

School-Based Management Practices and Academic Performance: Evidence from Philippine Schools

Charlyn Baylon¹, Edralin Manla², Ray Butch Mahinay³

¹Public Schools District Supervisor, Division of Cagayan de Oro City, Department of Education

²Dean, School of Education, Xavier University-Ateneo de Cagayan

³Vice President, Extension and Social Development Services, City College of Cagayan de Oro

Abstract

This study examined the level of School-Based Management (SBM) practices among school heads in the Department of Education (DepEd) Cagayan de Oro City Division, Philippines, and its relationship with their schools' academic performance. Using a descriptive-correlational research design, data were collected from 56 school heads in public secondary schools through surveys and Curriculum Management Support System (CMSS) reports on schools' academic performance. The study focused on the four SBM principles: Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Learning, Accountability and Continuous Improvement, and Resource Management. Findings revealed that most school heads exhibited an advanced level of SBM practice across all four principles, with Leadership and Governance scoring the highest. Further, statistical analysis indicated no significant relationship between the school heads' SBM practice levels and their schools' academic performance. These results highlight the multifaceted nature of academic outcomes, which are influenced by contextual factors. While school heads play a vital role in SBM implementation, its direct impact on academic performance may require a longer time to manifest.

Keywords: school-based management system, academic performance, leadership and governance, accountability and continuous improvement, resource management

1. Introduction

A school leader holds both the authority and responsibility to manage the school's objectives and outcomes effectively. By uniting efforts within their organizational unit, they drive the successful realization of educational missions and visions. This involves the efficient utilization of human resources and ensuring that all policies and targets are implemented accurately and on time. The wide-ranging responsibilities of school heads necessitate empowering them with clear, transparent, and excellent leadership goals (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001).

With reference on DepEd Order 83, series of 2012, this study is anchored on the School-Based Management (SBM) Framework of the Department of Education, which highlights a holistic and collaborative approach to improving the quality of education by empowering schools to operate as self-managing and self-renewing learning communities. The framework revolves around the vision of producing functionally literate citizens, aligned with the department's overarching vision, mission, and goals. It is structured around key dimensions and processes that promote sustainable and effective school

governance and management.

At the core of the SBM Framework is the development of functionally literate individuals who possess the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for personal and societal development. These individuals are envisioned to be prepared for life's challenges and capable of contributing to national progress. The framework conceptualizes schools as dynamic entities that continuously evaluate, plan, and improve their processes to adapt to the evolving needs of their learners and communities.

The SBM Framework is built on four key dimensions: Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Learning, Accountability and Continuous Improvement, and Resource Management. Leadership and Governance establish a participatory and inclusive leadership structure, encouraging school heads and stakeholders to share decision-making responsibilities and foster accountability. Curriculum and Learning focus on delivering a contextualized and localized curriculum that meets the diverse needs of learners, ensuring that they acquire the competencies necessary for lifelong learning. Accountability and Continuous Improvement emphasize the regular evaluation of school performance through structured assessments, promoting data-driven decisions and sustained improvement. Lastly, Resource Management enables schools to allocate and utilize financial, material, and human resources effectively, aligning resource utilization with identified priorities in the school improvement plan (SIP).

SBM was introduced in the Philippines to provide schools with autonomy in decision-making and resource utilization (King & Shipton, 2014). It emphasizes collaboration among the school community—including teachers, parents, learners, and staff—as a vital factor in achieving desired student performance (Wang & Hallinger, 2005). Effective school-based management is anchored on the leadership of school heads, who foster collaboration and create opportunities for improvement (Punter, 2014). Under RA 9155, school heads are empowered to lead in governance, curriculum supervision, and continuous improvement efforts. The primary goal of the SBM Framework is to improve student learning outcomes by fostering collaboration, transparency, and accountability among stakeholders. It empowers schools to create learning environments that are responsive to the needs of their communities, develop sustainable practices for continuous improvement, and build the capacities of school leaders and stakeholders. By doing so, the framework ensures that schools are well-equipped to meet the demands of modern education and contribute meaningfully to the broader goals of the Department of Education.

The school heads of secondary schools in Cagayan de Oro City have been actively implementing School-Based Management (SBM) and participating in validation processes at the school-based, division, and regional levels. SBM validation follows three progressive levels: Level I (Beginning), Level II (Developing), and Level III (Advanced). Schools are required to undergo this validation every three years, with newly established schools expected to meet at least Level I and more established institutions required to achieve at least Level II. Currently, schools in the city have attained their respective SBM levels.

This study aimed to explore the level of School-Based Management (SBM) practices among school heads of public secondary schools in Cagayan de Oro City and their implications for the schools' academic performance.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

Two key research designs, descriptive research and correlational research, formed the foundation of this study. In this study, descriptive research was employed to explore the school heads' profiles, their attitudes toward School-Based Management (SBM), and their SBM practices, as well as their school's academic

performance. The correlational part was utilized to examine the relationships between school heads' SBM practices and their school's academic performance.

2.2. Data Collection

This study utilized total enumeration as the sampling method, targeting all 57 school heads of secondary schools in the DepEd Division of Cagayan de Oro City. The school heads included in the study were those officially designated by the Schools Division Superintendent to lead their respective schools.

The data collection process utilized a research instrument designed to gather the required information. Primary data were collected using researcher-made questionnaires tailored to address the study's objectives. The questionnaire consisted of the following parts: (1) profile of the respondents, (2) respondents' attitudes toward school-based management, and (3) school-based management practices. Reliability testing yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.87, indicating that the instrument had good internal consistency and was reliable for measuring the constructs and variables outlined in the study.

Secondary data, which is the schools' academic performance, were obtained from official school reports. This combination of primary and secondary data provided a comprehensive basis for the analysis and conclusions of the study.

The data collection was conducted in a single session to avoid delays and to ensure the school heads could complete the survey under optimal conditions. Once data collection was completed, the information was organized and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools.

2.3. Data Analysis

This study utilized both descriptive and inferential statistical methods to analyze the data. Mean, standard deviation, frequency and percentages were used to summarize the school heads' profiling, their attitudes toward school-based management, and school-based management practices. The schools' academic performance was also treated with the same descriptive methods. Moreover, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the relationships among the variables.

2.4. Ethical Considerations

Strict data collection procedures were developed to ensure the highest level of privacy, confidentiality, and data protection. The researcher informed the participants of the nature of the study and sought their consent. Before distributing the research questionnaires through Google Forms, the study was presented, emphasizing the context of the participants and the significance of their participation in the study. It was emphasized that the respondents' participation in this study was completely voluntary. It was also explained that withdrawal or non-participation in this study would not result in any penalty on their part or loss of benefit. In the event of a possible withdrawal, all associated data would be immediately deleted permanently.

2.5. Limitations

This study was conducted among secondary public high schools in Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines, during School Year 2022–2023. Elementary schools and private schools were excluded from the scope of the study. Due to the limited number of school heads, a complete enumeration sampling method was employed.

The questionnaires used in this study were researcher-developed and anchored on the indicators of the School-Based Management (SBM) Framework outlined in DepEd Order No. 83, s. 2012. It is important to note that this framework does not reflect updates introduced in the latest DepEd Order No. 007, s. 2024, which may have implications for how SBM practices are currently implemented. Additionally, the SBM level of practice was self-reported by the school heads, which presents a limitation in terms of objectivity

and accuracy, as responses may be influenced by subjective perceptions.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Profile of the School Heads

Most of the school heads in DepEd Cagayan de Oro City are aged 45-54 years old, females, married, handling teaching item positions (in contrast to principal items), served for 21-30 years, and have earned graduate degrees already. Also, most of them have an outstanding performance rating in their Office Performance Commitment and Review (OPCR).

The designation of school heads holding teaching items, such as Teacher II, Teacher III, or Master Teacher, can be attributed to several practical, policy-driven, and contextual factors within the DepEd system. In many cases, these teachers are assigned as Officer-in-Charge (OIC) or Acting School Heads, particularly in schools where there is a shortage of formally appointed principals. This arrangement ensures the continuity of school operations while awaiting formal appointments through the Principal's Test or ranking processes.

Additionally, while some teaching staff meet the eligibility requirements for school head positions, they may not have taken or passed the National Qualifying Examination for School Heads (NQESH). Consequently, experienced teachers in these positions are often tapped to temporarily assume leadership roles due to their seniority, expertise, and familiarity with DepEd policies and operations.

Regardless of their official position, all individuals designated as school heads are expected to perform the same duties and responsibilities as outlined in RA 9155, also known as the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001. This legislation defines the roles and functions of school heads, emphasizing their responsibility to lead and manage their schools effectively. Whether the designation is held by Teacher I, Teacher III, Head Teacher, or Principal, the scope of their responsibilities remains consistent. These include providing instructional leadership, managing school resources, fostering collaboration among stakeholders, and ensuring the delivery of quality education. This framework ensures that leadership is role-based rather than position-based, highlighting the importance of the functions performed rather than the formal title held.

3.2. School Heads' Attitudes toward School-Based Management

The level of attitude toward SBM pertains to the degree of positivity in the school heads' perception of and approach to School-Based Management. It reflects their competence in leadership, governance, and the characteristics of an effective school head, such as instructional leadership, strategic thinking, innovation, and stakeholder engagement.

Most of the school heads held a very high positive attitude towards SBM. They expressed consensus toward the statement, "I appreciate the importance of designing and implementing action plans for the programs implemented in school." This reflects their recognition of action planning as a vital component of School-Based Management (SBM) and their competence in leadership and governance. This attitude aligns with the key characteristics of effective school heads, including strategic thinking, instructional leadership, and stakeholder engagement.

Action planning within the SBM framework involves assessing internal and external factors, setting specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) objectives, implementing actions, managing resources, assigning roles, and evaluating outcomes (Ali, 2020; Balarin et al., 2008). The school heads' strong agreement with the importance of action planning underscores their commitment to enhancing educational quality and addressing the needs of students, staff, and the broader school

community (Alsubaie, 2016). This reflects a strategic and proactive mindset in aligning school programs with organizational goals.

Table 1 Distribution of School head’s level of attitude towards SBM

Range	Level of attitude towards SBM	Frequency	Percentage
3.26 – 4.00	Very High Positive Attitude	47	83.9
2.51 – 3.25	High Positive Attitude	9	16.1
1.76 – 2.50	Low Positive Attitude	0	0
1.00 – 1.75	Very Low Positive Attitude	0	0
	Total	56	100
Overall Mean: 3.63 (Very High), SD: .49			

Furthermore, their positive attitude indicates a readiness to collaborate with various stakeholders, such as district offices, division and district supervisory teams, teachers, parents, and students, to ensure the successful design and implementation of action plans. This collaborative approach is critical in SBM, as it ensures inclusivity and responsiveness to the diverse needs of the school community. Research highlights that stakeholder involvement in school strategic planning is significantly influenced by the leadership functions of school heads and their ability to mobilize support for school programs and activities (Esqueda, 2016). Strengthening this collaboration through intervention programs can further enhance school performance and align it with SBM objectives.

3.3. School Heads’ School-Based Management Practices

School-Based Management (SBM) is a strategy implemented by the Department of Education (DepEd) to decentralize decision-making authority to individual schools, thereby empowering school heads and stakeholders to manage their own educational institutions. Anchored on DepEd Order No. 83, series of 2012, it is structured around key dimensions, including (1) leadership and governance; (2) curriculum and instruction; (3) accountability and continuous improvement; and (4) management of resources.

The evaluation of school heads’ level of school-based management (SBM) practices in the domain of **leadership and governance** principles reveals an overall advanced implementation level. This reflects the school heads' strong commitment to establishing and sustaining a governance framework that provides a clear vision, direction, and collaborative approach to school management. The advanced level of implementation indicates that school heads are not only proficient in leading their respective schools but also excel in engaging stakeholders in the decision-making process, ensuring that the governance structures are inclusive, transparent, and responsive to the needs of the school community.

The school heads within the DepEd Division of Cagayan de Oro City have effectively embraced and operationalized the principles of **curriculum and learning** under the SBM framework. An advanced stage of implementation in this domain demonstrates that school heads are successfully managing curriculum delivery and instructional processes to align with both the national educational standards and the unique needs of their school communities. This also highlights the school heads' ability to implement programs and projects tailored to improving learner outcomes, such as remedial classes, enrichment activities, and intervention programs for struggling students. Furthermore, it reflects their capacity to ensure that learning assessments are effectively conducted, analyzed, and utilized to inform instructional strategies and curriculum adjustments.

The evaluation of the school heads’ level of school-based management (SBM) practice in the domain of **accountability and continuous improvement** principles reveals an advanced stage of implementation. This indicates that school heads have demonstrated a strong commitment to fostering a culture of transparency, responsibility, and ongoing development within their schools. The advanced stage reflects their ability to implement mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation, and feedback, which are integral to ensuring that the school continuously strives to meet and exceed performance standards.

Table 2 Overall School Head’s SBM Level of Practice

Range	SBM Level of Practice	Frequency	Percentage
3.26-4.00	Advanced Level of Practice	43	76.80
2.51-3.25	Maturing Level of Practice	13	23.20
1.76-2.50	Developing Level of Practice	0	0
1.00-1.75	Low Level of Practice	0	0
Total		56	100

<i>SBM Principles</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>QD</i>
<i>Leadership and Governance</i>	3.61	0.49	<i>Advanced Level of Practice</i>
<i>Curriculum and Learning</i>	3.50	0.41	<i>Advanced Level of Practice</i>
<i>Accountability and Continuous Improvement</i>	3.44	0.56	<i>Advanced Level of Practice</i>
<i>Resource Management</i>	3.53	0.58	<i>Advanced Level of Practice</i>
<i>Overall</i>	3.52	.48	<i>Advanced Level of Practice</i>

Moreover, the continuous improvement aspect underscores the dynamic nature of SBM practices, wherein school heads are expected to lead efforts in refining instructional strategies, enhancing school infrastructure, and fostering stakeholder engagement. This involves creating and implementing School Improvement Plans (SIPs), conducting regular performance reviews, and aligning goals with the Department of Education’s standards and policies. Through these practices, school heads actively contribute to raising the quality of education and achieving better outcomes for learners.

The school heads’ SBM practices regarding the **management of resources** principles reveals an advanced implementation that underpins their exceptional ability to effectively manage financial, human, physical, and material resources to support their schools’ educational goals. Achieving an advanced implementation level reflects a high degree of competence and adherence to DepEd’s guidelines and mandates for resource management, ensuring that resources are utilized efficiently, equitably, and transparently.

The Management of Resources principles in the SBM framework emphasize the judicious allocation and utilization of resources to address the diverse needs of the school community. School heads at this level demonstrate a well-rounded approach to managing resources, including aligning their financial plans with their School Improvement Plans (SIPs) and directing investments toward initiatives that maximize student learning outcomes. They also ensure compliance with DepEd Order No. 13, s. 2023, which emphasizes accountability, efficiency, and transparency in the management of Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) and other funding sources.

The overall mean score of 3.52, coupled with a standard deviation of 0.48, further corroborates the advanced implementation level. This consistent performance across all dimensions highlights the school heads' ability to operationalize SBM principles comprehensively and effectively. The low standard deviation indicates minimal variability among the scores, suggesting a uniform level of advanced practice across the various schools in the DepEd Division of Cagayan de Oro City.

The overall advanced implementation level across the four sub-dimensions suggests that school heads in the division have internalized and operationalized SBM principles effectively. However, while the results are commendable, the slight variation in scores highlights areas that could benefit from additional support, such as enhancing collaborative accountability systems under Accountability and Continuous Improvement.

Additionally, ongoing capacity-building initiatives, particularly in the areas of resource management and curriculum innovation, are essential to sustaining and strengthening the gains achieved in the School-Based Management (SBM) implementation. Capacity building involves equipping school heads, teachers, and other stakeholders with the skills, knowledge, and tools necessary to effectively manage resources, innovate in curriculum delivery, and address emerging challenges in education. These initiatives ensure that schools can maintain and build on their progress in SBM, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and adaptability.

In the context of resource management, capacity building can include training on budget planning, resource allocation, and mobilization of external funding sources, such as partnerships with local government units (LGUs) and private organizations. Efficient resource management ensures that schools can maximize their existing assets while acquiring additional resources to support their programs and initiatives. For instance, school heads can benefit from workshops on strategic financial planning or grant writing, enabling them to secure funding for infrastructure improvements, instructional materials, or capacity-building programs for teachers.

Similarly, in curriculum innovation, capacity-building initiatives can empower educators to design and implement learner-centered, contextualized, and differentiated instructional approaches. These programs can focus on integrating 21st-century skills into the curriculum, such as critical thinking, collaboration, and digital literacy, which are essential for preparing students to meet global challenges. By fostering creativity and adaptability in curriculum design, these initiatives enable schools to better address the diverse needs of their learners, particularly in regions like DepEd Cagayan de Oro City, where schools often cater to students from varied socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

Moreover, capacity building in these areas aligns with the principles of SBM, which emphasize shared decision-making, accountability, and continuous improvement. For example, resource management training can strengthen the transparency and accountability mechanisms of schools, ensuring that resources are used efficiently and ethically. Similarly, curriculum innovation initiatives can align teaching strategies with the unique needs and aspirations of the school community, fostering a more relevant and inclusive educational experience.

The sustainability of these efforts also requires a multi-stakeholder approach, involving support from the Division and District Offices, LGUs, and non-governmental organizations. These entities can provide the technical assistance, funding, and policy guidance needed to institutionalize capacity-building programs. Additionally, regular monitoring and evaluation of these initiatives can help identify areas for further improvement, ensuring that they remain responsive to the evolving needs of schools and communities.

3.4. Schools’ Academic Performance

The schools’ level of academic performance refers to the overall achievement of students, measured by the quarterly and end-of-school-year average grades of all students in each school across eight learning areas: English, Mathematics, Science, Filipino, Araling Panlipunan, MAPEH, TLE, and Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao. This represents the academic performance of the 56 schools where the school head-respondents are assigned. These grades were accessed through the Curriculum Management Support System (CMSS). The academic performance levels are categorized based in DepEd Order No. 8, s. 2015. Most schools, 43 out of 56 (76.80%), achieved grades within the Outstanding range. This result underscores the high level of academic achievement among students in Cagayan de Oro City, reflecting their exceptional mastery of competencies across various learning areas. The high proportion of learners in this category suggests a strong emphasis on academic excellence and the effective delivery of instruction within the division.

Table 3 Distribution of Schools’ Level of Academic Performance

Range	Level of Academic Performance	Frequency	Percentage
90 – 100	Outstanding	43	76.80
85 – 89	Very Satisfactory	13	23.20
80 – 84	Satisfactory	0	0
75 – 79	Fairly Satisfactory	0	0
Below 75	Did Not Meet Expectations	0	0
Total		56	100
Overall Mean: 85.22 (Very Satisfactory), SD: 3.17			

A notable portion of schools, 13 out of 56 (23.20%), fell within the Very Satisfactory range. The learners in these schools demonstrate above-average academic proficiency and have met or exceeded expectations in their coursework. This outcome further indicates that a significant number of students are achieving commendable academic success.

Remarkably, no schools were classified under the Satisfactory, Fairly Satisfactory, or Did Not Meet Expectations categories. This absence highlights the overall academic strength of students in Cagayan de Oro City, where learners consistently perform at high levels and achieve grades well above the minimum standards.

3.5. Relationship between School Heads’ SBM Practices and their Schools’ Academic Performance

The finding reveals that there is no significant relationship between the school heads’ level of School-Based Management (SBM) practice and their schools’ level of academic performance. This shows a complex dynamic between leadership practices and measurable student outcomes. This result further suggests that while SBM practices are essential in creating structured and effective school systems, they may not directly or singularly influence academic performance, as academic outcomes are shaped by a variety of interconnected factors.

Academic performance is influenced by factors beyond the scope of SBM practices, such as student socio-economic background, teacher quality, curriculum alignment, resource availability, and community support. While school heads play a vital role in implementing SBM principles—such as leadership and governance, resource management, and fostering accountability—their influence is often indirect, operating through these mediating factors rather than directly impacting student grades. For instance,

effective SBM may improve school facilities, promote teacher development, or enhance stakeholder engagement, but these changes may take time to translate into measurable academic outcomes. With this, the relationship between SBM practices and academic performance may also require a longer timeframe to materialize. Immediate academic outcomes, as reflected in quarterly or annual grades, may not capture the broader and long-term impact of SBM practices on school culture, teacher effectiveness, and student learning environments.

Table 4 Relationship between the School Heads’ Level of SBM Practice and their Schools’ Level of Academic Performance

SMB Practices	Test Stat (Pearson r)
Leadership and Governance	.197 ^{ns}
Curriculum and Learning	.138 ^{ns}
Accountability and Continuous Improvement	.208 ^{ns}
Resource Management	.232 ^{ns}
Overall SBM Practice	.207^{ns}

Legend: ns - Not Significant; s - Significant

Additionally, academic performance as measured through grades may not fully encompass the holistic goals of SBM, which include fostering critical thinking, lifelong learning skills, and student well-being—elements that may not be directly reflected in quantitative academic assessments.

The study by Imants and Harris (2012) explores the perceptions and experiences of school administrators and teachers regarding school improvement and contextual factors. The study found that both issues related to the human side of school improvement, such as the behaviors, practices, and attitudes of school staff, students, and parents, and the structural side, like physical characteristics, budget, education system, and socioeconomic status of the school environment, have impacts on school improvement. These factors are likely to govern school improvement efforts and outcomes. This finding is relevant to the issue of the minimal impact of school development plans on the performance levels of learners within the school, which can be attributed to several factors, including the lack of effective professional development for teachers.

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the strong leadership profile of school heads in DepEd Cagayan de Oro City, characterized by their extensive experience, advanced educational qualifications, and commendable performance in both attitude and practice of School-Based Management (SBM). With most school heads demonstrating very high positive attitudes toward SBM and achieving outstanding performance ratings in their Office Performance Commitment and Review (OPCR), they collectively exhibit an advanced level of SBM implementation, particularly across key principles such as leadership and governance, curriculum and learning, transparency and accountability, and resource management. This high level of leadership competence aligns with the outstanding academic performance levels of the schools under their management.

Despite these strengths, the study reveals that the demographic variables of age, civil status, length of service, and educational attainment do not significantly influence the level of SBM practice, emphasizing the role-based nature of effective school leadership and the commitment to serve rather than position-based or demographic determinants. However, gender differences in leadership and governance suggest areas for further exploration, potentially pointing to distinct leadership approaches that merit deeper understanding.

Notably, the absence of a significant relationship between school heads' level of SBM practice, their performance ratings, and their schools' academic performance highlights the multifaceted nature of educational outcomes. While school heads play a critical role in implementing SBM principles, their direct association on academic performance may take time to materialize. Changes initiated through SBM practices often involve systemic shifts, such as improvements in leadership strategies, resource management, and stakeholder collaboration, which require sustained effort and time to translate into measurable gains in learner outcomes.

5. Recommendations

School heads can benefit from enhanced professional development programs focusing on leadership, governance, and stakeholder collaboration. Given their advanced SBM practices and high OPCR ratings, sustained training can help them navigate evolving educational demands. Gender-sensitive leadership training may also address governance differences, ensuring equitable growth and fostering inclusive leadership styles.

Strengthening resource management systems through collaboration among school heads, teachers, and stakeholders can enhance partnerships and optimize assets. Regular resource inventories and stronger linkages with local government units and parent-teacher associations may improve resource allocation. A holistic monitoring and evaluation framework could also provide deeper insights into SBM's impact beyond academic outcomes, incorporating student well-being and community engagement.

Long-term commitment is crucial for effective SBM implementation, as governance and resource improvements take time to yield results. Encouraging a culture of patience and continuous progress can sustain motivation among stakeholders. Future research could explore additional factors like school-level interventions, teacher performance, and community involvement, using qualitative approaches for a deeper understanding of SBM's role in academic success.

6. References

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