



Lived Experiences of School Heads in School-Based Management (SBM) Implementation

Brian Paul Escuyos Sta. Ana

St. Paul University Surigao, Cor. San Nicolas and Rizal Streets, Surigao City

Pilar National High School, Schools Division of Siargao, Brgy. Asinan, Pilar, Surigao del Norte

St. Paul University, Surigao City, Surigao del Norte, Philippines

staanabrianpaul@gmail.com

ORCID: 0009-0002-1821-3699

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.69481/ZCZK5269>

Abstract

This study explored the lived experiences of school heads in SBM implementation using Collaizi's phenomenological approach with transcribed semi-structured face-to-face interviews among nine participants who were school heads in the Schools Division of Siargao. Selected through the snowball sampling technique, these participants graciously shared their lived experiences, including the challenges and best practices through SBM implementation. This study was anchored on RA 9155: Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001 and DepEd Order No. 1, s. of 2003 (Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act 9155) as supporting legislative works. Moreover, this study was also in line with Pluralism, Social Cognitive, and Functionalism Theories. Six emergent themes were derived from the study: (1) unified support from stakeholders; (2) pressure; (3) community linkages; (4) transparency and responsibility; (5) challenging journey; and (6) development. The emergent themes comprehensively explained an understanding of the participants' thoughts about SBM, the perceived challenges and opportunities, best practices, and achievements in collaboration with the internal and external stakeholders. To ensure the aim of this study, it was crucial to develop meaningful programs as recommendations for enhancing quality assurance, particularly within the realm of school-based management across the entire division. Moreover, empowerment not only among internal but also external stakeholders must be established, in order to keep empowering communities and foster unity in diversity for the benefit of enhanced SBM implementation in schools.

Keywords: School-Based Management, stakeholders, School Head, Community, Lived Experiences

1. Introduction

The education system in the Philippines is constantly being challenged by various issues affecting the vision and mission of the Department of Education. This one fact alone proves that every dramatic change may impact positive or negative outcomes. Through SBM, impacts that affect the delivery of quality education will be identified. Every school indeed has its different major issues and challenges, and through benchmarking of the school's challenges encountered, members of SBM will be able to compare and reflect on findings to come up with lucid solutions to the problems that compromise the teaching-learning process (Linao & Gosadan, 2019). Through SBM, the needs of every school community can be provided and supported through the cooperation and unity of both internal and stakeholders. According to Latorilla (2012), the context of SBM suggests that the school should be the key to providing education that will motivate and inspire the school heads and stakeholders to perform relevant tasks. In addition, the sharing of initiatives coming from the school heads and stakeholders needs to be considered in polishing the educational system and the relevant needs of all the school communities. However, according to Sriram (2019), just like some other policies in DepEd, SBM also has challenges that need to be solved to avoid compromising its objectives and these are the following: paper-based processes; online registration; admission and enrollment; course management; teacher evaluation; communication and collaboration; classroom management strategy; student monitoring; revenue management; and forecasting the academic achievement. According to Osea et. al. (2023), issues and challenges as to the implementation of SBM in schools include the availability, authenticity, and veracity of documents.

With these abovementioned pressing issues affecting the SBM implementation in schools, stakeholders, as major contributors and benefactors, are not given enough opportunities to embrace SBM. Stakeholders must be aware that they are responsible for the preparation and collection of pertinent documents so that when surveillance happens, all the needed files exist and are genuine and accurate. In the Department of Education, SBM is a way of life. It carries the education agency's vision and mission statements for Filipino learners (Abulencia, 2012). Hence, SBM must have the strong support of school staff and stakeholders. SBM focuses on amplifying the support systems of DepEd through enhanced educational planning and management on its 4 key principles, namely: leadership and governance, curriculum and learning, accountability, and continuous improvement and management of resources. When these principles are managed properly, it is expected that the best practices will invite more stakeholders and strengthen linkages. Camacho & Farrales (2020) said that these four principles serve as a basis for the validation of the schools' SBM level of practice. Primarily, the objectives of SBM are: to empower the school heads to lead their teachers and students through reforms that lead to higher learning outcomes; bring resources, including funds, down to the control of the school to spur change in line with decentralization; strengthen partnerships with communities to invest time, money and effort in making the school a better place to learn; and integrate school management and instructional reformation for school effectiveness. This is anchored on the aims of Child Friendly and Community Centered Education Systems (ACCESS) that advocate "right-based" education and community as "stewards or right-bearers" in education.

Research Objectives

This study aimed to look into the lived experiences of school heads in SBM implementation in the Division of Siargao.

Specifically, it aimed to explore the following:

1. What are the lived experiences of the school heads toward achieving quality assurance through SBM?
2. What essence and meanings can be derived from the prevailing codes of the lived experiences of school heads toward achieving quality assurance through SBM?
3. What emergent themes can be drawn from these lived experiences?
4. Based on the results of the study, what development plan may be proposed to improve the SBM implementation of the schools in the Division of Siargao?

2. Literature Review

Over the years, the Department of Education has been embarking on adapting and practicing modifications to school policy to make improvements in the public educational system. However, posed promising results led to losing in a fillip of a finger; and still some stood in serving their purpose to promote sustainability. Formulas that may alter the management conditions are said to make everyone accountable for both wins and downfalls of schools. World Bank Group (2007) claimed that governments around the world are introducing a range of strategies aimed at improving the financing and delivery of education services, with a more recent emphasis on improving quality as well as increasing quantity (enrollment) in education. One strategy for increasing parental and community involvement in schools is SBM. Thus, the Department of Education introduced School-Based Management, or SBM in 2009 as an answer to some long-standing burdens in education. What is SBM and what value does it have to the field of education?

School-based management (SBM) is a strategy to enhance education by transferring significant decision-making authority from state and district offices to individual schools. Caldwell (2005) claimed that SBM is the systematic decentralization to the school level of authority and responsibility to make decisions on significant matters related to school operations within a centrally determined framework of goals, policies, curriculum, standards, and accountability. In addition, SBM lets principals, teachers, students, and parents explore opportunities for greater control over the education process. By giving them responsibility for decisions about the budget, personnel, and curriculum, the involvement of teachers, parents, and other community members can create more effective learning environments for children. On the aspect of School-Based Management, the first dimension which is *Leadership and Governance* presents the idea of how school principals portray their roles in terms of their ability to

execute the programs of the Department of Education including primary duties and responsibilities attached to their roles as leaders of their respective schools (Pepito & Acibar, 2019). This highlights that another important aspect of school-based management entails not only the practice of implementing department programs but also the practice of motivating, directing, and promoting principals and the rest of the faculty, all while creating an environment within which learners can effectively learn.

Curriculum and Learning is the second dimension under the SBM, which shares the idea of the role of the curriculum learning systems, which are primarily anchored on the community and learners' contexts and aspirations, which are collaboratively developed and continuously improved by the schools (Abulencia, 2012). It covers the development of a culturally appropriate curriculum that needs to be taught in the classroom, taking into consideration the needs as well as achievements of the students. When the local context is incorporated, schools may be able to work within a culture of effective learning that enhances the standard of the educational content, thus making students appreciate whatever they learn. It is a strategic approach that not only fulfills the needs of student learning but also fosters their future development by providing an environment that is conducive to learning while encouraging a culture that will support this learning. The third dimension, Accountability and Continuous Improvement, is a term that sounds heavy as it echoes about the responsibility of the school officials to observe a clear, transparent, inclusive, and responsive accountability system is in place, collaboratively developed by the school community, which monitors performance and acts appropriately on gaps and gains as stated in the Revised Assessment Tool for SBM of DepEd (2012). The accountability being emphasized calls for the participation of the stakeholders in ensuring that there is a mechanism that would be responsible for promoting the welfare of the school's improvement and development as a whole (Ehren & Hatch, 2013). This implies the active participation of the teachers, parents, school officials, and especially the community in the setting of objectives, assessment initiatives, and the execution of technology for increasing educational achievement. Commitment with every stakeholder toward constructing a more positive approach towards solving various problems and using various assets can help in building a single positive environment for any student. The requirement to be accountable also implies that in order to improve the situation and gain trust within the system, people work more efficiently and effectively.

The fourth dimension of the SBM as presented is the Management of Resources. This area of SBM focuses on the resources that are collectively and judiciously mobilized and managed with transparency, effectiveness, and efficiency by the schools, particularly by the public schools (Dones et al., 2023). This dimension focuses on issues of resource management and mobilization, especially in the provision of financial, human, and material resources for the provision of education, and educational interventions. Resource management affects the achievement of the goals and objectives to enhance effective learning institutions capable of delivering the knowledge, skills, and character forwarded in the schools. Also, it emphasizes the importance of the School's accountability and ethical practices in the management of school funds and physical assets since it affects school stakeholders' perceptions. Therefore, the paper demonstrates that by adopting strategic resource management practices at schools, effectiveness in running schools as well as delivery of quality education can be enhanced besides enhancing the aspect of sustainable development.

School heads can empower teachers to propose and lead initiatives that align with the school's mission and vision. Abulencia (2012) asserted that high levels of teacher enthusiasm can foster a strong sense of school identity and pride among both students and staff. The same case is most likely to happen with the external stakeholders. In fact, when everyone feels a deep connection to the school, it can lead to a smooth sailing proliferation in SBM implementation through the following changes: increased motivation, school spirit, and a collective commitment to achieving educational goals.

Supported by guidelines for SBM, each school must be composed of the principal, representatives of parents and teachers, student leaders, and other citizens. The council is responsible with regard to the conduct of needs assessments and action plans that state the goals and measurable objectives in line with the school board policies (Abulencia, 2012). It is the principal who has a tremendous role in the decision-making process. Meanwhile, members have the voice to support the decision and share their insights (Bustamante, 2022). This is a positive aspect of strengthening the implementation of SBM because when there is a sharing of ideas and responsibilities, it can achieve better results. After all, the concerns and issues were understood in a better way. The involvement

of all the members of the council guarantees that various decisions are made very well and that the strategies adopted serve the purpose of the school's context. Additionally, action planning ensures that all the members/faculty/staff/students of the council and the whole school have ownership of the goals/strategies/action plans developed and foster a positive school climate towards the improvement of the school's educational performance and interaction with the school's community. According to Cheng (2004), the school heads are the highest rank with higher academic qualifications and longer service years of teaching and administrative experience. As such, they should be more open and have a more positive attitude toward new approaches to quality management than teachers, who are lower rank with lower academic qualifications and shorter service years of experience. Thus, it should be valuable to study and explore their managerial skills and strategies in the implementation of SBM in schools.

3. Methodology

This study used the descriptive phenomenological type of study employing Colaizzi's (1978) strategy. A descriptive phenomenological approach was beneficial in examining and understanding an issue. Moreover, this study aimed to make clear and decipher the most essential meaning of a phenomenon of interest from the viewpoint of those directly involved in it or, in other words, their first-hand experiences or actual human experiences (Giorgi, 1997). The study was conducted in the Schools Division of Siargao, School Year 2023- 2024. The participants of this study were the select nine elementary and secondary school heads whose managed schools are under SBM levels 1, 2, and 3. They were selected through the fishbowl technique and purposive sampling method. Three participants in each SBM level were selected using the fishbowl sampling technique. In addition, the purposive sampling method selected the participants based on their highest educational attainment at the graduate school level, with at least 18 units above, to ensure they were equipped with skills in managing their schools. This study was anchored on Colaizzi's (1978) distinctive seven-step process, which provides a rigorous analysis, with each step staying close to the data. The result was a concise yet all-encompassing description of the phenomenon under study and validated by the participants. The stages are illustrated below: Below are the seven steps in Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological method: familiarization, identifying significant statements, formulating meanings, clustering themes, developing an exhaustive description, producing the fundamental structure, and seeking verification of the fundamental structure. In this study, the researcher ensured to application protection of human rights, risk-benefit assessment, participant's status, type of data, procedures, nature of commitment, sponsorship, incentives or compensation, participant selection, potential risks, potential benefits, alternatives, compensation, confidentiality pledge, voluntary consent, right to withdraw, contact information, privacy and confidentiality, debriefing, communications and referrals, conflict of interest, recruitment, vulnerability assessment, collaborative study terms of reference and credibility as ethical considerations.

4. Results/Findings

Table 1. The Demographic Profile of the School Heads

Code Name	Highest Educational Attainment	Job Position	Length of Service in the Current Work	School	SBM Level
P1	MAEM (CAR)	School Head	4	Roxas National High School	1
P2	MAEM (CAR)	School Principal 1	9	Pilar Central Elementary School	2
P3	MAEM (18 units)	Head Teacher I	2	San Roque Elementary School	1
P4	MAEM CAR (46 units)	School Principal I	8	Caridad Elementary School	1
P5	MAEM CAR (42 units)	School Principal IV	16	Union National High School	2
P6	Full-fledged	School	21	Dapa National High	3

	PhD Graduate	Principal IV		School	
P7	MAED CAR	School Head	3	Caridad National High School	2
P8	MAED (36 units)	School Head	11	Burgos National High School	3
P9	MAED (36 units)	Principal	5	Sapao National High School	3

The table shows the profile of the school heads in the Division of Siargao. The secondary school heads were mostly managing the third and second level in the SBM. According to Silabay & Alegre (2023), school heads experiencing positive outcomes at SBM level III report increased participation, collaboration, support, trust, and confidence among stakeholders. This heightened engagement among stakeholders has the potential to propel schools toward achieving higher levels within the SBM framework.

In contrast, elementary school heads were managing their schools at level 1 in the SBM. According to Obias (2023), it is imperative for school heads to promptly address issues and challenges that may hinder the effective delivery of programs to stakeholders. This suggests that school heads must seek the involvement of external stakeholders to enhance their School-Based Management (SBM) practices. While the school heads try to fortify the General Parents Teachers Association, which is capable of initiating projects for institutional improvement, it is essential to ensure proper documentation and endorsement when compiling necessary data or supporting documents as evidence of implementation. This underscores the importance of transparent and accountable practices in advancing school initiatives.

In summary, an analysis of school head profiles within the Division of Siargao suggests that high schools tend to achieve higher levels in School-Based Management (SBM), indicating a greater degree of collaboration and stakeholder engagement. Conversely, elementary schools predominantly remain at level 1, underscoring the urgency of addressing issues promptly to enhance program delivery. Transparency and the active involvement of external stakeholders emerge as crucial factors in advancing SBM practices across all levels of education.

Table 2. Clustered themes and emergent themes

Clustered themes	Emergent themes
Knowing the community	Unified support from stakeholders
Supportive stakeholders	
Recognizing stakeholders' roles	
School head as motivator of stakeholders	
Demanding responsibility	
Challenging experience	
Recruitment of stakeholders	
Empowering stakeholders	
Honing school administrators	
Encouraging the stakeholders	Pressure
Pressure on documentation	
Struggling to level up	
Demotivating pressure	
Challenging ways	
Empowered leader	

Monitored management	
Criticizing perceptions	
Union of stakeholders	
Supportive stakeholders	Community Linkages
Collaboration with stakeholders	
Partnership with the community	
Symbiotic relationship	
Interdependency of partnership	
Tremendous support	
Connection of community to school	
Sense of belongingness	
Source of motivation	
Proactive stakeholders	Transparency and Responsibility
Freedom to raise suggestions	
Unity in diversity	
Financial transparency	
Activity awareness	
Joy of appraisal	
Learning to lead	
Division of labor	
Amiably sympathetic	
Consistent progress	Challenging Journey
Crucial step	
Evaluating strong and weak points	
Risky role	
Tedious task	
Beneficial ways	
Stakeholders' support	
Tool for impactful change	
Center for excellence	
Intensive review	Development
Freedom to decide	
Joy of embracing sustained development	
Surveillance readiness	
Inspiring other schools	

Table 3 summarizes the general themes drawn from the participants' responses. There was resistance to extending stakeholders' participation in every relevant activity under SBM. In spite of this, some stakeholders shared their responsibilities with regard to the implementation of SBM in schools. It was also found out that the participants experienced huge pressure due to a lack of management experience in the SBM journey with its series of documentation and other preparations, in order to advance to the next level. Amid the aims of SBM in achieving quality assurance, it was found that the participants were challenged in the practice of documentation and planning. The year-end reports and overall school performance were crucial factors that required improvement efforts to raise the school's rating. In line with Republic Act 9155 of 2001, School-Based Management is assessed based on four key principles of implementation. These principles encompass Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Accountability and Continuous Improvement, and Management and Resources. These pillars guide schools in achieving their instructional objectives. The participants encountered challenges in maintaining a symbiotic relationship among stakeholders. In other words, a struggle to empower the stakeholders to be part of the decision-making in SBM was clearly evident. Challenges faced during its execution comprised insufficient parental involvement, limited autonomy, coordination difficulties, blurred roles between the principal and school committee, ineffective school leadership and professional development, difficulties in grasping the SBM

concept, and inadequate school funding (Obias, 2023). In light of the challenging journey of the participants, they believed that SBM was helpful for the proliferation of school communities through giving equal opportunities among stakeholders and constant scrutiny of its implementation by maintaining transparency in the four SBM principles. Within SBM, professional accountability supersedes bureaucratic guidelines, empowering classroom leaders and school administrators to drive transformation within their schools.

Based on the results of this recent study, it recommends that teachers, parents, and other stakeholders in the communities must work together to realize the aims of SBM in achieving quality assurance in schools. This indicates that there may be a new program or initiative related to SBM being implemented in the school, ensuring that everyone in the community is informed and understands the situation. Rini et al. (2019) suggested in their research that School-Based Management (SBM) empowers school leaders and team members to engage in strategic decision-making, especially concerning the school's mission, vision, objectives, building maintenance, financial resources, programs, teaching and learning methods, upkeep of facilities, student behavior policies, cafeteria management, fund allocation, staff selection, textbook procurement, and curriculum improvement.

5. Conclusions

SBM served as an avenue to unite the stakeholders in every community. Through the aid of community linkages, proactive stakeholders recognize their duties and responsibilities with the guidance of the school head. In spite of the challenges faced, as long as there is empowerment among stakeholders, the journey toward achieving quality assurance will flourish. The challenge attracts pressure. Hence, as per the participants of the study, it was found that SBM brought so much pressure on them as school leaders. Challenges like recruitment of stakeholders, empowerment of stakeholders, and development of effective school administrators were the common challenges encountered in SBM implementation. An establishment of rapport among the stakeholders must be evident, so that collaboration, significant contribution, symbiotic relationship, and partnership will be fortified. If this is applied, communities will immerse themselves as members of SBM by developing a sense of belongingness, since the school considers the stakeholders as the source of motivation in achieving quality assurance. It was gleaned that SBM was not just all about ensuring transparency in records and other essential data but also it served as an avenue to listen to their concerns and to recognize the sincere and unified efforts. In line with this, when suggestions like freedom to raise suggestions, awareness of the school's projects, joy of appraisal, and leaders training leaders as a division of labor strategy, transparency is not impossible to be achieved. Schools' best practices varied depending on the needs of the stakeholders. In addition, these paved the way for them to quality to SBM levels 1, 2, and 3. SBM served as a crucial step in identifying the strong and weak points of the schools. Amid being labeled as a tedious and risky task, SBM is truly a way to uplift quality assurance with the support of the stakeholders. Hence, they must be given the opportunity to immerse themselves in training and seminars, so they grasp the goals of SBM in achieving quality assurance. Based on the results of this study, the school heads must capacitate themselves through participating in seminars and trainings in relation to SBM, in order to fill in the gaps that affect the manifestation of quality assurance in schools and continue empowering the stakeholders.

6. Recommendations

To strengthen community linkages, SBM campaigns should be emphasized to encourage greater participation among stakeholders. This can be achieved by integrating SBM meetings into relevant school activities, involving members of the PTA and other volunteers. Empowering stakeholders amidst the pressures of the demanding SBM journey can be done by identifying and leveraging their skills, particularly in safekeeping pertinent documents and other modes of verification. Stakeholders can collaborate with their school communities through campaigns and relevant projects, followed by innovating the data banking system to safeguard documents and artifacts, similar to the creation of an SBM museum. School heads can utilize their SBM journey as a communication tool to address the specific developmental needs of both internal and external stakeholders. This could include providing orientation and assigning responsibilities to each SBM member, clearly defining their roles and duties. To ensure transparency across all SBM indicators, school heads should present the school's milestones and future plans to both internal and external stakeholders. Additionally, stakeholders should engage in capacity-building training related to SBM to enhance their leadership and management skills. In light of the meaningful responses from school heads, integrating this study into capacity-building seminars or training for school heads in the Schools

Division of Siargao would help document trends and best practices, highlighting the quality of school leadership and management. Encouraging schools to immerse their teachers in a culture of research could be further supported by organizing a research conference focused on the teachers' lived experiences with quality assurance through SBM implementation. To foster collaborative planning, this study could be proposed within the Schools Division of Siargao, allowing participants to share insights and help all school heads gain a deeper understanding of the challenges involved in realizing the four principles of SBM. Additionally, both internal and external stakeholders should engage in benchmarking visits to schools with SBM Level 3 implementation, allowing them to explore and discover effective best practices and strategies.

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