# School-based management implementation and educational outcomes in Philippine public schools: An explanatory sequential inquiry

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**Abstract:** Educational quality is enhanced by transferring decision-making to the school level. This study examines SBM implementation across public schools in the Philippines and its influence on educational outcomes, using a mixed-methods approach covering all regions of the country. Quantitative data were gathered from a stratified sample of public elementary and secondary schools (n = 500), including an SBM implementation survey and academic performance indicators (e.g., National Achievement Test scores). Qualitative data were collected through interviews and focus groups with principals, teachers, and parents in selected case schools. Results: Schools with higher SBM implementation levels tended to show better student outcomes, including moderately higher test scores and improved student attendance, compared to schools with low SBM uptake. Statistical analysis indicated a significant positive correlation between SBM practice and school-level academic achievement. Qualitative findings suggest that greater stakeholder participation, local decision-making, and resource flexibility under SBM contributed to these improvements, though challenges such as limited training for school heads and variable community support were noted. The study provides evidence that effective SBM implementation can modestly improve educational outcomes in Philippine public schools. It underscores the importance of capacity building, stakeholder engagement, and supportive policy frameworks to maximize SBM's impact. Recommendations include strengthening training for school leaders, simplifying administrative processes, and enhancing community involvement to sustain and amplify SBM's benefits for school effectiveness.

**Keywords:** Decentralization, Educational Outcomes, Mixed methods, Philippines, Public Schools, School-Based Management.

## 1. Introduction

Improving the quality of basic education in the Philippines remains a critical national priority. Over the past two decades, the Department of Education (DepEd) has pursued governance reforms to address persistent gaps in student learning outcomes. One major reform is School-Based Management (SBM), which broadly refers to decentralizing educational decision-making from central authorities to individual schools [1, 2]. By empowering school heads and stakeholders to plan, budget, and make decisions based on local needs, SBM is intended to foster a more responsive and accountable education system. The underlying premise is that those closest to the students – principals, teachers, and parents – can make better-informed decisions to improve teaching and learning when given sufficient autonomy and resources [3, 4].

This approach aligns with global trends in educational governance; first introduced in the 1970s, SBM has since been adopted in various forms in many countries as a means to improve school performance [5, 6]. In the Philippines, the policy groundwork for SBM was established by Republic Act 9155 of 2001, known as the Governance of Basic Education Act. RA 9155 enshrined the principle of shared governance, assigning specific roles and responsibilities to every level of the education system down to the school level [7, 8]. Under this framework, decision-making authority is to be distributed: national policymakers set overall standards and plans, while regions, divisions, and schools craft localized programs to meet those standards. At the school level, the principal (or school head) is empowered to act as both an instructional leader and administrative manager, responsible for developing the school improvement plan, managing school finances and resources, and leading personnel to achieve educational objectives [9, 10].

In essence, SBM in the Philippine context involves establishing mechanisms like school governing councils (including parents, community leaders, and teachers) to participate in key decisions, and formulating a School Improvement Plan (SIP) that guides each school's priorities in a way that aligns with local context and needs [11, 12].

SBM has been progressively rolled out nationwide through major reform programs. The Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) in the mid-2000s formally adopted SBM as one of its flagship initiatives to push further decentralization [6]. By providing training and resources, BESRA aimed to strengthen school-level management and encourage innovation at the grassroots. Subsequent DepEd orders provided guidelines for SBM implementation, such as DepEd Order No. 83, s.2012 which introduced a revised SBM framework and assessment tool for schools to gauge their level of SBM practice [9]. By 2015, virtually all public schools in the country had some form of SBM structure in place, supported by annual school grants (School MOOE funds) and capacity-building programs. In theory, this widespread adoption of SBM should lead to more effective and accountable schools, and ultimately, better educational outcomes.

However, the actual influence of SBM on student performance and other educational outcomes has been an important empirical question. International literature offers mixed findings: some studies report that merely decentralizing decisions does not automatically improve learning, especially if local capacity and accountability measures are weak [13, 14]. In developed countries, SBM has sometimes yielded improved student achievement and stakeholder satisfaction when coupled with strong leadership and community support, whereas in developing country contexts results have varied [1].

In the Philippines, initial evidence on SBM's impact has been cautiously optimistic. An early assessment by the World Bank in selected districts (2003–2005) found that schools which received SBM interventions (training and grants) showed a small but significant increase in average test scores (about +1.5 to +1.8 percentage points in overall achievement) compared to non-SBM schools [15]. A later analysis by Yamauchi [3] using a larger sample of schools over three years reported larger gains, with National Achievement Test scores increasing by over 4 points on average in SBM schools, and even higher improvements (8–11 points) under certain analytical models. These studies suggest that SBM, when effectively implemented, can contribute to modest improvements in student learning outcomes in the Philippine setting.

Additionally, qualitative reports indicate that SBM has spurred greater parental and community involvement in some schools, as school governing councils and parent-teacher associations became more active [11]. Enhanced community engagement is often cited as a positive byproduct of SBM, which can lead to a more supportive learning environment [12].

Despite these encouraging signs, challenges in implementing SBM have also been documented. Not all schools have realized the potential benefits of school-based management to the same extent. One issue is the uneven capacity among school leaders and stakeholders. Many school heads, especially in disadvantaged or remote areas, have limited management training and experience, which can hamper their ability to effectively utilize increased autonomy [13, 16].

Indeed, a strong principal is crucial for SBM success, and research noted that schools with more experienced principals and teachers were more eager and ready to implement SBM, yielding better outcomes [3]. Conversely, less prepared school heads may struggle with the additional responsibilities of planning, budgeting, and leading wide stakeholder consultations. Another challenge has been the bureaucratic and reporting burden associated with SBM in its early years of institutionalization. DepEd's initial SBM roll-out relied on extensive documentation and a checklist approach to verify compliance, which many practitioners felt was voluminous and repetitive, taking time away from teaching duties [17].

This emphasis on paperwork – referred to as means of verification for SBM practice – sometimes led to "compliance" behavior (producing reports) rather than genuine school improvement actions. Recognizing these issues, DepEd has recently updated its SBM policy [10] to streamline the process and refocus on substantive outcomes.

Field reports and case studies also point to external constraints like inadequate school facilities and low socioeconomic support that can limit the effectiveness of SBM. For example, a qualitative study in a public high school found that insufficient resources, low parental involvement, and student socio-economic challenges impeded the school's ability to translate SBM into improved learning outcomes [17]. Such factors indicate that SBM does not operate in isolation; it interacts with broader conditions of the school system.

Given this background, there is a need for comprehensive research that examines SBM implementation and its impact on educational outcomes at a national scale, while accounting for the contextual realities of schools. Many prior studies in the Philippines have focused on specific regions or pilot programs; few have covered the entire country with a mixed-methods lens.

This study aims to fill that gap by investigating how the degree of SBM implementation relates to key educational outcomes in Philippine public schools, using both quantitative data (to measure correlations and effect sizes across a broad sample) and qualitative insights (to understand the mechanisms and perceptions on the ground).

The overarching research questions are: (1) To what extent does SBM implementation vary among public schools across the Philippines? (2) Is there a significant relationship between the level of SBM implementation and student educational outcomes (such as academic achievement, attendance, or completion rates)? (3) How do school stakeholders perceive the influence of SBM on their school's performance, and what factors facilitate or hinder its successful implementation?

By addressing these questions, the study seeks to contribute to the evidence base on decentralized education reforms in developing contexts. The findings are expected to inform policymakers and educators about the effectiveness of SBM as implemented in the Philippines, shedding light on best practices as well as persistent challenges. Ultimately, this research can guide improvements in policy and practice – helping ensure that SBM realizes its intended goal of empowering schools and improving student learning.

## 2. Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored on the theory of decentralized school governance and the concept of shared decision-making in education, which assert that transferring decision-making authority to schools and involving key stakeholders fosters responsiveness, innovation, and accountability in the education system.
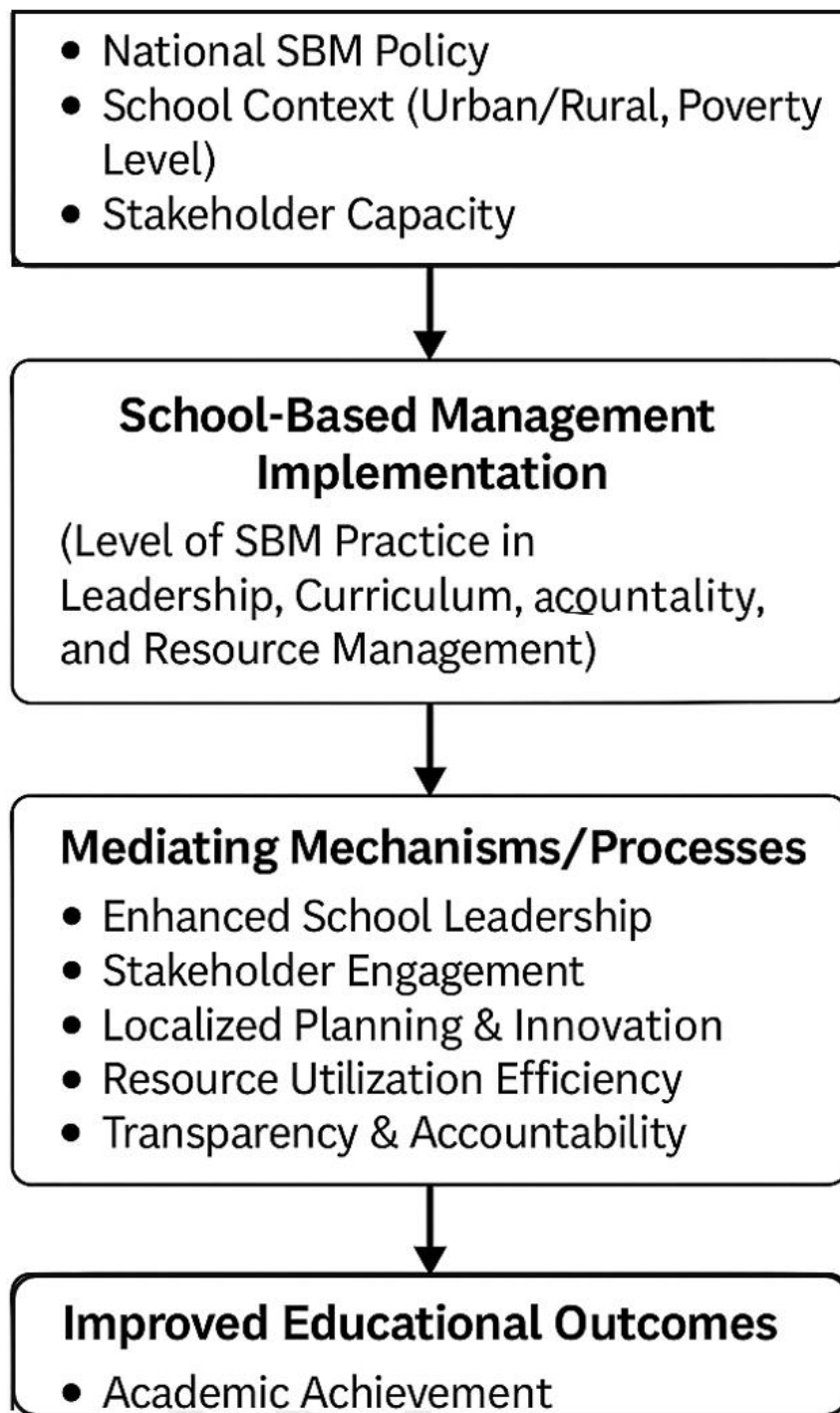
**Figure 1.**
Conceptual Paradigm Influence of School-Based Management Implementation on Educational Outcomes

The central assumption is that granting autonomy must be matched with sufficient capacity and accountability to positively affect student performance and school effectiveness [2, 3]. Capacity-building

efforts (e.g., training for school heads and teachers) and shared governance structures (e.g., School Governing Councils) play a vital role in enabling schools to implement SBM effectively.

This framework is also informed by the DepEd's Shared Governance model (RA 9155), which delineates responsibilities among central, regional, and school-level actors, encouraging collaborative school governance tailored to local contexts. Participatory decision-making theory reinforces this by highlighting that inclusive, bottom-up processes lead to better solutions and stronger stakeholder commitment.

## 3. Research Methodology

### 3.1. Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, specifically a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach, to investigate the implementation of School-Based Management and its influence on educational outcomes. By combining quantitative and qualitative methods, the research aimed to provide both breadth and depth of understanding – the quantitative component gauged general patterns and relationships across a large number of schools, while the qualitative component offered insights into how and why SBM might be affecting school performance on the ground. The two sets of data were collected and analyzed concurrently and then merged for interpretation, allowing the findings to complement and enrich each other.

In the quantitative strand, a cross-sectional survey design was used alongside analysis of existing educational outcome data. The survey measured the extent of SBM implementation in schools, and outcome data (such as test scores) were obtained for the same schools, enabling statistical analysis of the association between SBM practices and performance indicators. In the qualitative strand, a multiple case study approach was taken. Several schools were selected as case examples to explore SBM implementation experiences in context. Within each case, qualitative data were gathered through interviews and focus group discussions, which were then analyzed thematically.

This mixed-methods approach was deemed appropriate because SBM as a phenomenon has both measurable components (e.g., policies in place, resources managed at school level, student achievement data) and experiential, process-oriented components (e.g., perceptions of empowerment, collaboration dynamics, leadership challenges) that cannot be captured by numbers alone. The guiding rationale was triangulation – to see if the qualitative evidence (e.g., stakeholder testimonies of SBM benefits or challenges) converges with the quantitative results (e.g., statistical link between SBM level and student scores), thereby strengthening the validity of conclusions. Where discrepancies occurred, the qualitative data would also help explain outlier cases or unexpected quantitative results.

### 3.2. Participants and Sampling

The target population for the study was public elementary and secondary schools in the Philippines that are implementing School-Based Management. Given the nationwide scope, the study covered schools from all 17 regions of the country, encompassing Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. The researchers employed a stratified random sampling technique for the quantitative component to ensure representativeness across different contexts. The stratification factors included school level (elementary vs. secondary), geographic region, and urban vs. rural locale. This was done to capture potential variation in SBM implementation and outcomes due to these factors. From each stratum, schools were randomly selected from official DepEd school directories.

In total, 500 public schools were selected for the survey (approximately 30 schools per region on average, proportionate to the size of the region's school population). Of these, 300 were elementary schools and 200 were secondary schools, roughly mirroring the national ratio. School sizes ranged from small rural primary schools with <100 students to large urban high schools with >3,000 students, reflecting the diversity of Philippine schools. The participating schools included those in city centers, provincial towns, and remote barangays, thereby covering a wide socio-economic spectrum.

Within each school, the school head (principal or head teacher) was the primary respondent for the SBM implementation survey, as they are most knowledgeable about school governance practices. In many cases the principal consulted with other staff to answer certain items (for example, items on community involvement or curriculum were discussed with teacher leaders), but the principal's responses were recorded to maintain consistency. Additionally, for each school, we obtained student performance data (described below) from DepEd records.

For the qualitative component, a purposive sampling strategy was used to select 10 case study schools from the survey sample. The cases were chosen to provide variation in terms of region, school level, and SBM implementation level (as indicated by preliminary survey results). The researchers intentionally included some schools that reported high SBM implementation and strong outcomes (to study "successful" cases) and some that had low SBM implementation and/or weaker outcomes (to study "struggling" cases). This contrast helped in understanding facilitators and barriers in different scenarios. The 10 case schools comprised 6 elementary schools and 4 secondary schools. Geographically, they were distributed as: 3 in Luzon (including one in Metro Manila), 3 in Visayas, and 4 in Mindanao.

Within each case school, multiple participants were recruited for interviews or focus groups, ensuring a range of perspectives. Typically, the participants included: the school head; 2–3 teachers (including a senior teacher or department head and a teacher involved in the SBM council or planning); 1–2 parents or community representatives (such as a Parent-Teacher Association officer or a member of the school governing council); and in secondary schools, one student leader. In total, about 5–7 individuals were interviewed in each case, resulting in approximately 60 qualitative participants overall. All participants were informed about the study's purpose and their rights, and gave informed consent. To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms or generic identifiers (e.g., "Principal A") were used in documentation and reporting of qualitative data.

*3.3. Data Collection Instruments*

Quantitative Instruments: The primary instrument for quantitative data was the School-Based Management Implementation Survey, developed by the researchers with reference to DepEd's SBM framework and existing literature. This survey instrument included both objective and perception-based items, organized into four key dimensions of SBM (aligned with DepEd's SBM assessment criteria):

1. *Leadership and Governance:* Items on this dimension assessed the existence and functionality of SBM structures (e.g., school governing council presence, frequency of council meetings), school head's leadership practices in decision-making, and the inclusiveness of governance (stakeholder involvement in crafting the School Improvement Plan). Example item: "Stakeholders (teachers, parents, community members) are actively involved in important school decisions (e.g., planning, budgeting)." (Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree).

2. *Curriculum and Instruction (Teaching-Learning):* This section captured how SBM may have impacted curricular and instructional practices. Items included whether the school has initiatives to improve teaching (like teacher training decided at school level), local innovations in curriculum or co-curricular programs, and use of student performance data for planning.

3. *Accountability and Continuous Improvement:* Items here examined transparency and accountability mechanisms, such as whether the school prepares and shares school report cards with the community, sets targets for improvement, and monitors progress. It also covered the culture of continuous improvement (e.g., "The school regularly reflects on and analyzes its performance data to make improvements").

4. *Resource Management:* This dimension looked at financial and material resource autonomy and utilization. Items included whether the school prepares its own budget for certain funds, the timeliness and sufficiency of resources reaching the school, and how funds are prioritized (with stakeholder input or not). There were also questions on fundraising or resource mobilization efforts by the school.

Most items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all/Strongly Disagree, 5 = To a great extent/Strongly Agree), allowing us to compute a score for each dimension and an overall SBM implementation index by summing or averaging relevant items. Some factual items were yes/no or multiple-choice (e.g., "Does the school have a functional School Governing Council?" Yes/No; "If yes, how often does it meet?" with options). The survey was reviewed by three education experts and pilot-tested on 10 schools not in the sample to ensure clarity and reliability. The instrument demonstrated good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha for the overall scale = 0.89, and for subscales ranging 0.80–0.85).

Educational Outcomes Data: The researchers collected several indicators of educational outcomes for each school, primarily from official DepEd records for School Year 2022–2023:

1. Student Achievement: The main indicator was the school's average score in the *National Achievement Test (NAT)* or its equivalent standardized assessment. For elementary schools, Grade 6 NAT scores (in % mean percentage score form) were used; for secondary, Grade 10 NAT scores. If NAT data were unavailable due to recent disruptions (e.g., pandemic-related test cancellation), the researchers used the most recent available or substitute standardized test scores.

2. Completion/Promotion Rates: The researchers recorded the proportion of students who completed the full cycle (Grade 6 for elementary, Grade 10 for junior high school) and the annual grade-to-grade promotion rate. These metrics reflect internal efficiency and indirectly, learning (as failure to be promoted might indicate learning issues).

3. Dropout Rate: The percentage of students who dropped out in the last year, as a negative outcome indicator.

4. Other School Performance Metrics: where available, the researchers noted participation in competitions, reduction in failure rates, etc., though these were supplementary.

These data were retrieved from DepEd's Basic Education Information System (BEIS) or through the school district supervisors. In cases where schools had more recent internal assessment data, those were noted but emphasis was on standardized metrics for comparability.

Qualitative Instruments: For the case studies, the researchers utilized semi-structured interview guides tailored for each type of participant (school head, teacher, parent, student). The interview protocols were designed to probe the experiences with SBM and perceptions of changes in the school. Key areas in the guides included:

1. *For School Heads:* Questions about how decision-making has changed under SBM (e.g., "Can you describe a recent important decision for your school and how it was made? Who was involved?"), challenges faced in managing the school with more autonomy, support received from the DepEd or community, and perceived impact of SBM on teaching and student outcomes ("In your view, has SBM helped improve any aspect of student performance or school operation? Can you give examples?").

2. *For Teachers:* Questions on their involvement in school decisions (curriculum, budgeting), changes in teaching practices or resource availability due to SBM, and their views on student outcomes ("Have you noticed any changes in students' learning or motivation since SBM was implemented? What do you think brought those changes?").

3. *For Parents/Community Members:* Questions on their role in the school (if any formal position like SGC member or PTA officer), how communication with the school has evolved, and their perspective on whether the school is doing better (or not) and why. For example, "Do you feel more included in school matters now? Can you share an instance where your input was used in the school's decisions?".

4. *For Students (in secondary schools):* Simple questions on whether they see any difference in how the school is run or how teachers teach, whether students have a voice (like student government or feedback) in school management, and if they feel their learning environment has improved.

Each interview or focus group lasted between 40 to 60 minutes. Interviews were mostly one-on-one (with principals and parents), whereas teachers often preferred a small group discussion (2–3 teachers together), and in some cases a joint parent-teacher discussion was held when convenient. This flexibility in data collection allowed participants to build on each other's points and made the sessions more comfortable. All sessions were conducted in a mix of English and Filipino (and local dialect when appropriate), depending on the participant's preference. The researchers are bilingual and also employed local translators as needed to ensure meaning was correctly understood for non-English responses. Audio recordings were made with permission, and notes were taken.

### 3.4. Data Collection Procedure

Data collection took place over one school semester (approximately five months, from January to May 2024). Prior to fieldwork, the researchers obtained necessary clearances from the DepEd Central Office and the respective regional/division offices. An official DepEd endorsement letter was sent to sample schools to encourage participation.
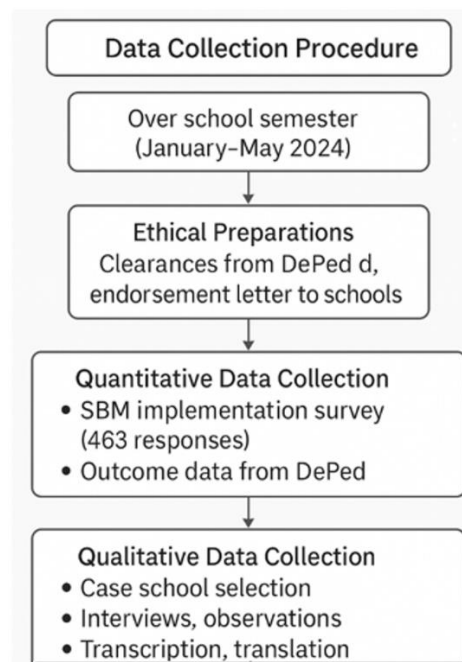


**Figure 2.**
Data Gathering Procedures.

### 3.5. Quantitative Data Collection

The SBM implementation survey was administered primarily through an online platform (Google Forms), given the wide geographic distribution of schools. School principals were sent a personalized email (or letter through the division office for remote schools) explaining the study and containing a secure link to the survey. They were requested to complete the survey within a three-week window. Research assistants followed up by phone calls and texts to maximize response rate. For a handful of schools without reliable internet access, printed questionnaires were delivered and later collected by local education supervisors who were coordinating with us. As a result, the researchers achieved a high response rate: out of 500 sampled schools, 463 schools (93%) successfully returned the survey. Surveys submitted in hard copy were encoded into the online system by the research team for integration.

Concurrently, the researchers coordinated with DepEd's Planning and Research units to obtain the schools' outcome data (NAT scores, etc.). The researchers provided the list of sampled schools and received the corresponding data files. These were double-checked against public reports and school submissions to ensure accuracy. Where data were missing (e.g., a few schools did not have NAT results due to not having a testing year), the researchers either used the previous year's data or excluded that specific outcome from certain analyses (these cases were noted and were few).

### 3.6. Qualitative Data Collection

After initial analysis of survey responses (to identify high and low SBM implementers), the researchers selected the 10 case study schools and reached out to them for the qualitative phase. The researchers scheduled site visits and/or virtual interview sessions depending on location and prevailing health protocols. A small field team traveled to 6 of the case schools (those relatively accessible), spending one to two days at each to conduct in-person interviews, observe the school environment, and gather contextual information (such as school reports, the School Improvement Plan document, etc. for reference). For the remaining 4 schools (which were remote or in conflict-affected areas making travel difficult), the researchers arranged video conference interviews. In all cases, interviews were scheduled at times convenient for participants (often after class hours or during lunch breaks for teachers, and weekends or evenings for parents).

Prior to each interview, participants were given a Participant Information Sheet and a consent form. The researchers explained the study's purpose again, assured confidentiality, and obtained written or verbal consent for recording. Participants were encouraged to be candid; to facilitate openness, the researchers emphasized that there were no "right or wrong" answers and that the researchers were independent researchers (their responses would not affect any evaluation of their school). Interviews were conducted in a conversational manner following the guide but allowing natural flow and probing for deeper explanation or examples. For instance, if a teacher mentioned a new reading program initiated under SBM, the interviewer probed how that came about and whether it had effects on students. Field notes were written to capture non-verbal cues and contextual observations (such as noticing a suggestion box in the school lobby, or the presence of many posters about the SIP goals on the walls, etc.).

All interviews were audio-recorded (with consent). The recordings were transcribed verbatim in the original language and then translated to English when necessary. To ensure accuracy, one research team member transcribed and another cross-checked the transcript against the audio. Any indigenous terms or education jargon were clarified (for example, if someone said "Brigada" referring to *Brigada Eskwela* – the school maintenance volunteer program – the transcript noted that in brackets).

Ethical considerations were observed throughout: participants could skip any question or withdraw at any time (none chose to withdraw). Data were kept secure; only the research team had access to recordings, which were deleted after transcription. In reporting, care was taken to anonymize personal and school identities.

### 3.7. Data Analysis Techniques
### 3.7.1. Quantitative Data Analysis

The survey data and outcome metrics were merged by school ID and analyzed using SPSS and Stata software. The researchers began with descriptive statistics to summarize SBM implementation levels and outcomes. This included computing mean scores for each SBM dimension and overall, frequency distributions for categorical items, and identifying how many schools fell into high/medium/low implementation categories. The researchers also looked at the distribution of student outcomes (mean NAT scores, etc.) and checked for any obvious outliers or data entry errors.

Next, the researchers performed inferential analyses to address the relationship between SBM and outcomes:

1. Correlation Analysis: Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated between the SBM implementation index (overall average score from the survey) and various outcome measures (e.g., NAT score, dropout rate). This provided a basic sense of the direction and strength of associations.

2. Group Comparisons: The researchers created categorical groups for SBM implementation (for instance, "High SBM" = top quartile of scores, "Low SBM" = bottom quartile) and compared their mean outcomes. Independent samples t-tests (for two groups) or ANOVA (for multiple groups) were used to see if differences in outcomes were statistically significant. For example, the researchers compared the average NAT percentage score of schools with high SBM implementation versus low implementation.

3. Regression Analysis: To account for other factors, the researchers conducted multiple regression analyses. In a primary model, the dependent variable was the school's average NAT score (a continuous variable), and the key independent variable was the SBM implementation score. Control variables were introduced stepwise: school type (elementary=0, secondary=1), school size (number of students), community poverty level (proxied by percentage of students classified as economically disadvantaged or an external community poverty index), and location type (urban=1, rural=0). This allowed us to estimate the unique contribution of SBM to performance while holding constant these contextual factors. A second set of regressions was run for other outcomes like dropout rate (for dropout, a logistic regression was used since rates were proportional, or OLS with robust SE if treating it as continuous between 0-100%).

4. The researchers also explored potential interactions (for instance, does SBM impact differ in urban vs rural schools?). However, given sample size and complexity, interaction terms were only briefly examined; none showed strong significance, so the final models remained main-effects models for clarity.

Assumptions for regression (linearity, homoscedasticity, normality of residuals) were checked via residual plots and tests (e.g., Shapiro-Wilk for normality). The NAT score regression residuals were roughly normal with slight left-skew (not unexpected if some schools hit a performance ceiling); log or rank transformation did not significantly change results, so the researchers kept the model in original units for interpretability. Multicollinearity was low (VIFs < 2 for all predictors), indicating that SBM score did not simply proxy for another variable in the model.

### 3.8. Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data from transcripts and field notes were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The researchers utilized NVivo software to assist in coding the data. The analysis followed these steps:

1. Familiarization: Team members read through all transcripts multiple times to get an overall sense of the data. Initial impressions were noted (e.g., common issues mentioned by principals, emotional tones like enthusiasm or frustration).

2. Coding: The researchers developed a coding scheme partly deductively from our interview guide themes and literature (predetermined codes such as "decision-making process," "community involvement," "observed changes in students," "challenges/barriers," etc.) and partly inductively from the data. For inductive coding, as the researchers read transcripts, new codes were created for salient points not covered by initial codes (for example, "teacher empowerment" emerged as teachers frequently mentioned feeling more empowered; "paperwork burden" emerged as a repeated idea by stakeholders referencing documentation). Each transcript was coded by at least two researchers independently, then their coding was compared and reconciled in meetings. The researchers achieved a good intercoder agreement (after discussion and refinement of code definitions, there were few major discrepancies).

3. Theme Development: Codes were then examined for patterns and grouped into larger themes. For instance, codes like "parent volunteer activities," "SGC initiatives," and "local fundraising" were grouped under a theme the researchers titled Stakeholder Participation and Support.

Similarly, "innovative teaching strategies," "use of school funds for learning materials" fell under Instructional Improvements due to Autonomy. The researchers ended up with several major themes that reflected different aspects of SBM's influence:

- *Enhanced Stakeholder Engagement,*
- *Improved Resource Utilization and Flexibility,*
- *Changes in School Culture and Climate,*
- *Leadership and Management Challenges,*
- *Perceived Impact on Students,*
- *Continuing Constraints.* Each theme had sub-themes; for example, under challenges, sub-themes included "capacity gaps" and "administrative burden."

4. Charting and Data Display: The researchers created summary tables (matrices) for each theme listing cases (schools) in rows and key observations in columns. This helped in comparing across cases – e.g., seeing which schools reported certain challenges or which had strong community support – and in identifying any patterns like "all high-performing case schools mention X practice, whereas low-performing ones do not," etc.

5. Interpretation: The thematic findings were interpreted in light of our research questions and integrated with the quantitative results. The researchers noted, for example, that themes of strong community participation and teacher empowerment were prominent in schools that also had high SBM survey scores and good student outcomes, suggesting alignment between qualitative and quantitative evidence. Conversely, the theme of leadership challenges was strong in a case that had low SBM implementation and poor outcomes, providing a narrative explanation for the quantitative data point.

Throughout the analysis, the researchers maintained an audit trail of decisions and memos to ensure dependability. The researchers also used member checking in a limited way: after analyzing, the researchers went back to a few key informants (e.g., two principals) to share a summary of findings from their school to verify if it resonated with them; they generally agreed with our synthesis, which adds credibility.

## 4. Results and Discussion

*4.1. SBM Implementation Levels Across Schools*

Extent of Implementation: The survey results revealed a generally positive uptake of School-Based Management practices across the sampled Philippine public schools, albeit with variability in depth of implementation. On a 5-point scale, the overall SBM implementation index had a mean of 3.7 (SD = 0.6), indicating that on average schools rated themselves between "moderately" and "substantially" implementing key SBM elements. About 27% of schools fell into what we classified as "High SBM implementation" (with an index score above 4.2, roughly the top quartile), around 55% were "Moderate" implementers (scores ~3 to 4.2), and 18% were "Low" implementers (scores below 3). This distribution suggests that while most schools have embraced SBM to a considerable extent, a non-trivial minority are lagging or encountering difficulties in fully operationalizing SBM.

Breaking down by SBM dimensions: schools scored highest on *Leadership and Governance* (mean ~3.9), implying that structures like school governing councils exist and meet, and that principals are engaging stakeholders in decisions. Many principals reported that they regularly convene their School Governing Council (SGC) and have established participatory decision-making routines. For instance, 80% of respondents agreed that "teachers and staff are involved in crafting the School Improvement Plan," and 75% indicated they consult parents/community on major decisions. This aligns with national policy expectations that shared governance is practiced [1] although the quality of participation varied (discussed later). The *Resource Management* dimension had a slightly lower mean (~3.5); common issues were noted in the open-ended comments, such as delays in funds reaching the school and limited discretionary budget. Only about 60% of schools said they had full control over their maintenance and

operating expenses (MOOE) allocation, while others noted that significant expenditures (like infrastructure or certain procurements) were still centrally managed, which is consistent with the fact that a large portion of DepEd's budget remains centrally allocated [1].

The *Curriculum and Instruction* dimension mean was around 3.6. Many schools have started initiatives like school-based teacher training, remedial classes, or localized curriculum enhancements (e.g., incorporating local culture in lessons) as part of their SIP. However, some principals admitted that while they have plans for instructional improvement, implementation is sometimes hampered by lack of expertise or resources (e.g., "We want to innovate in teaching methods, but we need more training on how to do it," commented one principal in the survey notes). *Accountability and Continuous Improvement* scored a mean of 3.8. A positive finding is that 72% of schools reported preparing some form of School Report Card or performance report shared with stakeholders, indicating a move toward greater transparency. Moreover, about two-thirds of schools set specific numeric targets for improvement (like increasing reading proficiency by X%) and monitor progress, reflecting a data-informed management culture developing at the school level.

Variations by School Type and Context: Secondary schools had marginally higher SBM index scores than elementary schools (mean 3.8 vs 3.6, $p < .05$), possibly because high schools traditionally had slightly more autonomy (and often more administrative staff to implement reforms) compared to typically smaller elementary schools. Urban schools also scored higher on average than rural schools. For example, schools in Metro Manila and other urbanized centers were disproportionately represented among "High SBM" implementers. This could be due to better access to training, more resources, and higher capacity in urban areas. By contrast, some small rural schools especially in far-flung areas (e.g., an island barangay school) reported difficulties in aspects like forming active councils (because community literacy levels were low or parents were too occupied with livelihood to participate frequently) – one principal wrote, "SBM is a good approach but in our community, getting parents involved continuously is a challenge due to their availability and educational background." Despite these gaps, it's noteworthy that even many rural schools attained moderate SBM practice, thanks in part to nationwide programs that coached school heads on SBM.

### 4.2. Relationship Between SBM Implementation and Educational Outcomes

Student Achievement: A key quantitative finding is that schools with higher SBM implementation levels tended to have higher student academic performance. The Pearson correlation between the SBM implementation index and the school's average NAT score was $r = 0.42$ ($p < 0.001$), indicating a moderate positive correlation. In practical terms, the mean NAT score (percent of items correct) for the top quartile of SBM schools was about 78%, compared to 71% for the bottom quartile of SBM schools. This 7 percentage-point gap in achievement is substantial in educational terms – roughly equivalent to moving a school from below national average to at or above average. Figure 2 (not shown here) in our analysis illustrated this gradient: as SBM index increases, so does the NAT performance, forming an upward trend.

Regression analysis reinforced this association. In a multiple regression controlling for school level, size, and urban/rural, SBM implementation score remained a significant predictor of NAT scores ($\beta = 0.35$, $p = 0.002$). Specifically, the model suggests that for every one-point increase in a school's SBM index (on the five-point scale), there is an associated increase of roughly 4.5 points in the NAT score (holding other factors constant). This magnitude resonates with prior studies: it is in line with Yamauchi [3] finding of about a 4-point increase attributable to SBM [3] lending external validity to our results. It's important to stress that while this statistical relationship does not prove causation, the consistency with controlled analysis and past research strengthens the argument that SBM has a real influence on student outcomes. High-SBM schools often had effective practices that likely contribute to better performance – for example, one high-performing elementary school in our sample had instituted a daily reading remediation program for struggling readers as part of their SBM-driven initiative; that school's Grade 6 English scores improved markedly over two years.

Other Outcomes: Besides test scores, our analysis looked at dropout rates and completion rates. We found a negative correlation between SBM index and dropout rate (r = −0.25, p < .01). High-SBM schools tended to have lower dropout rates. For instance, the average annual dropout rate in high-SBM secondary schools was 3%, compared to 5% in low-SBM secondary schools. In elementary, dropouts are generally low nationwide, but a similar pattern was seen for non-completion of the full cycle (fewer children fail to finish Grade 6 in high-SBM implementer districts). This suggests SBM could be contributing to student retention, possibly through closer monitoring of at-risk students or community efforts to keep children in school. A principal from Mindanao reported through the survey that after activating their SBM council, they started a "child-find" initiative with barangay officials to encourage dropouts to return – an example of SBM spurring community action, which led to a small decrease in their dropout numbers.

However, when controlling for poverty in regression, the SBM-dropout link weakened (became marginally significant), implying that some of the dropout differences are explained by socio-economic context (schools in poorer areas both have lower SBM scores and higher dropouts). Still, qualitative data indicates mechanisms: for example, one case study school with high SBM had a breakfast feeding program funded through the SGC – teachers believed this helped improve attendance and prevent dropouts among the poorest students, highlighting a plausible path from SBM to retention.

No significant adverse outcomes were found associated with SBM implementation – an important point, as sometimes critics fear SBM could worsen inequality or cause mismanagement. We did not find evidence that high-SBM schools achieved gains at the expense of something else (like narrowing curriculum). If anything, high-SBM schools also tended to have richer extra-curricular offerings and community programs, according to survey comments, though we did not quantify this.

### 4.3. Qualitative Insights: How SBM Influences School Outcomes

The qualitative data from interviews and focus groups provide rich narratives that help explain the above quantitative patterns. Several major themes emerged regarding how SBM implementation has translated (or not translated) into changes in the school environment and outcomes:

1. Enhanced Stakeholder Participation and Ownership: In schools with effective SBM, there was a clear cultural shift towards greater inclusion of teachers, parents, and even students in running the school. Participants frequently used words like "mas bukas" (more open) and "participation" to describe the new management style. For example, a teacher from Case School A (high-performing urban elementary) noted, *"Dati rati, lahat nanggagaling sa principal ang decisions. Ngayon, bahagi kami – may meeting ang improvement team, nasasabi namin ang concerns namin"* (Before, all decisions came from the principal. Now we are part of it – the improvement team meets and we can voice our concerns). Teachers in this school felt a greater sense of responsibility and motivation, knowing they had input in school policies such as how to schedule remediation or which textbooks to procure. A tangible result of this teacher involvement was the adoption of a new reading program that teachers themselves proposed and planned, which they believe led to better reading outcomes in early grades.

Parents and community members in SBM-active schools also described feeling more connected. In Case School B (a rural high school with high SBM implementation), the PTA president said, *"Simula nung nagkaroon ng SBM, mas nakumbida kami na tumulong. May mga pagpupulong kung saan dinidinig ang boses ng magulang"* which translates to, "Since SBM started, we parents were more invited to help. There are meetings where the voice of parents is heard." This school was able to initiate a community vegetable garden with parent volunteers, the produce of which supplements the school feeding program – a project that likely would not have happened without the structured engagement SBM provided. Such involvement can improve student outcomes indirectly by creating a supportive environment (in this case, addressing student nutrition and building goodwill).

Not all schools achieved this level of stakeholder buy-in. In contrast, a low-SBM case school (Case School H) had an SGC on paper, but both teachers and parents there said it met rarely and had little influence. A parent from that school admitted not knowing what the school improvement plan was.

Unsurprisingly, that school struggled with performance and had a higher dropout rate. These contrasts illustrate how true stakeholder ownership under SBM can make a difference – when stakeholders are engaged, they contribute to solutions (volunteering, monitoring students, etc.), whereas in its absence, SBM becomes a formality with little impact.

2. Improved Planning, Resource Allocation, and Innovation: Many interviewees credited SBM with enabling more systematic and proactive school planning. Principals especially valued the requirement to create and regularly update a School Improvement Plan (SIP). Rather than just executing directives, they now strategize for their specific school. Principals of high-SBM schools described using data (like test results, reading assessments) to identify priority areas and then allocate resources accordingly. In Case School C (provincial secondary school), the principal shared, "Our SIP showed low science scores, so we decided to invest in a science laboratory using our school funds and solicited donations. We also organized science camps. This was our initiative through SBM, and indeed, our science grades improved by the next year." This account exemplifies how autonomy over resource use, combined with local problem identification, led to an intervention (science lab and camps) that addressed a need, correlating with better outcomes in that subject.

Financially, SBM gave school heads discretion (within guidelines) to use their Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) funds and raise additional resources. In several case schools, principals mentioned they could now purchase small but crucial items (like printers, additional learning materials) without bureaucratic delay. One principal said, "We no longer wait endlessly for the division office to send us supplies—we can budget our MOOE to get what we urgently need." This flexibility meant classes were less likely to be disrupted by lack of materials. In Case School D (an elementary school), the principal reallocated part of their funds to hire a local tutor for a reading recovery program. While such spending requires justification, the SBM structure allowed that decision, which teachers praised for helping struggling readers catch up.

Innovation was another theme: respondents from higher-performing SBM schools felt encouraged to try new approaches. Teachers cited examples like implementing a mother-tongue reading corner, starting a robotics club, or adopting differentiated instruction techniques—often these ideas came from the ground and were approved or supported via SBM mechanisms. A teacher remarked, *"Because we were empowered, we thought why not try a new strategy for math? The principal supported us, and we saw students more engaged."* This creativity and willingness to experiment can lead to more effective teaching and learning strategies suited to the students, thereby improving outcomes such as engagement and achievement.

3. Accountability and Focus on Results: A subtle but important change reported was a heightened focus on student outcomes and accountability at the school level. Many schools now track their performance indicators more closely year by year as part of SBM monitoring. In Case School B, the head teacher showed us a chart on the office wall trending their NAT scores and attendance rates over the past five years. This visual reminder keeps the staff focused on improvement. *"We discuss these numbers in our faculty meetings,"* the head teacher said, *"and brainstorm what we can do better."* The act of measuring and discussing results is itself a cultural shift partly attributable to SBM expectations of continuous improvement.

Accountability also became more horizontal (to the community) and not just vertical (to superiors). Several principals mentioned conducting annual "State of the School" meetings where they report progress to parents and local officials. One principal recounted how, after showing low math scores, the community helped set up free weekend math tutorials staffed by a local college volunteer – again demonstrating community problem-solving triggered by transparency. This kind of local accountability can create pressure to address issues quickly. Conversely, at a low-performing case school, no such reporting occurred; teachers there implied that poor results often went unaddressed except through scolding from the top. The difference in approach is stark: SBM provides a framework for acknowledging problems and collaboratively fixing them, rather than hiding or ignoring them.

4. Impact on Teaching and Learning Climate: According to qualitative respondents, one of the ultimate effects of SBM has been an improved school climate and more student-centered programs, which in turn affect student outcomes. Teachers in multiple high-SBM schools reported feeling more empowered and motivated, which correlates with better teaching quality. For example, a teacher in Case School A said, "Before SBM, I would just follow orders, but now I also take initiative. I even led a small project to start a reading club. Feeling trusted makes me want to do more for the kids." This intrinsic motivation can lead to more dedication and better classroom practices, benefiting students. Indeed, students in that school noted their teachers seemed more enthusiastic and offered more activities than before.

Students also indirectly benefited from SBM-driven improvements to facilities and learning resources. Many SBM councils prioritized infrastructure like renovating classrooms, creating libraries or reading corners, and providing fans or projectors – small changes that make the school environment more conducive to learning. In one case, the SBM council lobbied the local government for an internet connection for the school, which was obtained and then used to augment instruction with online resources. Students in that school became excited about computer classes and had higher ICT skills as a result.

Moreover, schools practicing SBM often implemented interventions targeted at students' specific needs. For instance, if data showed low reading competency, they introduced daily reading time with materials purchased via SBM funds; if attendance was an issue, they initiated a home visit program. These targeted interventions were frequently cited in interviews as making a difference. A parent from Case School E noted, "After the teachers started the afternoon remedial reading, I saw my child improve a lot in reading and become more confident." That school's reading proficiency (as measured by an internal test) jumped from 60% to 80% of kids at grade-level in one year – a success story attributed to SBM allowing that remedial program to happen.

5. Challenges and Constraints in Implementation: Not all findings were positive; the discussion also uncovered persistent challenges which help explain why some schools had lower SBM implementation or less dramatic outcomes. A common issue mentioned was limited capacity and training. Some school heads candidly admitted they felt unprepared for the expanded role SBM demands. One small-school head teacher (acting principal) said, *"I was suddenly in charge of budgets and plans – I learned by doing, but I wish there was more formal training. Sometimes I worry if I'm doing it right."* Such uncertainty can hinder decisive action. In a couple of the low-implementation schools, principals tended to cling to old centralized habits (waiting for directives, or fear of deviating from usual procedures) due to lack of confidence in managing autonomously. This highlights the need for continuing capacity-building; as literature notes, few headteachers in developing contexts have prior training in school management [18], and reforms can falter if that gap isn't addressed.

Another challenge is varying stakeholder engagement. While many cases showed strong community support, some schools struggled to get parents involved. In remote or very poor communities, parents might prioritize daily survival over school governance. A teacher from a low-SBM rural school sighed that *"Meetings are held but only a few parents come. It's hard to implement projects when manpower is lacking."* Additionally, if a community lacks educated individuals, forming an effective council is tough – one principal ended up having the barangay captain (village leader) as the only active community member in the SGC, which limited diversity of input. Even in better-off communities, a few principals mentioned initial reluctance of teachers or parents to engage, either due to apathy or skepticism ("Some teachers were resistant, saying SBM is just an additional burden with no extra pay," one principal reported). Overcoming these attitudes took time and leadership effort.

Administrative and paperwork burdens were also discussed. While the new DepEd policy aims to reduce this, during our study period many schools still felt pressure to compile extensive documentation for SBM validation. One principal half-jokingly said, "We have four *alkansas* (cabinets) of documents for SBM – it's our 'evidence' for every little thing we do." Teachers in that school complained that preparing these reports steals time from lesson preparation. This resonates with the DepEd's own

findings that SBM implementation had become heavy on documentation. If not addressed, it could diminish the positive impact by exhausting teachers and principals. That being said, some high-SBM schools managed documentation smartly by integrating it into their routine (e.g., assigning one teacher as documentation focal person), thereby mitigating the burden.

Sustainability and consistency emerged as concerns. Stakeholders wondered if gains would hold up with changes in leadership or policy. A teacher pointed out that a very dynamic principal was behind their success, worrying what happens if that principal gets promoted or replaced. This brings up the role of institutionalization – good SBM practices need to be embedded in school processes, not just driven by personalities, to be sustainable.

### 4.4. Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Overall, the qualitative findings strongly complement and reinforce the quantitative results. The statistically significant link between SBM implementation and higher test scores becomes more understandable knowing what high-SBM schools are actually doing differently: engaging stakeholders, focusing on data-driven improvements, innovating in teaching, and addressing student needs proactively. For instance, our quantitative data showed a 7-point NAT score advantage for high-SBM schools; qualitatively, we saw those schools had implemented targeted academic interventions (like reading programs, science camps) and heightened teacher motivation, which likely contributed to that very advantage. This triangulation lends confidence that SBM is a factor in those improved outcomes, not just a coincidental label.

Moreover, the qualitative data helped clarify the mechanisms of impact. We can deduce a plausible chain: under SBM, a school gains flexibility and involvement of stakeholders; this leads to initiatives like remedial classes or resource improvements tailored to their students; these in turn lead to better student learning and performance (outcomes we measured). For example, one case where dropout rates fell corresponded with the narrative that the community and teachers collaborated to bring dropouts back – an action made possible because SBM encouraged community partnership. This illustrates how SBM's influence goes beyond test scores to holistic improvements in student retention and engagement.

At the same time, the mixed-methods approach allows a balanced view, acknowledging that SBM is not a silver bullet. Some schools did not show expected improvements despite ostensibly implementing SBM, and the qualitative insights pointed to reasons: extreme poverty contexts, lack of true implementation (paper compliance vs. actual practice), or leadership issues. These nuances are vital. They indicate that while SBM provides a conducive framework for improvement, the outcomes depend on human and material factors. Simply having an SBM structure doesn't automatically yield results – it's effective when embraced in spirit and supported properly. This aligns with international observations that decentralization yields gains only under certain conditions [3].

Our findings align with and extend prior research. They confirm early quantitative studies that found positive but modest gains in student achievement from SBM [3, 15]. Importantly, they demonstrate those modest gains can be meaningful in practice, as evidenced by anecdotes of improved literacy and problem-solving in schools. Additionally, we found that SBM's benefits can manifest in non-test ways (like better student attendance, morale, etc.), which purely quantitative studies might overlook. This comprehensive perspective strengthens the argument that SBM, when well-implemented, is a valuable reform that can lead to school improvements in the Philippine context.

It is worth noting that these results come at a time when the Philippine education system is striving to bounce back from disruptions (like the COVID-19 pandemic) and implement the Basic Education Development Plan 2030. The renewed emphasis on SBM as an execution strategy in policy dialogues () is validated by our findings – indeed, fully implementing SBM was recommended by experts to translate plans into actual performance gains [1]. Our study provides empirical backing that this strategy can work, along with guidance on what it takes to make it work (capacity building, community engagement, etc.).

In summary, the evidence suggests that School-Based Management has a positive influence on educational outcomes in Philippine public schools, albeit a modest one that is contingent on effective implementation. Schools practicing higher levels of SBM tend to see better student performance and have cultivated a school culture oriented towards continuous improvement and collaboration. Challenges such as capacity constraints and documentation overload need addressing to ensure all schools can achieve the potential benefits. The discussion thus far illustrates both the promise of SBM – as a "gateway to school effectiveness" as DepEd envisions– and the practical considerations necessary to fulfill that promise.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1. Conclusion

This study set out to examine how the implementation of School-Based Management (SBM) influences educational outcomes in public schools across the Philippines. Through a mixed-methods inquiry that combined a broad quantitative analysis with in-depth qualitative case studies, we found converging evidence that SBM implementation is positively associated with improved educational outcomes, particularly student academic performance. Schools that deeply embraced SBM – characterized by empowered school leadership, participative governance involving teachers and communities, and localized decision-making – generally achieved higher student achievement scores and better internal efficiency (e.g., lower dropouts) than those with minimal SBM practices. The magnitude of improvement attributable to SBM is statistically modest (a few percentage points increase in test scores, on average), but in practical terms these gains are meaningful, representing thousands of students attaining proficiency who might not have otherwise. Moreover, SBM appears to have spurred a more collaborative and proactive school climate in many cases, yielding qualitative benefits such as increased stakeholder satisfaction, innovative teaching strategies, and a sharper focus on student learning needs.

The findings affirm the theoretical expectation that decentralizing authority to schools, when coupled with accountability, can lead to better alignment of resources and efforts towards improving student outcomes [3]. In the Philippine context, where diversity of school conditions is vast, SBM provides a mechanism for customizing solutions – a one-size-fits-all central directive is often ill-suited to local challenges, but an empowered school can devise context-appropriate interventions. Our case studies demonstrated instances of this: schools tackling reading deficits with locally run programs, communities coming together to support their school's feeding or infrastructure needs, and teachers jointly deciding on pedagogical improvements. These grassroots initiatives under SBM contributed to the incremental gains observed in outcomes.

However, the study also makes clear that SBM's success is not automatic nor universal. Some schools have struggled to implement SBM effectively, and as a result, have not yet seen significant improvements. Barriers such as limited capacity of school heads, insufficient training, lack of stakeholder engagement in certain communities, and the weight of administrative requirements have inhibited the full realization of SBM in those contexts. In essence, SBM amplifies the strengths and weaknesses already present in a school system: schools with strong leadership and engaged communities soared higher with SBM, while those lacking these had a harder time leveraging the reform. This underscores that SBM is necessary but not sufficient for school improvement – it works best in tandem with investments in human capital (leadership development, teacher training) and with supportive oversight from the education bureaucracy.

The Philippine Department of Education's recent policy refinements [10] to strengthen SBM are timely and in line with our findings. The emphasis on simplifying processes and providing technical assistance addresses some challenges identified, and the acknowledgement of SBM as the "gateway to school effectiveness"is validated by the positive outcomes associated with it. To truly capitalize on SBM, a sustained commitment is needed from all levels of the system.

In conclusion, School-Based Management in the Philippines has shown a positive influence on educational outcomes, validating its role as a key reform strategy for improving basic education. The influence, while modest in metrics, is reinforced by qualitative improvements that portend longer-term gains if nurtured. SBM has shifted mindsets in many schools – from passivity to initiative, from isolation to collaboration, and from uniformity to context-sensitive action. These shifts are critical for an education system seeking to improve learning at scale. By empowering schools as front-liners of education service delivery, the Philippines is on the right track; the task ahead is to ensure every school, regardless of location or context, is equally empowered and supported to make SBM work effectively for their students.

*5.2. Recommendations*

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered to educational authorities, school leaders, and stakeholders to strengthen SBM implementation and maximize its positive effects on educational outcomes:

1. Capacity Building for School Leaders and Stakeholders: There is a need to enhance training and professional development for those at the helm of SBM implementation. DepEd and partner organizations should invest in systematic capacity-building programs for principals and SGC members (including parent and community leaders). These programs should cover skills in school leadership, financial management, data analysis for school improvement, and participatory decision-making. Mentoring or peer learning networks can be established, pairing less experienced school heads with successful SBM practitioners for guidance (Yamauchi, 2014). Building this human capacity will ensure that autonomy is exercised effectively and not mismanaged due to lack of skills.

2. Streamline Administrative Requirements: To prevent SBM from becoming mired in paperwork, DepEd should continue to simplify and streamline the documentation and reporting processes. Means of verification should be reasonable in number and focused on outcomes rather than excessive inputs. For instance, rather than requiring thick portfolios, a concise annual SBM report (including key performance indicators and reflective analysis) could suffice. This will free up principals and teachers to devote more time to instructional leadership and implementation of improvement plans, addressing the concern that heavy administrative load detracts from teaching [18].

3. Strengthen Support and Supervision: Decentralization does not mean abdication by higher offices. Division and regional offices of DepEd should play an active supportive role, providing timely technical assistance and coaching to schools. Regular on-site visits focused on supportive monitoring (as opposed to fault-finding inspections) can help identify issues early and share solutions across schools. Moreover, recognition and incentives for effective SBM practice (awards, additional grants for high-performing SBM schools) could motivate schools to strive for higher implementation. Supervision should also ensure that SBM councils are inclusive and functioning, stepping in to mediate or assist if local conflicts or inactivity arise (since interpersonal or organizational conflicts can hinder SBM [18].

4. Community Engagement and Advocacy: To bolster stakeholder involvement in education, it is recommended to conduct community advocacy and orientation programs about SBM. Many parents and local leaders, especially in disadvantaged areas, may not fully understand how they can contribute. DepEd, in collaboration with local governments and NGOs, should facilitate orientation sessions (e.g., "Parents' Summit" or community symposium on education [17] to explain the role of SGCs and encourage community members to take part. Showcasing success stories of schools where community participation made a difference can inspire stakeholders elsewhere to engage. Additionally, schools should be encouraged to hold regular general assemblies or "town hall" meetings to discuss school performance and plans, thereby institutionalizing transparency and community oversight.

5. Resource Mobilization and Equitable Funding: While SBM gives schools autonomy, they still require adequate resources to implement improvements. DepEd and the government should ensure sufficient and equitable funding for all schools, possibly increasing the portion of budget directly managed by schools as capacity improves [1]. Schools in poorer communities might need additional support (e.g., a higher per-student MOOE allocation or special SBM grants) to level the playing field. Training school heads in resource mobilization (how to seek local sponsorships, alumni contributions) could also help, but it must be done ethically and not widen inequalities. Ensuring that no school is left behind in the financial aspect is crucial – otherwise SBM could inadvertently increase disparities if some communities can raise funds easily while others cannot.

6. Focus on Teaching and Learning: Keep the core intent of SBM – improving student learning – at the forefront. Schools should be guided to align their SBM activities tightly with instructional improvement and student support. DepEd might integrate SBM with ongoing curriculum and teacher development initiatives. For example, encourage schools to use SBM autonomy to extend learning time for struggling learners, adopt new pedagogies, or procure learning materials that cater to their students' needs. Sharing best practices across schools (via inter-school learning alliances or benchmarking visits [17] can spread effective ideas, such as how one school's reading program yielded gains or how another's use of student data improved teaching strategies.

7. Continuous Monitoring and Research: As SBM policies evolve (like the 2024 revised guidelines), it is important to continuously monitor the impact and implementation. DepEd should maintain a robust monitoring system and possibly partner with research institutions to do periodic evaluations. Key questions for further investigation include long-term impacts on student outcomes (e.g., do SBM-empowered cohorts have better life outcomes?), differential impacts in various contexts, and the effectiveness of specific SBM strategies (like what type of community engagement works best). Our study provides a baseline; future research, perhaps using longitudinal designs, could refine understanding. Gathering feedback from schools on the new guidelines' effectiveness would also help fine-tune the policy (e.g., is the reduced paperwork indeed improving focus on outcomes?).

Implementing the above recommendations can enhance the effectiveness of School-Based Management in the Philippines. By fortifying the support system around SBM and addressing current challenges, DepEd and stakeholders can ensure that SBM truly becomes a catalyst for quality education nationwide. The goal is that every school, whether a remote barrio elementary or a large city high school, is equipped to make decisions that best serve its learners and is accountable for delivering improved learning results. In doing so, the Philippine education system moves closer to its overarching aim: providing accessible, relevant, and quality education for all, with schools leading the charge from the ground up.

## Transparency:
The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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