SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT: A STRUCTURAL REFORM INTERVENTION

Arthur S. Abulencia
Philippine Normal University

Abstract

Every education institution in the world has its own share of problems that need to be addressed. Some issues besetting the school system, especially the public school, include high dropout rate, quality educational service, high repetition rate, and limited holding capacity of the schools. Over the past decades, many initiatives and reform efforts have been implemented to arrest these problems. One key response of the national government is the adoption and implementation of SBM – School-Based Management anchored on the decentralization trend of the 70s. SBM, a framework of governance, transfers the power and authority as well as the resources to the school level on the assumption that the school heads including teachers, key leaders in the community, parents know the root and solution to the problem. In the Philippines, SBM was officially implemented as a governance framework of DepEd with the passage of RA 9155 in 2001 as legal cover. TEEP, SEDIP and BEAM – two pilot projects implemented by DepEd – support the SBM as an effective mechanism to improve the quality of education in the basic level. Thus, SBM is a viable structural reform intervention used to improve the quality of education in the public school so as to produce functionally literate Filipinos. The big challenge ahead of the DepEd is the implementation nationwide of SBM after the pilot testing.

Keywords: *SBM, decentralization, education reform, TEEP, BEAM, BESRA*

INTRODUCTION

In response to the decentralization trend since the 70's School-Based Management has been adopted by many countries as a national education policy. SBM entices many education managers and experts, because it yields various positive results such as improved academic performance of students, increased participation of parents and the community in the education of the students/children, and more importantly, empowerment of the local school heads, among others. Thus, the centralized and bureaucratic system of education is deconstructed and reconstituted to give way for a decentralized management system. With this system, different educators and scholars of SBM provide insights and feedback as to the effectiveness of SBM in addressing education concerns.

In the Philippines, SBM was officially implemented as a governance framework of DepEd with the passage of RA 9155 in 2001 as legal cover. The DepEd implemented three pilot projects TEEP, SEDIP and BEAM to support the SBM as an effective mechanism in improve the quality of education in the basic level. Then SBM was cascaded in all public schools in the Philippines.

From Centralized to Decentralized Education

The public education system in the Philippines was established with the passage of the Education Act of 1901, otherwise known as Act No. 74 of the Philippine Commission. Although the Spanish regime attempted to establish an over-all public school system and normal schools (*ecole normale*), the American government saw the wisdom of setting up a centralized public school system in the country.

The Department of Education (DepEd) has been in existence for more than 100 years now—from its institutional beginnings as the Department of Public Instruction in 1901 to its constitution as a Department of Education in 1947, as the Department of Education and Culture in 1972, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports in 1982, the Department of Education, Culture and Sports in 1987 and the Department of Education in 2001. Since 1995, this executive unit has been responsible for all levels of education. However, the legislated trifocalization of education in 1995 limited the scope of its mandate to basic education (elementary, secondary and non-formal education).

From 1901 up to the present, the Philippine education system has been overwhelmed with perennial problems despite reform initiatives and projects instituted as early as the 1920s. It is still mired in difficult challenges that the bureaucracy has yet to address effectively such as high dropout rates, low participation rates, low performance in national achievement tests, and the shortage of facilities and teachers. But a common structural problem that has run through education reviews since the 1920s is the centralization of education.

Why does the centralized management of education pose a big problem? Because the managerial, technical, and financial demands of education systems on government capacities, especially in the developing world and the complexity of education, make it very difficult to produce and distribute education services in a centralized fashion (King and Cordeiro-Guerra, 2005, in World Bank, 2007); hence, the call for decentralized education as a fitting reform agenda to maximize the efficient and effective use of government limited resources. This became a battle cry in the 1980s and 1990s as the wave of decentralization in governance, leading John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene (1990) to assert that the decentralization of organizational management is one of the megatrends that shaped the 1980s.

The wave of decentralization spilled over to the education sector in the Philippines, which continued to have a centralized educational bureaucracy of the Philippines for most of the 20th century. The passage in 2001 of Republic Act 9155 (An Act Instituting a Framework of Governance for Basic Education, Establishing Authority and Accountability, Renaming the Department of Education, Culture And Sports as the Department of Education, and for other Purposes) provided the legal cover for decentralization.

Decentralization is a process of transferring the decision making from central or higher office to the local government or offices of the bureaucracy. In the context of education, the functions that are commonly decentralized to the local levels—usually to the local government or the school itself—are policymaking, revenue generation, curriculum design, school administration, and teacher management.

There are many reasons why decentralization is deemed to be a good strategy for addressing the problems of poor governance and inefficiencies in providing the basic needs of society. For instance, the World Bank (1998) recommends decentralization "to effect a more efficient allocation of resources that is necessary to bring about improvements in the quality of schools and to deal with financial pressures" (Berhman, et. al., 2002:33). The pressure to decentralize among developing countries was driven largely by fiscal constraints and concern over the effectiveness of a centralized education bureaucracy in providing education services. Interestingly, in places like Latin America, the eastern European bloc and the former USSR, decentralization proceeded hand in hand with the democratization process.

A key reform program that has concretized decentralization in the basic education sector in different parts of the world is site-management or school-based management (SBM). Australia adopted the strategy in 1976; Britain in 1988; the US in 1988; New Zealand in 1989; Mexico in 1992; Hong Kong in 1991; Thailand in 1999; and, the Philippines in 2001 (Bautista, Bernardo and Ocampo, 2010). By the turn of the century, SBM had become one of the three major tracks for change in public education (Caldwell, 2004:3), the other two being the "an unrelenting focus on learning outcomes, and the creation of schools for a knowledge society and global economy".

With regard to SBM, it is important to take note of the following:

- For Conley (2003), SBM is more of an enabling mechanism for other goals to materialize. He clearly states in an earlier work (1993) that educational restructuring such as SBM needs to dovetail with the goals of systemic reform. He formulated a "framework of twelve dimensions of educational restructuring that are grouped into three subsets: central, enabling, and supporting variables. Learner outcomes, curriculum, instruction,

and assessment make up the central variables, labeled as such because they have a powerful direct effect on student learning. Enabling variables, also closely related to instruction, consist of leaning environment, technology, school-community relations, and time. Supporting variables, those further removed from the classroom, consist of governance, teacher leadership, personnel structures and working relationships." (in Thomson, 1994).

- Hanushek and Woessmann (2007) remind policy makers and implementers about the evidence that "merely increasing resource allocations will not increase the equity or improve the quality of education in the absence of institutional reforms" (p. 1, World Bank, 2007). For a successful SBM, all stakeholders of education should effectively and meaningfully participate in its implementation and all aspects of educational management should also synchronize with efforts related to decentralization.

- As to the context-specify of SBM – because its implementation is dynamic, its practices cannot be boxed in a template to be followed by school heads. Every country and every locality that practices SBM is well aware of its context-based implementation.

Decentralization through school-based management has shown mixed results. Bautista, Bernardo and Ocampo (2010) noted that in developed societies, SBM increases participation in decision making, but does not appear to have an effect on teaching and learning when treated merely as a change in governance structure. However, based on their literature review, the authors assert that it affects school performance positively "when schools, in addition to obtaining autonomy, provide for local capacity-building, establish rigorous external accountability through close relations between schools and communities, and stimulate access to innovations". They further note that "the qualitative link of SBM to the formation of a professional learning community, greater focus on student work (or assessment literacy), changes in pedagogy, and improved student outcomes is apparent in the literature", but in quantitative terms, "SBM, narrowly conceived as autonomy, on student achievement, while statistically significant, is less than that of other variables".

To date, there are hardly quantitative analyses of the impact of SBM, broadly defined as a governance mechanism and a framework that integrates various inputs and classroom learning processes. A rare exception is the ongoing empirical study done by Yamauchi and Liu (2011) of the Washington-based International Food Policy Research Institute on school quality, labor market imbalance and investment in human capital in the Philippines. Obtaining a random sample of students from the schools that experienced SBM and other interventions through TEEP and tracking them after several years, the authors compared students who graduated before and after the TEEP

intervention in treatment and control schools and revealed a significant difference in impacts on subsequent schooling investments, migration, and labor market earnings between females and males. In other words, the broadly conceived SBM intervention had significant positive impact on female students, but not necessarily on male students.

School-Based Management Defined

The importance of education in national development can never be underestimated. Education is "a key investment that can break the Filipino's seemingly endless cycle of poverty, and provides the people, particularly the youth, with more opportunities" (MTPDP 2004-2010). Improving the quality of basic education redounds to the development of the society in general. Today, education becomes more relevant as we are living amidst a knowledge-based society that demands human capital in the form of knowledge workers who can steer the local as well as the global economy. Since education systems in many societies are not poised to meet the challenges of the times that include the demands of a globalized world, reforming and transforming the educational system has been at the core agenda of national governments worldwide.

Educational leaders and policy makers are always on the look for reforms to improve the quality of basic education in their country. One of the most popular strategies that came out during the 1980s – the school reform movement – was school-based management. SBM is the decentralization of decision-making authority to the school site (Oswald, 1995). Essentially such an innovation in the delivery of educational services excites various education policy makers because of shifting of the place of power or authority.

School-based management with its different meanings has been implemented in wide range of social context both in developed and developing countries. Caldwell (2004) defines SBM in a system of public education as "the systematic and consistent 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 accountabilities" (p. 3). While the term 'school-based management' has international prevalence, the practice has different names in different settings, including 'school self-management', 'school autonomy' and 'local management of schools', 'site-based management'.

In the words of Malen, *et al* (1990), "school-based management can be viewed conceptually as a formal alteration of governance structures, as a form of decentralization that identifies the individual school as the primary unit of improvement and relies on the redistribution of decision-making authority as the primary means through which improvement might be stimulated and sustained" (p. 2, World Bank, 2007). Santibañez (2006) further asserts that SBM, as a reform strategy, has a strong theoretical appeal due to its

participative decision making and autonomy wherein schools under SBM are expected to be more efficient in the use of resources and more responsive to local needs. Parents are involved in school affairs such as monitoring and evaluating school personnel. SBM can pave the way to a transparent, higher accountability and an increased focus on improving educational outcomes.

Cromwell (2006) says that the "philosophy supporting site-based management has its roots in industry and business. In the last half of the 20th century, an industrial model touting the benefits of empowering factory workers to change their work roles gained widespread celebrity and credibility". Peter Drucker, a management guru, has laid out the idea on decentralization as early as 1940s amidst of command and control corporations. He "favored decentralized organizations because they create small pools in which employees gain satisfaction by witnessing the fruits of their efforts, and nascent leaders can make mistakes without bringing down the business" (p. 8, Buchanan, 2009). SBM, as decentralization strategy, engages in delegating authority to the school instead of the central office, a shared decision-making model engaging various stakeholders and facilitative rather than directive leadership.

Decentralization in most developing countries is interpreted in three complementary ways: asking elected local authorities to take charge of education in their area, strengthening the role of regional and district education offices and increasing school autonomy in resource management" (p. 1, IIEP, 2004). The Montreal Economic Institute, (2007) basing on 2004 OECD report, shows that the degree of decentralized decision-making in public schools varies considerably across countries. Together, school decision-making has become more decentralized in recent years. It also asserts that there are variations in the degree decentralization in the four domains of school decision makings, namely: personnel management; financial resources; student polices; curriculum instruction. To illustrate, in one local setting, personnel management is more decentralized, while curriculum is still nationally determined by central office.

Barrera-Osorio, et. al. (2009) put in a continuum SBM as regards the degree to which decision making is devolved in the school. They identify "weak SBM reforms" at one end of the continuum in schools with limited autonomy regarding instructional methods and planning school improvement. In a weak SBM, school councils serve only as advisory role. By contrast, "strong SBM" is characterized by school councils that receive funds directly from national government, have granted to hire and fire teachers and have also given the responsibility to setting curricula.

Reasons for School-Based Management

Several reasons explain why SBM is widely supported by different policy makers and even governments. One of the main reasons is that principals, teachers and parents are the best people to manage the resources available for education to meet the needs of the wider community. If there is a strict regulation imposed upon schools, it limits its ability to make a full potential in meeting students' needs. If school organization is given importance, it will have a net effect on student performance through increased test scores and reduced dropout rates (Montreal Economic Institute, 2007). Although many other factors affect student performance such as influence of the family, school autonomy has the strongest influence on the overall quality of school management and organization.

The implementation of SBM also results in "increased efficiency and innovation in the delivery of education, reduced education bureaucracy, increased responsiveness of schools to the needs of local communities, strengthened accountability and increased engagement with, and financial support for, schools" (p. 2, Montreal Economic Institute, 2007). In countries with devolved systems of education or high degree of autonomy, average performance in mathematics and literacy tends to be higher. But OECD report cautions that the relationship between school autonomy and academic performance is not causal.

Di Gropello (2006) expresses the primary goal of decentralization reforms in education as "to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of education by increasing school autonomy and community participation and the autonomy and capacity of local and regional education offices and stakeholders" (p. 1). In his study (2006) he presses that "school-based management models seem to be a potentially promising means to promote more civic engagement in education and to cost-effectively get better or similar educational results than traditional programs" (p. 53). SBM has had a very substantial impact on enrollment and is somewhat associated with better student flows, as the experiences of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala point out. There is also evidence that academic achievement is at least high in autonomous schools, as in traditional schools.

Decentralization reforms have a positive influence on the efficiency and effectiveness of education service delivery largely because it: (a) enables the school to make use of information about local preferences, and (b) increases the opportunities for the community to hold the service provider accountable, which, in turn, can improve teaching and learning (World Bank in Di Gropello, 2006). The first reason for effectiveness and efficiency of SBM is information argument which argues that information or knowledge should be within the reach of the schools so that they could use it for their benefit; while

secondly, it speaks distinctly of accountability of the academic communities for their decisions and actions.

Admittedly, education is "too complex and too diversified, both in demand and supply, to be efficiently produced and distributed in a centralized fashion" (p. 4, Montreal Economic Institute, 2007). Excessive and centralized bureaucratic control over schools hampers them to be responsive and creative organizations to imply non-ability to grab the opportunity of the environment. The current period shows a volatile society in which many changes happen in very fast phase conditions. We can only adjust, given enough elbow room for direct actors to decide and make immediate actions or steps advantageous to the welfare of the group.

Caldwell (2004) enumerates some of the driving forces for SBM as follows: "1) demand for less control and uniformity and associated demand for greater freedom and differentiation; 2) interest in reducing the size and therefore cost of maintaining a large central bureaucracy; 3) commitment to empowerment of the community; 4) desire to achieve higher levels of professionalism at the school level through the involvement of teachers in decision-making; and 5) realization that different schools have different mixes of student needs requiring different patterns of response that cannot be determined centrally, hence the need for a capacity at the school level to make decisions to respond to these needs" (p. 4).

Likened to a juggernaut, the flourishing of decentralization movement reveals the internal limitation of nationally defined programs and policies. National policies are one size that does not fit all. There is an imperative that these central policies must be adapted to be relevant, because each community is differently constituted, although similarly situated, each school has its own distinct character and attributes. Furthermore, too much centralization in education stifles creativity of actors and too much inspection suppresses local initiative (IIEP, 2004).

IIEP (2004) reports the positive findings of decentralization in education implemented in Africa and Asia. First, parents and communities are showing great commitment to their children's schooling by partly shouldering the cost of schooling and provision of practical supports. Secondly, parents and teachers, inspectors and mayors, and other stakeholders are genuinely convinced of the need for decentralization since they commit themselves to its implementation, although fully aware of the present constraints. And thirdly, considering that schools and local offices struggle with scarce resources, the local community engages in several innovative efforts and initiatives.

Barrera-Osorio, *et al* (2009) hold that at very marginal costs, the potential benefits SBM are large. A number of these benefits include:

- "more input and resources from parents (whether in cash or in-kind)

- more effective use of resources because those making the decisions for each school are intimately acquainted with its needs
- a higher quality of education as a result of more efficient and transparent use of resources
- a more open and welcoming school environment because the community is involved in its management
- increased participation of all local stakeholders in the decision-making processes which leads to more collegial relationships and increased satisfaction
- improved student performance as a result of reduced repetition rates, reduced dropout rates, and (eventually) better learning outcomes" (p. 6).

The main purpose for school-based management is the improvement of educational outcomes and, thus most governments have adopted as their policies for educational reform (Caldwell, 2004). The caveat, though, is that SBM does not provide a panacea to all school related problems. SBM, when properly and carefully implemented, yields increased community ownership of schools, improves student learning outcomes, and provides more streamlined administration of the education system (Montreal Economic Institute, 2007).

SBM and Education Outcomes

For the last three decades of implementation of SBM, according to Caldwell (2004) "there has been little evidence that school-based management has had either a direct or an indirect effect on educational outcomes", primarily because most of the early SBM was implemented as a strategy to empower the community, if not to dismantle large, costly and ineffective bureaucracy (p. 4). Caldwell (2004) further notes that the impact of SBM was hard to establish due to the weak database on student achievement. He claims that SBM in western nations have yielded little evidence of impact on learning, though they have already practiced SBM for almost three decades, while in developing countries, the implementation of SBM gives early evidence of impact on learning.

Fullan and Watson (1999) reviewed several empirical studies involving SBM in developed countries, concluding that SBM, in its then present form, did not impact on teaching and learning. Fullan cited the following studies; a) the first was conducted by Taylor & Teddlie (1992) in thirty-three schools in the United States. They found out that teachers in this study did not alter their practice, much less increase their participation in decision-making or overcome norms of autonomy so that teachers would feel empowered to collaborate with their colleagues; b) Hallinger, Murphy and Hausman, (1991) found that teachers and principals in their samples were highly in favor of restructuring, but did not make connections 'between new governance structures and the teaching-learning process'; c) identical findings arise in Weiss' (1992)

investigation of shared decision-making (SDM) in twelve high schools in eleven states in the US. Weiss did find that teachers in SDM schools were more likely to mention involvement in the decision-making process, but 'schools with SDM did not pay more attention to issues of curriculum than traditionally managed schools, and pedagogical issues and student concerns were low on the list for both sets of schools.'; d) Leithwood and Menzies (1998) examined 83 empirical studies of school-based management to arrive at this conclusion: "There is virtually no firm, research-based knowledge about the direct or indirect effects of SBM on students … the little research-based evidence, that does exist, suggests that the effects on students are just as likely to be negative as positive. An awesome gap exists between the rhetoric and the reality of SBM's contribution to student growth in light of the widespread advocacy of SBM." (p. 34)

Thus, Fullan and Watson (1999) suggest that we don't need to abandon SBM, but rather reconceptualize it by providing three key non-structural elements:

- building professional learning communities;
- developing the two-way seamless relationship between schools and their communities; and
- establishing and extending infrastructures which contribute to (1) and (2), as well as serving as a framework for external accountability.

Equally, Fullan and Watson (1999), in studying the SBM in developing countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America claim that there is not yet any overall evidence that SBM in developing countries is directly linked to improvements in the quality of learning. In Kenya, Anderson and Nderitu found that implementation of School Improvement Programme (SIP) has become widespread (since mid-1996), that there is evidence of impact on the work of teachers and their relationships to students and community members, and that while it is too early to assess the impact on student learning outcomes, most of the evidence is positive. In Jaipur, India, the Bodh Shiksha Samiti Project uses a child-based philosophy of education linked to an integrated community schools strategy. The researchers report the following specific achievements:

- A comparative assessment, based on the findings of benchmark studies in the government schools under the programme, has established that the level of children's cognition attained through these innovative methods is much higher than those of schools not involved in the programme.

- The programme has brought the government teachers out of systematic rigidity and there is perceptible qualitative improvement in classroom culture, teacher-student relationships and parental involvement in school activities.

- There is a general appreciation of the programme and a growing demand for its expansion.

In Pakistan, the Roads to Success (RTS) is a well documented report on an in-depth evaluation of school improvement in 32 schools in four provinces. Four indicators of success were used: enrolment, attendance, repetition rate, and retention—data were not available on student performance. The findings are:

- Critical causal factors in the process of positive school change include a combination of a competent head teacher (and teachers) and a supportive community;
- Heads and teachers can form a cluster of schools to help each other;
- Parents/communities support schools through:
    - involvement with their own children's learning;
    - involvement through securing facilities and financial support for the school;
    - involvement through participation in school activities.

Research findings in various countries demonstrate that through the implementation of SBM, school stakeholders and participants have been empowered in decision-making, leading to create high levels of parental and community participation (Bandur, 2008).   In Indonesia, Bandur (2008) made a study that aims to examine whether improvements in student achievements have been achieved resulting from the implementation of SBM. Based on his study, "there have been school improvements and student achievements resulting from the implementation of SBM. SBM policies and programs have created better teaching/learning environments and student achievements. Further, the research suggests that continuous developments and capacity building such as training on school leadership and management, workshops on SBM, and increased funding from governments are needed to affect further improvements in school effectiveness with the implementation of SBM" (p. xii).

Santibañez (2006) provides this summary in her literature review regarding SBM, "it appears that having a school council that includes a wide variety of stakeholders (principal, teachers, parents) and has either limited authority and more resources, or great authority and autonomy (even without extra resources), does have a positive effect on student outcomes, particularly those on access and dropout rates, and lesser so on student achievement" (p. 31).

Caldwell (2004) asserts that for SBM to be successful in improving school outcomes, there is a need to "highlight the importance of local decision-making being pre-eminently concerned with learning and teaching and the support of learning and teaching, especially in building the capacity of staff to

design and deliver a curriculum and pedagogy that meet the needs of students, taking account of priorities in the local setting, including a capacity to identify needs and monitor outcomes.   Also evident is the building of the capacity of the community to support the efforts of schools" (p. 5). This simply means that SBM may not directly affect learning but transfer of authority to local leaders may provide an important avenue and better opportunities for schools to perform well.

International studies of student achievement such as PISA and TIMMS show that schools with a high degree of autonomy did better (Caldwell, 2004). The reason behind the higher performance was the importance of support of the community to schooling.

Caldwell (2004) clarifies that SBM, as a policy, can be easily legislated which shifts power, authority, responsibility and influence from one level to another – such a shift is a change in structure. On the other hand, the challenge is posed to build commitment and capacity to achieve the desired impact on learning – such a shift is a change in culture.

Thus, the foregoing discussion shows mixed results of SBM as framework of school management in relation to school outcomes.   In the Philippines, with the TEEP and BEAM projects of DepEd, it shows that SBM really improves the schools outcomes.   Further discussion of TEEP and BEAM will ensure.

SBM and Capacity Building

School autonomy, decentralization, and SBM are all policies that automatically put the school principal at the heart of quality improvement. Past research yielded that school management has a crucial contribution in the performance of teachers and students. Principal characteristics such as strong leadership, achievement–orientation and good community networks pave the way for successful school (IIEP, 2004).

For Caldwell (2004), capacity building at the local level is one of the reasons for the effective implementation of SBM. Teachers, principals and other school leaders need to build their capacity to perform their new roles in the restructured school operation.   For teachers, there is an imperative to undertake professional development on such topics as needs assessment, curriculum design, research-based pedagogy, and continuous monitoring. For principals or school heads, they need to strengthen their knowledge and competencies on strategic leadership, human resource management, policy making, planning, resource allocation, community building and networking among schools.

In this regard Di Gropello (2006) mentions two influences that affect the successful implementation of SBM: "a) assets of actors and communities,

which include skills, and information as well as organizational, psychological, human, financial and material assets, and (b) the context in which the school and community exist" (p. 4). He also affirms that SBM has prioritized school quality like teacher and school effort, as well as attended to learning materials, teachers skills, pedagogical innovation all resulting in limited potential impact of SBM on the quality of education and learning. SBM equally remains at stake either due to the issue of the actors' ability to sustain its initial implementation or positive output.

SBM, if implemented in fragmentary and incomplete manner, will not produce its intended outcomes. Bimber (1993) claims that decentralization has a limited effect when treated separately with other aspects of school decisions. Since decisions are interdependent, granting autonomy in one area of school management may be constrained by other areas, in the absence of decentralization.

Caldwell (2004) also articulates passionately the role of universities in providing training programs for school leaders and teachers to acquire the necessary skills, perspectives and knowledge for a successful implementation of SBM. In this situation, teacher training institutions (TEIs), formerly known as *ecole normale*, play a vital role as part capacity builders for the public schools, especially in providing of In-Service Training (INSET) for teachers and school leaders.

For his part Di Gropello (2006) reminds us of the risk of SBM amidst weak institutional framework – the capture of local power by local elite.   Thus Grauwe (2004) in describing successful schools, recognizes three policy implications, namely:

- "Principals are key to successful schools; they therefore need to work within a supportive policy environment.
- An integrated accountability framework has to be developed linking the different actors to whom the school is responsible.
- These different actors should be given professional training so that, subsequently, their autonomy can be increased" (p. 6, IIEP, 2004).

SBM, on the other hand, has its own internal and external barriers. For example, Lugaz (2004) spells out the barriers of decentralization in West Africa: a) Poor quality monitoring on the part of local education offices, owing to the inadequacy of the financial, material and human resources at their disposal; b) Overloaded principals and undersourced schools; c) Lack of transparency on the part of the schools which obtained alternative sources of funds; d) Different categories of teachers and its quality; e) Lack of support from local elected officials due to lack of experience or training in education matters; and f) Culture (p. 4-5, Lugaz, IIEP, 2004). But these barriers can be

overcome by careful planning and implementation of SBM by those directly involved as well as the leaders in the national government.

Admittedly, SBM as reform management strategy is not free from pitfalls, let alone defeat its intended purpose, if poorly implemented.

SBM and Philippine Education Reform

Interestingly, while SBM was integrated in implementing the Third Elementary Education Project and the Seconary Education Development and Improvement Program in 2001 until 2005, SBM was carried out as a national policy in the Philippines in 2006 as the lynchpin of the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA).

Recognizing the need to improve quality education, the DepEd engages in a continuous reform movement. In 2006, it formulated the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda or (BESRA),   a package of policy reforms that seek to create a basic education sector capable of attaining the country's Education for All (EFA) objectives by the year 2015. The DepEd had it developed in consultation with various stakeholder groups and consultants. The National Education For All Committee (NEC) of the DepEd enumerated the four major objectives of BESRA:

1. Universal Coverage of Out-of-School Youths and Adults in the Provision of Basic Learning Needs: All persons beyond school-age, regardless of their levels of schooling should acquire the essential competence to be considered functionally literate in their native tongue, in Filipino or in English.
2. Universal School Participation and Elimination of Dropouts and Repetition in First Three Grades: All children aged six should enter school ready to learn and prepared to achieve the required competencies from Grades 1 to 3 instruction.
3. Universal Completion of the Full Cycle of Basic Education Schooling with Satisfactory Achievement Levels by All at Every Grade or Year: All children aged six to eleven should be on track to completing elementary schooling with satisfactory achievement levels at every grade, and all children aged twelve to fifteen should be on track to completing secondary schooling with similarly satisfactory achievement levels at every year.
4. Total Community Commitment to Attainment of Basic Education Competencies for All: Every community should mobilize all its social, political, cultural, and economic resources and capabilities to support the universal attainment of basic education competencies in Filipino and English." (p. 2-3, NEC, DepEd, 2006)

BESRA focuses on five key reform thrusts (KRT) in order to achieve the abovementioned objectives. One of the KRT is that school-level stakeholders

improve their own schools continuously (KRT–1). "Schools are the community-based social institutions that provide the most widely available formally organized instruction, which is expected to enable students to learn and thereby attain their desired educational outcomes." (p. 4, 2006, NEC) BESRA – KRT–1 believes that the stakeholders of the school must be enabled and empowered to attain the desired educational outcomes. The reason behind this is that people directly involved in the school operation are the ones who know directly the problems of the school, thus they are also the best persons to promulgate possible and practical solutions.

BESRA KRT-1 is a clear institutionalization of school-based management in the national level. As articulated earlier, SBM was found effective by delivering improvement in the performance of schools under TEEP and BEAM.

BESRA, "a comprehensive and sector-wide reform package that aims to change the entire sector and not just target sites for pilot implementation" (pp. 6-7, PIDS Policy Notes, 2009), seeks to attain the Education for All (EFA) goals, namely: "universal access and success of children in basic education schooling" (p. 7).

Bernardo (2010) in a UP Education Forum highlights the positive qualities of BESRA. Accordingly, BESRA

1) focuses on student learning processes and outcomes;
2) affirms the need to employ diverse approaches to facilitating learning in the classroom;
3) locates the reform interventions at the level of the school and the classroom;
4) creates stronger accountabilities to the community and allows for more responsive and relevant school programs
5) recognizes the important role of teachers and teacher training in improving learning outcomes
6) builds on community-school relationship and aims to strengthen such relationship by looking at the community as a resource for improving schools and by ensuring the schools are accountable to the community;
7) reforms are based on previous interventions that worked;
8) shifts the reform initiatives of the DepEd from project approach to a more organic approach; and
9) is DepEd's own reform initiative.

Indeed, SBM is a many splendored thing. On one hand, it is a mechanism of decentralized governance, wherein "the management of schools that are accountable to both internal and external stakeholders is lodged in the school head. On the other, it serves as a framework for integrating various

inputs such as teacher training, classroom, instructional materials, nutrition programs and resource mobilization efforts" (Bautista, 2010).

The Philippines has had some track record in implementing SBM in depressed, underserved areas before the BESRA. The Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP), Secondary Education Development and Improvement Program (SEDIP), and the Basic Education Assistance to Mindanao (BEAM) are three projects that implemented SBM as an organizing mechanism for improving pupil performance and learning. These projects have been assessed as successful in meeting their educational objectives, as shown in evidence of high teacher morale within the project period. Pupil/student performance is also said to have improved significantly as a result of these projects. In the case of TEEP, the Yamauchi and Liu study suggests that the effects are carried over to performance in the marketplace, although only for female pupils/students.

Projectized Education Reforms: TEEP and BEAM Projects

TEEP

TEEP is an externally funded project carried out by the Philippine government that focused on 22 of the poorest provinces (divisions) in the country as determined by objective poverty data. The project aimed to: "a) improve the quality of public education by building the Department of Education's capability to manage change; b) improve pupils' performance; and c) actively involve the community and the local government to attain quality education. Before designing the TEEP, a study had been commissioned to determine the most important factors for high-performing schools. The conclusion: High-performing schools were led by high-performing principals whose predictor for high-performance focused more on managerial capacity than academics" (Licuanan, 1995 in Luz, 2009).

Specifically, TEEP gave "inputs for an integrated approach to education delivery improvement that included sub-packages for classroom and school-building construction and renovation, textbooks, supplies and equipment, other instructional materials, teacher training, division reengineering and SBM." (p. 6, Luz, 2009). One very important feature of the project was its decentralization of the highly centralized education bureaucracy through school-based management. Under SBM, the school principal is empowered to convert the traditional school into a dynamic, needs-based school. In such set-up the principal functions both as an instructional leader and administrative manager. Instructional leadership focused on knowing what and how to teach the curriculum and administrative management centered on school constituencies and resources (As provided in RA 9155).

The "operationalization of SBM in TEEP included: 1) the formulation, together with parents, communities, and other stakeholders, of 5-year School Improvement Plans (SIPs) and corresponding annual implementation plans

(AIPs); and, 2) the integration of the procurement of inputs that included textbooks and training" (p. 17, Bautista, *et al*, 2010).

Luz (2009) provided the following improvement out of the 7-year TEEP: a) Among TEEP schools, there was a higher participation and promotion rates; lower dropout rates; and narrower gaps in completion rates; b) TEEP participation rates improved by 3.4% versus the 1.9% increase for non-TEEP, non-ARMM provinces; c) Average (non-ELS or non-Elementary Leader Schools) 85 TEEP schools had significantly higher promotion rates than poor and non-poor divisions including schools in the National Capital Region (NCR, 2004 data); d) TEEP drop-out rates were significantly lower than those in poor and non-poor divisions including NCR; e) Completion rates in TEEP were lower than the national average, but with the gap narrowing. During the SY 2002-03, 6% difference between TEEP schools versus the national average, while SY 2004-05, 2% difference between TEEP schools and the national average; f) More TEEP schools (by proportion) placed among the country's top 1% schools in terms of the National Achievement Test (NAT); and g) TEEP schools had a larger share of schools at the 75% mastery level and 60% near-mastery level (NAT). At the 75% mastery level, TEEP schools improved from 3% of all schools (SY 2002-03) to 16% (SY 2004-05) in contrast to Non-TEEP schools where the improvement was from 3% (SY 2002-03) to 10% (SY 2004-05). Near-mastery (60 – 74% MPS), the TEEP improvement was more marked from 16% (SY 2002-03) to 51% (SY 2004-05), compared to Non-TEEP schools: From 16% (SY 2002-03) to 41% (SY 2004-05). Over a two school year period (2002-03 to 2004-05), more TEEP schools reported zero non-readers and non-numerates among their pupils. For examples, English: 18% to 22% of schools, Filipino: 23% to 25% of schools, Non-numerate: 20% to 23% of schools (p. 46-47).

TEEP may be considered then a partial success in education reforms, hence the scaling up of SBM in the Philippines. TEEP, therefore, is the mother of SBM in the country.

BEAM

BEAM, a large and comprehensive 6.5-year DepEd project funded by a grant from Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), aimed to improve the quality of and the access to basic education in Southern and Central Mindanao, specifically in Regions XI, XII, and ARMM. Started in 2002, BEAM consists of four components—Human Resource Development; Materials Development; Access; and, Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation (Bautista, *et al*, 2010).

BEAM was able to contribute significantly in the DepEd's design and implementation of Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA). Considering that BEAM and BESRA were in line with each other, the DepEd reported that BEAM assisted the BESRA's implementation in Regions XI, XII and

ARMM, and in the process, BEAM had "provided numerous models, systems, and processes – such as School Based Management – to assist with the national roll-out of BESRA" (p.7, BEAM Final Activity Completion Report, 2009).

Baustista, *et al* (2010) lucidly articulate that "BEAM's underlying learning philosophy is constructivist. It assumes the active creation or construction by learners of their own knowledge through their actions on and interactions with the natural and social environment." (p. 14). The students's responsibility is greater for they discover how new knowledge connects with their prior knowledge and that they continuously ask questions and guide their own learning process. The constructivist theory of learning emphasizes teacher's role as facilitator of "the development of cognitive processes by providing supportive learning environments and materials that facilitate learner's discovery" (p. 15).

BEAM, as guided by the constructivist theory, emphasizes higher order thinking skills among students who are likely to raise their level processing skills, such as evaluating, analyzing and synthesizing to apply newly constructed knowledge to problems or situations. This is the reason that "BEAM poured a significant share of its resources into capacity-building at all levels—i.e., teacher-educators, teachers, school heads, division and regional personnel— towards learner-centered management and teaching. The shift in learning paradigm that BEAM hopes to achieve entails a more methodical, well-thought of, research-based and fully documented capacity-building process. It also requires the development of appropriate (i.e., context sensitive) learning materials in support of effective learning" (p. 15, Bautista, *et al*, 2010).

As a project, BEAM has helped DepEd improve the quality of and access to basic education across every elementary and secondary in every division across the Regions of XI, XII and ARMM including the indigenous peoples in the remote areas. This was done by implementing the School Improvement Plan (SIP) with participation of various stakeholders; establishing School Governing Councils (SGC); training and development of managers; undertaking of needs analysis before any training; providing four cycles of SBM training for school heads; training of Math, Science and English teachers in the constructivist approach. Also by establishing self-supporting processes through the local cluster and in-school learning groups; undertaking study tours; providing special training to multigrade, beginning reading, IP and special education teachers; giving assistance to the 21 teacher training institutions (TEIs) to change their pre-service curriculum and to reflect the Basic Education Curriculum and to develop and introduce extended practicum; finally by establishing the Regional Training and Materials Development Centers, teachers have had training and support on the use of authentic assessment process (BEAM Final Activity Completion Report, 2009).

With the conclusion of BEAM, Bautista, *et al* (2010) assert that BEAM was, indeed, a successful intervention project to improve the quality of and access to basic education in Central and Southern Mindanao. For instance, the average scores of sampled Grade 4 and Second Year High School students had increased significantly across subjects from 2004-2006. The mean percentage scores for the anchor questions in the Math and Science items that go beyond factual knowledge—routine problem-solving, reasoning, and the use of concepts in Mathematics and conceptual understanding and reasoning/analysis in Science—improved significantly. Similarly, more students in 2006 than in 2004 correctly answered the same questions that measure the capacity to interpret or reflect in English.

Thus, SBM as a management structure and frame really improves school outcomes considering other inputs like use of vernacular language, teachers teaching the subjects they specialize in, administrators evaluate their teacher effectively and efficiently, adequate school facilities, among others are present.

Legal Bases of School-Based Management in the Philippines

Every reform effort requires legal framework that redefines the existing structure's power, authority or mandates. Legislation, executive order or memorandum can change the social arrangement on the basis that these orders, memos and laws are developed and decided by rational and expert groups who are motivated to better their society (Gibton and Goldring, 2001). The legitimacy of orders or laws relies to some extent on the creators or legislators who formulate such rules. But legislative basis of any reform effort is not the end of it all, for many other aspects of reform agenda may define its success. DeMitchell and Fossey (1997, in Gibton and Goldring, 2001) caution us by saying, "Mandates, rules and regulations are not enough, if reform efforts are to be effective and not fall prey to the issue-attention cycle that claimed many reforms... capacity-building policy instruments may be the more effective alternative to mandates in the long run" (p. 83). Probably, the implementation itself and building of supports maybe be more important focus of reform implementers.

Considering the limitation of legal basis of reforms, we cannot deny the fact that laws are imperative for an initiative because we are already living in a modern society that is characterized by legal-rationality, according to the sociologist Max Weber. Thus, the following are presented to provide us with the legal frameworks that support the adoption and implementation of SBM as national policy in the Philippines.

Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan 2004-2010

The MTPDP 2004-2010 acknowledges that "school should be seen as the focus and the locus of educational development and must thus get the

attention it deserves from its primary stakeholders – the principal, teachers, students, youth, parents and the community as well as the higher administrative level" (p. 198). Thus, the MTPDP 2004-2010 lists the promotion of School-Based Management as one of the key strategies to improve the management of operations of the public school system and deliver quality basic education. According to the MTPDP 2004-2010, "all policy initiatives and program interventions in basic education depend mainly on the ability of the schools to make good use of these resources in imparting knowledge to the students. Within this framework, the DepEd, in collaboration with all stakeholders in education, shall:

- Develop interventions to make schools continuously perform better through improved teaching processes and greater support from parents, local government units (LGUs) and community organizations;
- Encourage the schools to undertake self-evaluation, formulate their own improvement plans, and determine the kinds and sources of resources required to improve learning; and
- Continue to reengineer its systems and procedures to maximize the benefits that will go to the schools, e.g., procurement of goods and services, financial management, payroll services, teacher welfare, health and nutrition, alternative learning programs and management information system" (pp. 207-8).

More important, the MTPDP is pushing the school system to adapt various strategies to attain quality education in the country, as it greatly supports the decentralization of management of the public school system. With SBM, the government could maximize local resources and involved communities for improving school outcomes.

Republic Act 7160 (Local Government Code of the Philippines)

Another legal framework that sustains and supports SBM is RA 7160 promulgated into law in 1991. The Local Government Code of the Philippines mandates the establishment of local school board (LSB) in every province, city, or municipality with the following functions:

a) Determine, in accordance with the criteria set by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports, the annual supplementary budgetary needs for the operation and maintenance of public schools within the province, city or municipality, as the case may be, and the supplementary local cost of meeting such needs, which shall be reflected in the form of an annual school board budget corresponding to its share in the proceeds of the special levy on real property constituting the Special Education Fund (SEF) and such other sources of revenue as this Code and other laws or ordinances may provide;

b) Authorize the provincial, city or municipal treasurer, as the case may be, to disburse funds from the Special Education Fund pursuant to the budget prepared and in accordance with existing rules and regulations; c) Serve as an advisory committee to the *sanggunian* concerned on educational matters such as, but not limited to, the necessity for and the uses of local appropriations for educational purposes; and d) Recommend changes in the names of public schools within the territorial jurisdiction of the local government unit for enactment by the *sanggunian* concerned." (Section 99, Title Four. – Local School Boards, Book I General Provisions, Local Government Code of the Philippines)

RA 7160 further states that the DepEd shall consult the local school board on the appointment of division superintendents, district supervisors, school principals, and other school officials.

The local school board comprises the following: local chief executive (e.g. provincial governor, city/municipal mayor) and school superintendent as co-chairs, the chair of the education committee of the *sanggunian*, the local government treasurer, the representative of *sangguniang kabataan*, the duly elected president of the federation of parents-teachers association, the duly elected representative of the teachers' organization, and the duly elected representative of the non-academic personnel of public schools, as members.

Primarily, the LSB administers "the Special Education Fund (SEF) sourced from one percent of the real property tax collected by the local governments, with the aim of improving access to and quality of education in the public schools" (p. 20, Caoli-Rodriguez, 2007).

Republic Act 9155 (Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001)

With the enactment of RA 9155, the State shall encourage local initiatives for improving the quality of basic education. Mainly, the Act purports to:

- Provide the framework for the governance of basic education which shall set the general directions for educational policies and standards and establish authority, accountability and responsibility for achieving higher learning outcomes;
- Define the roles and responsibilities of, and provide resources to the field offices which shall implement educational programs, projects and services in communities they serve;
- Make schools and learning centers the most important vehicle for the teaching and learning of national values and for developing in the Filipino learners love of country and pride in its rich heritage;
- Ensure that schools and learning centers receive the kind of focused attention they deserve and that educational programs, projects and

services take into account the interests of all members of the community;

- Enable the schools and learning centers to reflect the values of the community by allowing teachers/learning facilitators and other staff to have the flexibility to serve the needs of all learners;
- Encourage local initiatives for the improvement of schools and learning centers and to provide the means by which these improvements may be achieved and sustained; and
- Establish schools and learning centers as facilities where schoolchildren are able to learn a range of core competencies prescribed for elementary and high school education programs or where the out-of-school youth and adult learners are provided alternative learning programs and receive accreditation for at least the equivalent of a high school education."

RA 9155 promotes the principles of shared governance that recognizes that every part of an organization has a particular role to play and at the same time responsible for its outcomes. Shared governance also advances democratic consultation among stakeholders; accountability and transparency; strengthened communication channels and expand linkages with other government agencies, NGOs, POs. RA 9155 serves as the most important legal bases of SBM in the country.

Decentralization, as an effort of the national government to share power and authority to the local government, means beyond legislation. Hanson (1997) clearly points out that:

> Decentralization is not created by passing a law. Rather it must be *built* by overcoming a series of challenges at the center and the periphery by, for example, changing long established behaviours and attitudes, developing new skills, convincing people in the center who enjoy exercising power to give it up, permitting and sometimes encouraging people to take creative risks, promoting and rewarding local initiatives, and maintaining continuity with the decentralization reform even as governments change (p. 14).

SBM should, therefore, touch into every fabric of the DepEd and be embraced by key actors as well as the other stakeholders of education to make it successful. Many factors have to be considered in implementing SBM after the passage of a law or memo regarding its effect.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

SBM, as a governance framework of the DepEd, offers an opportunity to improve the quality of basic education. Various countries have so far tested

the SBM framework and though it has rightly delivered its promise, but education leaders have also raised their words of caution and hindsight. In the Philippines, the TEEP and BEAM pilot projects have proven their impact, thus the national cascading of SBM is a decision and policy in the right direction. Virtually, the DepEd together with other reform minded leaders and organizations is challenged to document and measure the milestones in the grassroots – schools, a task it pursues vigorously.

REFERENCES

Bandur, A. (2008). *A study of the implementation of school-based management in flores primary schools in Indonesia*. (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis). The University of Newcastle, Australia.

Barrera-Osorio, F., Fasih, T., & Patrinos, H. A. with Sant, L. (2009). Decentralized decision-making in schools, *The Theory and Evidence on School-Based Management,* The World Bank Washington DC.

Bautista, M. C. R. B., Bernardo, A. B.I., & Ocampo, D. (2010). When reforms don't transform: reflections on institutional reforms in the Department of Education. Quezon City: *HDN Research Monograph 2010-11.*

Bautista, M. C. R B. (2010). The promise of redemption: BESRA and the need for higher education reform, should we pin our hopes on BESRA?. Quezon City: *Forum on Education UP Diliman*.

BEAM Final Activity Completion Report. (2009).

Behrman, J. R., Deolalikar, A. B., & Soon, L.-Y. (2002). Promoting effective schooling through education decentralization in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Philippines. *ERD Working Paper Series No. 23, Economics and Research Department*, ADB.

Bernardo, A. B.I. (2010). The promise of redemption: BESRA and the need for higher education reform, BESRA's promise?. Quezon City: *Forum on Education UP Diliman.*

Bimber, B. A. (1993). School decentralization: lessons from the study of bureaucracy. Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation.

Buchanan, (2009). The wisdom of Peter Drucker from a to z, inc.

Caldwell, B. (2005). School-based management. *Education Policy Series, UNESCO International Academy of Education and International Institute for Educational Planning.*

Caoli-Rodriguez R. B. (2007). Education for all global monitoring report 2008, education for all by 2015: will we make it? the Philippines country case study. *UNESCO*.

Conley, D. T. (1993). Roadmap to restructuring: policies, practices and the emerging visions of schooling. Oregon: *ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management*, University of Oregon.

Cromwell, S. (2006). Site-based management: boon or boondoggle?. Education World. Department of Education. (2006). *Basic education sector reform agenda (2006-2010)*. National Education for All Committee (NEC).

Department of Education. (2010). *School-based management: a manual in the assessment of school-based management practices.* Pasig City: Technical Working Group, Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA).

Di Gropello, E. (2006). Comparative analysis of school-based management in Central America. World Bank Working Paper Number 72. Washington DC: World Bank.

Fullan, M. & Watson, N. (1999). School-based management: reconceptualizing to improve learning outcomes. Final paper prepared for The World Bank: *"Improving Learning Outcomes in the Caribbean"*. Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.

Gibton, D. & Goldring, E. (2001). The role of legislation in educational decentralization: the case of Israel and Britain. *Peabody Journal of Education*, *Vol. 76, No. ¾.*

Hanson, M. (1997). Educational decentralization: issues and challenges. Santiago, Chile: Program to Promote Educational Reform.

Human Development Network. (2010). In search of a human face.

Kubick, K. (1998). School-based management. *ERIC Digest Series Number EA33*.

Licuanan, P. B. (1995). *High performing schools: a comparative study of high-performing and low-performing elementary schools.* Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University.

Lugaz, C. (2004). Barriers to decentralization: examples from West Africa. *UNESCO International Institute for Education Planning*, 22 (4), 4-5.

Luz, J. M. (2009). The challenge of governance in a large bureaucracy (Department of Education): linking governance to performance in an under-performing sector. *Philippine HDN (Human Development Network) Report 2008-09*.

Medium Term Philippine Development Plan 2004-2005. (2005).

Naisbitt, J. & Aburdene, P. (1990). *Megatrends 2000*. New York: Avon Books.

Oswald, L. J. (1995). School-based management. *ERIC Digest, Number 99*.

Philippine Constitution. (1987).

Philippine Human Development Report. (2008/2009).

Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) Policy Notes. (2009).

Republic Act 7160 or The Local Government Code of the Philippines. (1991).

Republic Act 9155 or The Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001. (2001).

Santibañez, L. (2006). School-based management effects on educational outcomes: a literature review and assessment of the evidence base. Mexico City: Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas A. C. (CIDE).

World Bank. (2007). What is school-based management. Washington, DC.: Education, Human Development Network.

Yamauchi, F. & Liu, Y. (2011). School quality, labor market imbalance and the investment in human capital: evidence from a school intervention in the Philippines. Quezon City: Philippine Institute for Development Studies.

_____. (2004). Decentralization – can it improve schools?. *International Institute for Educational Newsletter*, *Vol. XXII, No. 4, October-December 2004*.

_____. (2007). Decentralization of school management: ideas from abroad. *Montreal Economic Institute, Education Series*.