



## Stakeholder's Perceived Reasons for Decentralization Reform in School-Based Management

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### ABSTRACT

School-Based Management (SBM) is a strategy to decentralize decision-making authority to the individual school and devolution of authority is the fundamental concept in educational reform. This study analyses the dynamics of the SBM policy and implementation at the school level. The study was approached through document analysis of the perception of stakeholders at school levels through previous studies analyses. These approaches produced rich data on issues relating to SBM policy and community involvement. The SBM decree did not choose a particular model of SBM instead it imposed a uniform model regardless of school level, size, location, type of community or even the public nature of schools. It was concluded that the level of participation of the school stakeholders in the different school-initiated activities can be significantly affected. Due to the SBM regulatory requirements, it has failed to fulfil its original intention of improving the quality of education to the maximum standard. The stakeholders' perception regarding school-based management implementation policy on the devolution of authority was determined to be moderate. It was discovered that the level of SBM implementation was on the minimum standard. It was suggested that there is still a need for the schools to be encouraged to achieve more development and graft on SBM implementation.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ideas about school governance at the primary and secondary levels were popularized as school-based management (SBM). The proponents of SBM argued that to improve education during the autonomy era, adopting democratic, transparent, efficient, and adopting SBM as the model for administering schools. SBM was further promoted as the sole choice for restructuring schools.

The implementation of the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001 (RA 9155) provided the mandate for decentralizing the system of school management and recognized the role of the Local Government Units and other stakeholders as partners in education service delivery. It was believed that SBM would improve the quality of education. School stakeholders [teachers, parents, and community members] hoped for an early implementation of the approach.

SBM underscores the empowerment of key stakeholders in school communities to enable them to actively participate in the continuous improvement of schools toward the attainment of higher pupil/student learning outcomes. School-based management does not mean that schools are independent and not subject to any control. Schools are required to operate within a prescribed framework of governance and comply with the rules and regulations under the Education Ordinance and Regulations, other related ordinances, the relevant code of aid, instructions as the Education Bureau may from time to time issue and the guidelines from the school sponsoring bodies.

Schools also have to appoint auditors under the Ordinance to examine their accounts. The historical and political developments of education from the colonial era to the present day include the policies and practices of the past which were adopted by past regimes and the latest developments in school governance. The public sector cannot be separated from the state system and the political culture will determine not only the process of policy development but also the content of policies in education. Before colonization, there was no formal schooling and communities educated their young mainly through informal apprenticeships ([Jizat & Sulong, 2021](#)).

Colonial regimes design education systems according to the needs of the rulers and not necessarily to meet the needs of the colonized. The content of formal schooling was organized for control with the colonial government administering education in a centralized and bureaucratic manner in line with colonial purposes. The idea of centralized administration as a legacy from the colonial era is taken for granted. Centralized administration was relevant for the colonial government to maintain the status quo and establish maximum control over all education practices throughout the country. However, from the 1970s the New Order government practiced bureaucratic-centralistic administration in education which proved even more restrictive than the previous practices.

States that policy of the educational decentralization has become the most commonly implemented restructuring policy. This policy has been initiated by democratic governments, autocratic military regimes, and centralization ideology. The implementation of educational decentralization varies in terms of scale. In the literature on educational decentralization policy, the degree of transfer within public institutions is categorized into at least three types, deconcentration, delegation, and devolution ([Onia & Ramadan, 2023](#)). There is a paradox when central governments decentralize certain powers. This is because decentralization and other restructuring developments are always initiated from above. These studies will increase our knowledge about the early stages of the implementation of SBM in a developing country ([Hawkins, 2000](#)).

## 2. METHODS

This paper is a literature survey. Data were obtained from internet sources, especially from articles in international journals. Data was collected, analyzed, and summarized to get the main ideas for building this study.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Plans for Implementing Decentralization Reform for School-Based Management

The implementation of decentralization in the form of SBM appeared to be strongly influenced by politics. The implementation of a school-based management policy is to support school autonomy to increase education quality by national and international standards (Al-Momani & Rababa, 2022). The possibility of greater school autonomy was further explored by the government which formed several task forces following the World Bank report (Supriyadi *et al.*, 2021). Upon publication of the Task Forces progress report in early July 2000, the public perception was positive. It appeared that the general public had welcomed and supported the idea of school-based management. In their final report, the Task Forces wrote explicitly about the school-based management implementation of laws and regulations to support the idea of school decentralization in the form of school-based management (Annisa *et al.*, 2022).

To guarantee the application of school decentralization that promotes quality education is necessary to describe the complete strategy of school decentralization in other forms of legal documents. That law explicitly mentioned the policy of regional autonomy at the education council level and school committee. Both institutions were to operate as governance entities at both levels. Rose (2003) writes that genuine participation implies the ability to take part in real decision-making and governance where all members have equal power to determine the outcome of the decision and share in a joint activity.

### 3.2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework formulated by Gamage and Zajda (2006) has defined SBM as a pragmatic approach to a formal alteration of the bureaucratic model of school administration with a more democratic structure. This framework includes a form of decentralization that identifies the individual school as the primary unit of improvement relying on the redistribution of decision-making authority through which improvements in schools are stimulated and sustained. Has also proposed a revised theory of SBM by devising seven assumptions that are the basis of a more realistic application of SBM. The first assumption is that a school council shall consist of all relevant stakeholders such as the principal or the head teacher and the representatives of staff (both teaching and non-teaching), parents, the local community, and students.

The representatives of the staff, parents, and students are expected to be elected by the relevant constituencies whereas the community representatives are to be nominated by the other elected members and the school leader. The second assumption is that the devolution or transfer of both authority and responsibility needs to be affected by a legislative enactment. This approach shall transform the former advisory body into a democratic governing body. The third assumption is the heavy reliance on the voluntary participation of parents, community, and student representatives in the process of policy formulation in governing the school.

It is believed that the school stakeholders are motivated and dedicated to developing quality schools because of the genuine transfer of authority and responsibility to governing bodies. The fourth assumption is that the lay councilors, with appropriate induction and training, will acquire sufficient knowledge to function as equal partners. The knowledge and experience of the lay members who come from fields other than education are relevant and useful to the educational enterprise so that the needs of contemporary schools are met. The fifth assumption is that because of de-zoning, the schools need to function in an interesting and effective mode that can improve the image of the school in a similar way to the business reputation of a private/public enterprise. Such an image will help attract high levels of school enrolment.

The sixth assumption is that SBM would be cost-effective because the ownership of the policies and the higher levels of commitment leads to the minimization of costs and better utilization of limited resources. More resources would also be available as a result of minimizing the size of the educational bureaucracy, as well as higher levels of resources coming from the school community. The last assumption is that stricter controls needed to be enforced by the center in ensuring accountability for the finances placed at the disposal of the school in conformity with the Ministerial/Departmental Guidelines relating to the operation of school councils.

The principal is made accountable to the governing body and through it to the state's education authorities, as well as to the school community. Submission of regular progress reports to the governing body and annual reports to other relevant authorities and the school community are required.

### 3.3. Reasons for Decentralization

Proposes five reasons: efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of public services; an ideology that embraces faith in the market mechanism in the public; equity in the allocation of scarce resources; a broad societal valuing of empowerment of the community and findings in the research on school effectiveness and school improvement.

- (i) Efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of public service ([Kurniati et al., 2021](#)). It became clear that large bureaucratic organizations which were administering public education could not maintain quality because of the high rate of student enrolment and tended to be inefficient and unresponsive to changing circumstances. School-based management policy became associated with the efficiency and effective use of public resources. Besides the effects of a recession or financial crisis, mismanagement of public money has in the past been the main reason why SBM policy was so tempting for central governments ([Widianti & Undang, 2022](#)). Moreover, it is believed that practicing SBM will reduce significant government spending on public education systems which in turn will reduce public debt. Decentralized decision-making happens with greater regard for outputs rather than inputs.
- (ii) The market mechanism. Within the sphere of education, the market mechanism is understood in a particular way. There are five elements: parental choice, competition, diversity, funding, and organization ([Glushchenko, 2022](#)). With a centralized policy system, it is common to see the imposition of mandatory pupil entrance to a specific public school or state-approved school in a designated area. Such a policy requires parents to send their children to the nearest school in the area. Under a market economy policy, parents are given the power of choice, permitting them to decide which educational institution their children should attend. Under such a policy, parents are described as consumers, implying that they have a personal interest and stake in

their children's education. Managing perception becomes a key role as schools become much more public relations friendly; more aware of the value of positive press publicity; and learns to record and highlight their activities and achievements better. It is hoped by its advocates, that competition between schools, aiming to attract students far from their locations will benefit consumers as well as the nation. It may also include parents having the opportunity to use the voucher to send their children to private schools, whenever they are willing to pay the difference. Undoubtedly, this system strengthens parents' bargaining position while making schools depend heavily on parental choice. Does the system also make the schools deliver overall service, and retain staff, facilities, and equipment, linked to their ability to attract consumers?

- (iii) Equity in the allocation of scarce resources. The practice of public-school systems where uniformity is widespread reflects equality rather than equity. This is because of a centralized system, education improved in quality as a direct result of the ability to standardize the content and provision of education ([Sukmawati & Maryanti, 2022](#)). Equity arguments can also be made concerning policies that are intended to close the gaps in education services between city & rural, rich & poor, male & female as well as differences between ethnic minorities and indigenous people and mainstream groups.
- (iv) Empowerment of the school community. Argues that from a deinstitutionalist perspective a big centralized and bureaucratic public service institution such as the school is repressive, inflexible, rule-bound, and undemocratic ([Shaffiyah et al., 2022](#)). Through decentralization policy, a school and its local community are empowered allowing for community participation in organizational and political life. Points out that participation tends to be a weaker form of arrangement than partnerships. Enlisted four characteristics which are a network of shared interests and concerns; a symbolic or physical base; an extension beyond the narrowly-defined household and something that distinguishes it from other similar groups. In terms of school-based management policy, partnerships allow for optional or mandatory policy options, where a range of possible devolved authority measures can be exercised ([Pepugal, 2022](#)). The proponents of community involvement in education argue that there are several outcomes from it. These include shared experiences and expertise where each party can give their knowledge and skills to solve the task. Community involvement may also result in increased resources whereas the community is bigger than the sum of all parts in terms of human, material, and financial resources. Further, community involvement involves an increased sense of ownership, because people who take part in participatory decision-making tend to feel a greater sense of belonging to any resolution, they are involved in.

### 3.4. Literature Review

[Omran's \(2019\)](#) study reveals the reality of the application of School-Based Management (SBM) in public schools as perceived by principals in the Karak governorate where this study provides a theoretical and practical description of the reality of SBM practice. The study sample 115 principals who are managing public schools in Karak governorate. We used the descriptive survey method to collect data and the results indicated that there is a moderate degree in the reality of the application of SBM in public schools from the point of view of principals in Karak governorate. We attribute the result to the fact that some of the work carried out by principles is focused on fulfilling the job requirements to the fullest and is focused primarily on providing concepts of management effectiveness, speed, accuracy, and

work procedures to contribute to the implementation of the duties assigned to them quickly and accurately.

The general results of the reality of SBM practiced by the principal in the public sector show the need to improve relationship management and maintain acceptable levels of communication for investment success in conjunction with the mission of education aimed at continuously improving the various processes in school administration and hence the quality of education. [Gamage and Zajda \(2005\)](#), made the strong point that the idea of local community participation and partnership in school-based management (SBM) is a major concern in school reforms where decentralization and delegation of authority occur at the school level thus empowering the school community to perform the majority of the functions previously performed by the central region or the district.

The individuals who are closest to the students, teachers, school administrators, parents and members of the community are best equipped to identify the approaches that will best serve the requirements of their learners. [Cabardo's \(2016\)](#) study evaluates the levels of participation of the school stakeholders in the different school-initiated activities and the implementation of school-based management (SBM) in selected schools in the Division of Davao del Sur for the school year 2014-2015 using a descriptive-correlational survey research design. A researcher-restructured questionnaire was answered by 13 school heads, 56 teachers, and 50 stakeholders who were the respondents of the study.

The data were statistically analyzed using mean, analysis of variance (F test), t-test for independent sample, as well as Pearson r and t-test. The level of participation of the school stakeholders in the different school-initiated activities. The level of SBM implementation was found to be at Exceeding the Minimum Standard. The level of participation of the school stakeholders in the different school-initiated activities can be significantly affected by the level of SBM implementation.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

It was obvious that the implementation of the SBM policy as planned was unrealistic due to the politically driven nature of the autonomy law. SBM reform did not include subsequent policy development to regulate level implementation. It seemed that an easy way for the government to deal with the autonomy era was to retain an old paradigm approach. The study found that dispersing information about the new policy to school stakeholders was not systematic. This means that teachers and school committee members relied heavily on information about SBM from the school head. School stakeholders saw community involvement as an additional source of resources for the school in terms of funding and free labor. The perception of stakeholders' regarding school-based management implementation policy on the devolution of authority was determined to be moderate. It was discovered that the level of SBM implementation was on the minimum standard. It was suggested that there is still a need for the schools to be encouraged to achieve more development and graft on SBM implementation.

#### 5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.



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