

Strengthening instructional competence through School-Based Management for sustainable educational development

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Abstract

This study assessed the implementation of the School-Based Management (SBM) program by school leaders and its influence on the instructional competence of teachers in selected elementary schools in North District 6, Division of Cebu City, during the 2025–2026 school year, as a foundation for a sustainable educational program. This study utilized a descriptive-correlational design engaging a quantitative method with 165 respondents. A modified standardized questionnaire tool was used in this study. The study revealed that school heads strongly agreed that the SBM domains, accountability and continuous improvement, curriculum and learning, leadership and governance, and resource management, were effectively implemented, reflecting a participatory and organized school leadership system. Also, teachers consistently exhibited high levels of instructional competence in planning, teaching, and assessment, highlighting their preparedness and effectiveness in promoting student achievement. Statistical analysis confirmed a significant relationship between SBM implementation and teacher instructional competence, suggesting that stronger SBM practices contribute positively to teaching quality. Despite these strengths, key challenges were identified, including limited resources, weak stakeholder engagement, unclear implementation guidelines, insufficient training, ineffective monitoring, resistance to change, and a lack of digital skills and collaboration. These findings underscore the need to strengthen support systems and capacity-building initiatives to sustain and enhance the gains of SBM and teacher competence in the long term.

Keywords: development education, school-based management, instructional competence, sustainable development program, Cebu City, Philippines

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1. Introduction

School-based management (SBM) is a decentralized governance model in the education sector that grants schools greater autonomy over decision-making, resource allocation, and stakeholder engagement. This framework involves four essential dimensions: leadership and governance, curriculum and learning, accountability and continuous improvement, and resource management (Soriano & Villanueva, 2025). Recent empirical research highlights the diverse implementation of SBM across public schools in the Philippines. A comprehensive nationwide study of 500 schools identified a substantial correlation between effective SBM practices and improved educational outcomes, including higher test scores and higher student attendance rates (Ang et al., 2025). However, localized studies reveal mixed results; for instance, moderate SBM implementation has been reported at San Luis National High School (Pepugal, 2022), while SBM objectives are not fully met in elementary schools.

In the Philippine context, the success of SBM is significantly influenced by stakeholder engagement, which emerges as a vital factor in its effectiveness. In the West II District of Gingoog City, evaluations by School Governing Council members indicated very high SBM implementation levels, and a moderately significant relationship was found between stakeholder perceptions and the actual evaluation outcomes (De Lara & Pañares, 2023). Despite these positive findings, challenges remain, including inadequate training for school leaders, inconsistent community support, and obstacles to participatory decision-making (Ang et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the existing literature consistently emphasizes a strong association between SBM and improved instructional competence among teachers (Ubongen et al., 2022; Tonzo, 2024), underscoring the need for supportive frameworks and capacity-building initiatives to unlock SBM's full potential.

Considering this context, the current study aims to analyze the impact of School-Based Management on teachers' instructional competence within selected highly urbanized large schools. The insights gained from this research are intended to guide school leaders, educators, parents, and policymakers regarding SBM's effectiveness as a strategy for sustainable instructional improvement. By examining the lasting effects of SBM and conducting comparative analyses across different regions, this study seeks to enhance understanding of how SBM can be optimized to improve educational outcomes in the Philippines.

2. Methods

This study used a descriptive-correlational, quantitative method in which the researcher primarily focuses on characterizing correlations between variables rather than attempting to demonstrate a causal link. As a result, a relationship was established between the level of implementation of School-Based Management and teachers' instructional competencies. The respondents of this study were the 5 school heads and 160 teachers in the identified elementary schools of North District 6, Division of Cebu City. The respondents were selected using a universal sampling method. The inclusion criteria were as follows: a) that they are school heads and teachers of the research environment; b) that they have been in the profession for more than a year; and c) that they are willing to participate and cooperate in the said undertaking.

This study's primary questionnaire was divided into four (4) sections. The second and most important component of the tool is a modified standardized questionnaire adapted from Abella's (2017) study on the "School-Based Management System in Public Schools in Cebu South District." This questionnaire was based on the factors in the Department of Education's School-Based Management System inventory, but it was contextualized to how it was used in the new educational normal. The questionnaire had 20 items and was graded on a 5-point Likert Scale, with 5 being strongly agree, 4 being agree, 3 being neutral, 2 being disagree, and 1 being strongly disagree.

The third section of the questionnaire is a modified standardized questionnaire adapted from Francisco and Celon's (2020) study on "Teachers' Instructional Practices and Their Effects on Students' Academic Performance." This instrument assesses instructors' pedagogical competence in terms of planning, teaching, and assessment procedures. This tool had 15 statements that were scored on a 5-point Likert scale: 5 for always, 4 for very often, 3 for sometimes, 2 for rarely, and 1 for never. The fourth and last section addresses the problems and barriers regarding the implementation of the School-Based Management and its influence on teachers' instructional competencies.

This research followed a step-by-step process in the conduct of this research endeavor. First, a letter was made addressed to the school principal, for approval of the conduct of the study. After the letter was approved, the questionnaires were personally distributed to the respondents. The respondents were asked to provide their full consent to participate in the study. Data was then collected and submitted to the statistician for statistical treatment. It was subjected to further presentation, analysis, and interpretation with the guidance of the research adviser. The final draft was submitted for finalization and corrections.

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents the data obtained from the respondents of the study with the corresponding analysis and interpretation.

Table 1
The level of implementation of School-Based Management

Domain	Weighted Mean	SD	Interpretation
Accountability and Continuous Improvement	4.40	0.49	Strongly Agree
Curriculum and Learning	4.37	0.46	Strongly Agree
Leadership and Governance	4.31	0.47	Strongly Agree
Management of Resources	4.56	0.41	Strongly Agree
Grand Mean	4.41	0.46	Strongly Agree

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 Strongly Agree; 3.41 - 4.20 Agree; 2.61 – 3.40 Neutral; 1.81 – 2.60; Disagree; 1.00 – 1.80 Strongly Disagree

Table 1 illustrates a significant level of School-Based Management (SBM) implementation among school heads across all four key dimensions. The overall grand mean stands at 4.41 with a standard deviation of 0.46, indicating a classification within the Strongly Agree category. This finding confirms that the implementation of SBM among the respondent school heads is highly commendable. The component that received the highest rating is Management of Resources, with a weighted mean of 4.56 and a standard deviation of 0.41, also interpreted as Strongly Agree. Highlighting the effective and collaborative handling of resource planning, allocation, and mobilization. Following closely are Accountability and Continuous Improvement, which garnered a weighted mean of 4.40 and a standard deviation of 0.49. This suggests that school heads are strongly dedicated to upholding high standards in performance monitoring, feedback mechanisms, and data-driven decision-making. This represents a culture of reflective practice and continuous improvement within school systems, which is essential for achieving sustained educational progress.

Furthermore, the dimension of Curriculum and Learning achieved a weighted mean of 4.37 with a standard deviation of 0.46, indicating Strongly Agree. This underscores the schools' commitment to ensuring the curriculum is relevant, inclusive, and adaptable to the needs of learners. It further highlights the integration of learner-centered practices, contextualized instruction, and community involvement in educational development. Although Leadership and Governance received the lowest rating among the four dimensions, it still achieved a weighted mean of 4.31 with a standard deviation of 0.47, which remains well within the Strongly Agree range. This affirms that school heads demonstrate effective leadership by promoting a shared vision, participatory decision-making, and stakeholder engagement in governance processes. However, it may imply that there are slight variations in execution consistency across different schools.

The findings are affirmed by Rebleza's (2025) study, which reported a significant implementation of School-Based Management (SBM) in public schools. Quinones and Abanto (2024) further confirmed this strong implementation, noting that SBM performance levels were high across all areas, particularly in leadership,

governance, and curriculum. These results highlight the positive impact of decentralization in Philippine education, as it empowers schools to manage their own systems and resources while being held accountable for their performance outcomes.

Table 2
The level of instructional competencies of teachers

Practices	Weighted Mean	SD	Interpretation
Planning Practices	4.92	0.14	Strongly Agree
Teaching Practices	4.11	0.51	Strongly Agree
Assessment Practices	4.84	0.13	Strongly Agree
Grand Mean	4.62	0.26	Strongly Agree

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 Always; 3.41 - 4.20 Very Often; 2.61 – 3.40 Sometimes; 1.81 – 2.60; Seldom; 1.00 – 1.80 Never

The results presented in Table 2 emphasize the overall instructional competence of the teacher respondents across three key areas: planning, teaching, and assessment. The grand mean score is 4.62, with a standard deviation of 0.26, which is interpreted as "Strongly Agree" or "Always." This indicates that teachers consistently employ effective instructional practices that are expected to positively influence student performance. Among the three areas evaluated, planning practices received the highest weighted mean of 4.92 and a low standard deviation of 0.14. This suggests that the respondents engage in consistent, high-quality lesson planning. Such planning indicates that teachers thoughtfully design lessons that align with curriculum standards, are differentiated to meet diverse learner needs, and aim to foster higher-order thinking skills. Assessment practices ranked second, achieving a high mean score of 4.84 and the lowest standard deviation of 0.13. This reflects strong agreement among respondents regarding their frequent and consistent use of effective assessment strategies, which include diagnostic tests, rubrics, and performance-based evaluation methods.

In contrast, teaching practices received the lowest weighted mean of 4.11, although this still falls within the "Always" category. This slightly lower score compared to the other domains suggests that there is room for improvement in classroom delivery, student engagement techniques, and differentiated instruction. While varied group structures, integrated reading/writing tasks, and social interaction activities are being implemented, they may benefit from deeper engagement. Despite these slight variations in scores, all domains fell within the "Always" category, showcasing the high instructional standards maintained by the teachers. The strengths in planning and assessment indicate their preparedness and evaluative rigor, while the moderately lower rating in teaching points to a potential need for increased support in dynamic delivery and classroom facilitation. The consistency of responses, indicated by relatively low standard deviations, particularly in planning and assessment, suggests a culture of shared instructional competence among the teaching staff. This cohesion may reflect effective school-based professional development programs and a supportive school climate that fosters instructional excellence.

The summarized data confirm that the teacher respondents possess a high level of instructional competence, especially in planning and assessment, while the teaching practices, though slightly less robust, remain commendable. Bojos et al. (2025) found that personal characteristics significantly influence instructional competence, indicating a positive relationship between teacher attributes and their instructional abilities. Similarly, Daga et al. (2023) found significant variations in teacher competence levels, noting that urban teachers demonstrated higher competence than their rural counterparts. This underscores the need for continuous professional development for all elementary teachers to effectively support student learning. Therefore, enhancing areas of teaching delivery through ongoing training, coaching, and reflective practice can further improve instructional impact and support the overarching goals of educational excellence and student performance.

Table 3 presents the results of the statistical test examining the relationship between the level of implementation of the School-Based Management (SBM) program and teachers' instructional competence. The computed chi-square value is 8.672, with an associated p-value of .004, which is below the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis, indicating a statistically significant relationship between the two variables studied. This significant finding suggests that the level of SBM implementation by school heads is not merely an administrative matter; rather, it is meaningfully linked to classroom teachers' instructional behaviors

and competence. When school leadership actively supports and engages in effective SBM practices such as distributing leadership, ensuring transparent resource allocation, providing curriculum support, and monitoring performance, teachers are more likely to demonstrate strong planning, teaching, and assessment practices. The alignment between SBM and teacher competence illustrates how well-managed schools can provide the necessary support, feedback, and resources for teachers to improve their practices.

Table 3
Test of significant relationships

Variables	Computed chi-square	Critical p- value	Decision	Interpretation
Level of Implementation of School-Based Management Program and Level of Teachers' Instruction Competence	8.672*	.004	Reject Ho	Significant

@ 0.05 level of significance

Additionally, this finding supports the Department of Education’s MATATAG agenda and the principles outlined in DepEd Order No. 44, s. 2015, which emphasizes that the success of educational reforms depends on strengthening leadership and governance at the school level. As school heads effectively implement SBM dimensions such as leadership and governance, curriculum and learning, accountability and continuous improvement, and resource management, teachers are empowered to design more effective lessons, employ evidence-based teaching strategies, and utilize assessment data to enhance learning outcomes.

In conclusion, the significant relationship between SBM implementation and instructional competence highlights the importance of school leadership structures in shaping the quality of teaching and learning. Ubongen and Revuelta (2022) demonstrated that teachers' instructional competence is significantly related to school heads' performance accountability. Therefore, school heads should be recognized not only as managers but also as instructional leaders, as their efforts in implementing SBM practices directly influence teacher effectiveness. This relationship underscores the need for integrated leadership development and instructional coaching programs that reinforce the synergy between school-based management and high-impact teaching. The results further suggest that investing in enhancing SBM implementation through leadership training, resource provision, and inclusive decision-making can lead to significant improvements in classroom instruction.

Table 4
Challenges and barriers encountered in the implementation of the School-Based Management (SBM)

Rank	Indicators	f	%
1 st	Insufficient resources and budget allocation	129	78
2 nd	Weak stakeholder engagement	122	74
3 rd	Unclear SBM implementation guidelines	120	73
4 th	Lack of adequate training and professional development	81	49
5 th	Poor monitoring and evaluation mechanisms	63	38
6 th	Resistance to change among teachers and staff	57	35
7 th	Lack of technological integration and digital competence	56	34
8 th	Limited collaboration and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)	54	33
9 th	Leadership gaps and inconsistent administrative support	23	13
10 th	Time constraints due to administrative workload	7	2

Table 4 outlines the challenges and barriers identified by respondents that hinder the effective implementation of the School-Based Management (SBM) Program in enhancing instructional competence across various domains. The most significant challenge, “Insufficient Resources and Budget Allocation” (78%), highlights a persistent issue in public education: limited funding that restricts school leaders’ ability to provide essential instructional materials, capacity-building activities, and infrastructure. The second challenge, “Weak Stakeholder Engagement” (74%), indicates difficulties in mobilizing parents, local government units, and community partners for shared school governance. The third challenge, “Unclear SBM Implementation Guidelines” (73%), points to inconsistencies in how schools interpret and apply policies. When clear directions are lacking, school leaders may adopt fragmented practices, undermining the SBM goals.

The fourth challenge, “Lack of Adequate Training and Professional Development” (49%), emphasizes the gap

between delegated authority and teacher preparedness. SBM requires empowered school leaders and teachers; however, capacity-building initiatives often fall short. Additional barriers include “Poor Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms” (38%) and “Resistance to Change Among Teachers and Staff” (35%). Monitoring and evaluation are vital to SBM’s accountability function, yet many schools lack established systems to track progress. Furthermore, “Lack of Technological Integration and Digital Competence” (34%) and “Limited Collaboration and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)” (33%) indicate shortcomings in readiness for 21st-century education.

The identified challenges, ranging from resource shortages to weak engagement and limited professional support, reflect systemic, organizational, and capacity-related constraints. Navarro et al. (2024) highlighted multiple significant obstacles, including resource limitations, inadequate training and capacity-building for stakeholders, weak monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, resistance to change among stakeholders, and insufficient community engagement that diminishes the participatory nature of SBM. Supporting these findings, Silabay and Alegre (2023) documented specific implementation challenges, including ongoing issues with shortages of instructional materials and equipment, limited stakeholder capacity to support schools, and inadequate facilities that hinder the achievement of advanced SBM levels. Both studies emphasize that addressing these barriers requires strengthening support systems and enhancing capacity-building initiatives to ensure successful SBM implementation. A multi-pronged approach is essential: increased funding allocations, clearer policy guidance, active stakeholder involvement, robust monitoring systems, continuous professional development, and effective digital integration. Without these measures, SBM's potential to enhance instructional competence and achieve sustainable educational development remains only partially fulfilled.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study concludes that the school-based management program is strongly implemented by school heads, particularly in the domains of accountability, curriculum and learning, leadership, and resource management. This high level of implementation reflects a school culture that values shared decision-making, instructional leadership, and effective resource utilization, all essential components for fostering an environment conducive to learning and school improvement. The significant relationship found between SBM implementation and instructional competence indicates that strong school leadership and governance positively influence teaching effectiveness. However, challenges such as limited resources, weak stakeholder participation, and gaps in training and digital competence need to be addressed to strengthen SBM's impact on instructional quality further. The results further confirm that the proper implementation of SBM can significantly influence teachers' instructional competence, which is essential for maintaining school practices that benefit students, teachers, and stakeholders.

Considering the findings and conclusions, it is recommended that school heads further strengthen the implementation of the School-Based Management (SBM) program by addressing the identified challenges, particularly in resource allocation, stakeholder engagement, and professional development. Continuous capacity-building initiatives and clear SBM guidelines should be provided to enhance teachers’ instructional competence. Moreover, fostering stronger collaboration through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and integrating technology into instructional practices can support sustained improvement in teaching and learning outcomes.

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