovation.

Central to SBM is the active participation of stakeholders, whose involvement in critical decisions directly influences school operations, programs, and projects. The rationale behind this decentralized structure lies in the belief that minimizing bureaucratic constraints can inspire school leaders, teachers, and parents to take greater initiative in addressing educational challenges (Naidoo et al., 2019). Such participation not only fosters shared responsibility but also strengthens the sense of ownership among stakeholders, which in turn leads to greater commitment to the success of school initiatives.

The goal of enhancing educational quality through SBM was reinforced by Republic Act (RA) 9155, known as the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001. This legislation established a comprehensive framework for governing and empowering primary and secondary education in the Philippines. It outlined policies and standards while clarifying the roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities necessary to strengthen educational services and promote better learning outcomes nationwide. By embedding these provisions into law, RA 9155 provided both the legal foundation and the operational guidance needed for SBM to function effectively in diverse school contexts.

Aligned with decentralization principles, RA 9155 granted school heads significant authority to manage their institutions effectively. As noted by Alvarado, Sy, and Adriatico (2019), this authority encompassed defining the school's mission, vision, and goals; fostering conducive learning environments; implementing curricula and improvement plans; introducing innovative instructional methods; managing staff and resources; conducting professional development; and building community partnerships (Riekkinen et al., 2022). This broad scope of responsibility was intended to allow school leaders to adapt programs and services to meet the unique needs of their students and communities, enabling them to respond quickly to challenges and opportunities.

However, despite this supportive policy framework, the implementation of SBM in the Philippines has faced notable challenges. A World Bank report, through the 2014 Public Expenditure Tracking Survey and Quantitative Service Delivery Survey (PETS-QSDS), revealed that most elementary and high schools operated at the lowest level of SBM implementation. Minimal community involvement and limited efforts to improve learning outcomes were observed. A major constraint cited by principals was the lack of financial autonomy, as schools controlled only a small portion of their funds—often restricted to utilities or minor repairs—leaving critical needs such as learning materials and equipment unmet (Suhroh et al., 2018). Without adequate control over resources, the vision of fully functional and responsive school-based management remained difficult to achieve.

Addressing these challenges requires identifying and strengthening the critical factors for successful SBM implementation. Among these, strong school leadership is paramount, as principals are expected to establish clear goals, make informed decisions, and allocate resources effectively. Equally

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important is empowering teachers, parents, and community members to participate in decision-making, which strengthens ownership of initiatives and fosters collective responsibility for school improvement (Lisha et al., 2023). Support from the Department of Education (DepEd) in the form of adequate funding, training, and technical assistance further enhances schools' capacity to implement SBM effectively.

The capacity and readiness of school personnel also play a decisive role in the success of SBM. Teachers and staff must develop the skills and knowledge required to engage in participatory governance and adapt to the additional responsibilities it entails (Perry et al., 2021). Recognizing this, Department Order No. 45, s. 2015 emphasized building capacity by setting objectives for school heads to promote ownership, improve teaching and learning, and strengthen management practices. These initiatives, when anchored in the School Improvement Plan (SIP), ensure that capacity-building efforts are aligned with the school's long-term vision and priorities.

Given these considerations, this study was undertaken to assess the level of SBM implementation in public secondary schools in District II of the Schools Division of Antipolo City. Specifically, it aims to determine whether school heads comply with SBM provisions, identify gaps hindering improvement, and evaluate how SBM practices contribute to school development (Dahiru et al., 2020). By analyzing leadership practices, stakeholder engagement, resource management, and contextual challenges, the study seeks to provide evidence-based insights and recommendations that can enhance the effectiveness of SBM as a mechanism for educational improvement, thereby contributing to a more responsive and equitable education system.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a predictive research design combined with one qualitative component, resulting in a mixed-method approach utilizing a concurrent triangulation strategy. This design was selected to determine whether a predictive relationship existed between the level of success and the trend of success in the SBM implementation of schools, as well as between the trend of success and predictive values on the SBM level of implementation. Predictive research, as explained by McCombes (2020), involves measuring two variables and assessing their relationship without manipulating an independent variable. The concurrent use of both quantitative and qualitative methods allowed the study to explore relationships through statistical analysis while also capturing the lived experiences of participants, thereby producing a more comprehensive understanding of SBM implementation.

To address its objectives, the study examined several key questions. It first sought to determine the level of success of School-Based Management implementation from S.Y. 2021–2024 in terms of Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Learning, Accountability and Continuous Improvement, and Management and Resources. Alongside these quantitative measures, the study explored participants' most significant experiences in implementing SBM, identifying themes from their testimonies, and integrating both sets of findings to formulate an action plan. Within this design, the trend of success in SBM implementation functioned as the predictor variable, while the level of SBM implementation served as the criterion variable. This structure aligned well with the research aim of determining whether a predictive relationship existed between these variables.

The population of the study consisted of school heads and designated SBM coordinators from public secondary schools in District II of the Schools Division of Antipolo City. Five national high schools participated—San Jose, San Roque, Dalig, Marcelino, and Cupang National High Schools—yielding a total of 30 respondents, including 5 school heads and 25 SBM coordinators. This composition ensured representation from both administrative leadership and operational coordination roles, enabling the study

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to examine SBM effectiveness from multiple operational perspectives. For the qualitative phase, interviews were conducted with four principals from the participating schools who had reached an advanced level of SBM implementation, providing deeper insights into effective practices and strategies that supported high-level success.

Data collection also included official records and documents related to SBM, such as the School-Based Management Assessment Tool and the SBM Level of Practice Validation Form. These were obtained from the School Governance and Operations Division (SGOD) of the Schools Division of Antipolo City, as well as from school files. Formal letters of request were submitted to school heads and the SGOD Chief to secure access, ensuring that the process adhered to institutional protocols. This triangulation of survey data, interviews, and document review strengthened the validity of findings by allowing cross-verification from multiple data sources.

The primary research instrument for the quantitative phase was a structured survey questionnaire designed to measure the level of SBM success across the four core principles. The items assessed leadership effectiveness, governance structures, curriculum quality, instructional strategies, accountability mechanisms, and resource management practices. Two four-point Likert scales were used: one to measure the level of SBM success (Very Low Level/Just Starting Phase to Very High Level/Advanced Phase) and another to measure trends in SBM implementation. Data from these surveys were analyzed using IBM SPSS to generate descriptive and inferential statistics, thereby identifying patterns and relationships between predictor and criterion variables. Complementing this, the qualitative phase employed semi-structured interviews that explored advanced-level principals' experiences, strategies, and challenges. These interviews were recorded with consent, transcribed, and subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring ideas and success factors.

The instruments underwent rigorous validation by professors from the University of Perpetual Help and master teachers, who reviewed them for clarity, content alignment, and relevance to the research objectives. Feedback from these experts was incorporated into the final version to enhance accuracy and applicability to real-world school contexts. Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha yielded a coefficient of 0.964, indicating excellent internal consistency and confirming the instrument's ability to produce dependable results across different respondents and settings.

The data gathering process began with a comprehensive review of relevant literature, establishing the theoretical and empirical foundations of the study. Upon securing the necessary permissions from school principals and the Schools Division superintendent, quantitative surveys were distributed, and qualitative interviews were conducted. Survey responses were encoded into IBM SPSS for statistical analysis, while interview transcripts underwent thematic coding to identify patterns and themes. By integrating these results, the study achieved methodological triangulation, ensuring both depth and breadth in its analysis of SBM implementation.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics—particularly mean scores—were used to summarize the level of SBM implementation within each principle. Scores were categorized according to the four-point Likert scale, ranging from Very Low to Very High Level. The qualitative findings were analyzed through thematic analysis, with identified themes validated through participant feedback. This combination allowed the study to link numerical trends with contextual insights, thereby producing actionable recommendations.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were fully briefed on the study's purpose, procedures, and potential implications. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. All collected data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes. These measures

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ensured the study's compliance with ethical research standards and reinforced the integrity and trustworthiness of its findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the analysis of the data and results gathered, the study evaluated the implementation of School-Based Management (SBM) across four domains: Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Learning, Accountability and Continuous Improvement, and Management of Resources. All domains achieved a Very High Level of success, with Leadership and Governance reflecting particularly strong administrative practices. Curriculum and Learning, along with Accountability and Continuous Improvement, demonstrated high-quality educational approaches and effective monitoring systems. The Management of Resources domain showcased high efficiency in resource utilization. Overall, the assessment indicated a Very High Level of success across all domains, highlighting the exceptional performance of SBM practices. This success can be attributed to strong leadership, effective management, and the strategic use of resources, which collectively contribute to the delivery of high-quality education.

Participants shared a variety of experiences that underscored the importance of community engagement, project-based interventions, and strong leadership. They emphasized that stakeholder involvement, particularly through initiatives such as SAVE LARDO and FEAT, played a significant role in reducing dropout rates and improving student performance. These testimonies reflected the value of proactive leadership, collaboration with local government units (LGUs), and continuous monitoring and evaluation. The success of SBM implementation was found to be driven by key factors across its four core variables, with strong stakeholder engagement—including parents, LGUs, and external organizations—proving vital in decision-making and resource provision. Schools effectively addressed academic performance challenges through targeted interventions like Project Achieve Numeracy and adopted student-centered approaches to manage pandemic-related learning gaps. Continuous monitoring, data-driven decision-making, and transparent communication with stakeholders ensured that improvement strategies were effectively implemented. Despite resource constraints, schools maximized the impact of innovative strategies and external partnerships, sustaining projects like SAVE LARDO that have significantly contributed to SBM's overall success.

The proposed action plan centers on strengthening leadership and governance, improving curriculum and learning, enhancing accountability and continuous improvement, and optimizing resource management. Key activities in the plan include leadership development workshops, stakeholder engagement forums, technology integration training, data management training, and resource allocation planning. These initiatives aim to improve stakeholder involvement, modernize teaching strategies, and ensure effective resource allocation to maintain and further enhance the success of SBM implementation.

The evaluation of SBM revealed exceptional performance across all key domains, particularly in Leadership and Governance. This high level of success signifies that schools are effectively managing resources and educational practices, which positions them for sustained excellence in student outcomes. Such achievements are the result of strong leadership, efficient management, and continuous improvement efforts. Moreover, the experiences shared by participants reinforce the significance of community engagement and project-based initiatives. Stakeholder collaboration, especially through LGU partnerships and targeted projects, has yielded positive results in reducing dropout rates and boosting student performance.

The success of SBM is closely linked to stakeholder engagement and targeted interventions that address specific challenges, such as learning gaps and limited resources. By leveraging partnerships and data-driven strategies, schools have been able to sustain improvement and maintain a high level of educational performance. Even in the face of resource limitations, innovation and collaboration with external partners have been instrumental in supporting key projects and achieving educational goals. The proposed action plan provides a clear roadmap for enhancing SBM practices by focusing on leadership development, curriculum innovation, accountability, and efficient resource use. With its emphasis on stakeholder engagement and modern teaching strategies, the plan is expected to strengthen school performance and sustain SBM's current success.

To ensure continuity, the school head is encouraged to prioritize leadership and governance practices to maintain the Very High Level of Success. Regular assessments of leadership effectiveness and resource utilization, coupled with active stakeholder participation, will ensure alignment with educational standards and goals. Strengthening partnerships with LGUs and external organizations will further enhance stakeholder engagement. Building on the success of existing projects, additional community-based initiatives targeting specific student needs should be developed, with proactive leadership and continuous monitoring at the forefront.

Expanding data-driven decision-making practices will be crucial for refining curriculum delivery and addressing post-pandemic learning gaps. Maintaining open communication with stakeholders will reinforce collaboration, while innovative resource management strategies and community partnerships can help overcome financial limitations. Implementing the proposed action plan through a phased approach—starting with leadership workshops, stakeholder forums, and technology integration—will help ensure effective and modernized teaching strategies.

Finally, future research could benefit from longitudinal studies examining the long-term effects of SBM practices on school performance and student outcomes. Such studies could provide valuable insights into the sustained impact of specific interventions, guiding the refinement of SBM frameworks and informing evidence-based educational policies. By committing to continuous improvement, strategic resource management, and collaborative partnerships, schools can sustain and even surpass their current achievements in SBM implementation.

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