

# Leading Schools: Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Leadership in Public Elementary School-Based Management

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**Abstract:** This study explored the challenges and opportunities in implementing sustainable leadership practices within School-Based Management (SBM) in public elementary schools. The research encompassed all 18 public elementary schools across three districts. Data were collected from 18 school heads and 160 teachers using a combination of sampling techniques. Stratified random sampling ensured a representative sample of teachers, while purposive sampling involved all school heads due to their specific roles. Cochran's formula determined teacher sample size. Based on the result of the study, while teachers appreciated SBM's role in fostering leadership development, they reported a lack of guidance and recognition. Similarly, school principals acknowledged the potential for broader stakeholder involvement but faced challenges with limited resources and motivating teachers. The findings highlighted both opportunities and challenges in navigating effective leadership within SBM. The study recommends several strategies to address these challenges and capitalize on the identified opportunities. These include allocating resources strategically, providing targeted support for teachers, fostering stakeholder engagement, implementing leadership training programs, and offering appropriate recognition for school heads. By creating a more supportive environment, schools can empower leaders and teachers, ultimately contributing to a more positive learning experience for students.

**Index Terms-:** Challenges, Leadership Practices, School Based Management, Sustainable Leadership

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education (DepEd) recognizes the crucial role of School Leadership in ensuring the quality of basic education (DepEd Order No. 24, s. 2020). Sustainable leadership practices, which emphasize long-term viability and effectiveness, are essential for fostering a thriving learning environment (DepEd Order No. 34, s. 2018). These practices are linked to the success of School-Based Management (SBM), where decision-making is made by the unique context and needs of each school.

Sustainable leadership practices create an avenue for School-Based Management to success. By fostering a culture of continuous improvement and empowering stakeholders at the school level, leaders empower School Improvement Planning Teams (SIPT) to develop and implement contextually-relevant School Improvement Plans (SIPs) (DepEd Order No. 35, s. 2018). According to Liao( 2022), a well-executed SBM, where decision-making is exercised by the school leaders and its unique way of implementing, provides a supportive ecosystem for leaders to implement and sustain their leadership practices( This relationship between sustainable leadership and SBM holds immense potential for public elementary schools.

Public elementary schools in the Philippines are increasingly relying on School-Based Management (SBM) to create effective learning environments that meet the specific needs of their students and communities (Department of Education, Philippines, 2018). While scholars have explored the theories behind sustainable leadership and its potential impact on educational outcomes (Nuridin et al.,

2022), there's less knowledge about the real-world challenges and opportunities faced by school leaders implementing SBM. Understanding these challenges and opportunities is key to figuring out how to support leadership practices that ensure SBM remains effective over time.

This study fills this gap by examining the experiences of school leaders in Nasipit as they direct SBM. By exploring the difficulties and opportunities they encounter, the research aimed to inform the academic community on how these factors influence the development and lasting success of strong leadership practices within the SBM framework. This research provides valuable insights for educational policymakers and school leaders. The data gathered out from this investigation can help the stakeholders create a supportive environment for SBM implementation and shape a more responsive educational experience for all students in Nasipit public elementary schools.

## II RESEARCH ELABORATIONS

The study was anchored on transformational leadership, a theory developed by James MacGregor Burns and Bernard M. Bass (originally proposed by James V. Downton in 1973). This approach emphasizes leaders who inspire and motivate their teams, a vital quality for educational reform. Transformational leaders act as role models, encourage innovation, and bridge the gap between individual and school goals. This style aligns well with SBM, where school heads are expected to be visionary leaders who build a forward-thinking school culture.

Moreover, this research also considers Situational Leadership, a theory by Paul Hersey and Kenneth H. Blanchard (Hersey & Blanchard, 2020). This approach highlights that effective leadership needs to adapt to different situations (Cherry, K., 2023). This flexibility is essential in the dynamic world of education, where the needs of students, staff, and the community constantly evolve. By adapting their leadership style, school heads can effectively manage the diverse needs of their schools and communities – a key aspect of successful SBM implementation.

Furthermore, it incorporates Rensis Likert's Participative Leadership Theory, further developed by J. Gregory Shonk (2023). This approach encourages involving all team members in decision-making. This collaborative style aligns with the decentralized nature of SBM, which promotes community involvement and ensures decisions reflect the needs of all stakeholders. It aims to understand how school heads can combine these styles to navigate the complexities of SBM, through exploring their opportunities and challenges encountered and SBM frontliners, refining educational delivery and outcomes. These insights can equip the SBM implementers with strategies to foster improved and more effective educational environments, ultimately contributing to sustainable development by fostering sustainable leadership.

School-Based Management (SBM) offers exciting opportunities but also presents challenges for school leaders. Combining Transformational, Situational, and Participative leadership styles allows leaders to leverage these opportunities and navigate the challenges. SBM can foster a positive and collaborative work environment where teachers feel empowered to develop leadership skills and pursue professional development. This, along with improved access to resources, can ultimately lead to stronger school performance and meet student needs more effectively. Furthermore, SBM encourages wider stakeholder participation, fostering a broader network within the community. Stronger collaboration with internal and external stakeholders can benefit school planning, program implementation, and project monitoring.

However, challenges exist, leaders may struggle with excessive paperwork, inadequate resources, and missing school documents. Additionally, teachers might feel unsupported due to limited professional development, a lack of resources, and inadequate supervision. These challenges highlight the need for sustainable leadership practices. By employing the leadership styles discussed earlier, school leaders addressed these challenges and capitalize on the opportunities of SBM. Transformational leadership can inspire staff to take ownership, situational leadership allows for targeted support, and participative leadership fosters teacher involvement. Through sustainable leadership, school leaders created a more supportive environment for both leaders and staff, ultimately leading to a more effective SBM system, a skilled future workforce, and a positive learning environment.



Figure 1. Research Flow of the Study

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive-quantitative approach to examine the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing sustainable leadership practices in School-Based Management (SBM) across public elementary schools. The research encompassed all 18 public elementary schools within three districts of Nasipit, Agusan del Norte. Data were collected from 18 school heads and 160 teachers selected through a combination of sampling techniques. Stratified random sampling ensured a representative sample of teachers across the districts, while purposive sampling was used to select all school heads due to their specific roles and limited number. Teacher participation was calculated using Cochran's formula to ensure a representative sample size.

To gauge the challenges and opportunities specific to this context in leadership and SBM practices, the researchers developed a survey instrument using Likert scale questions. This instrument underwent rigorous content validity and reliability testing. Content validity was established through consultations with educational experts, and reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. To further refine the instrument and ensure clarity, a pilot study was conducted with principals and teachers from a nearby district outside Nasipit.

Following the acquisition of necessary permissions from school authorities, standardized questionnaires, including the researcher-developed instrument, were distributed to collect data. Analysis of the data involved various statistical methods, including frequency and percentage distributions, mean scores. These methods were used to explore the relationships and impacts of different variables on SBM practices. Mean scores were specifically employed to calculate the central tendency of the data.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 provides the mean distribution of challenges encountered by teachers in sustainable leadership practices during the implementation of School-Based Management (SBM) in public elementary schools within the Municipality of Nasipit, Agusan del Norte. The table focuses on specific indicators related to these challenges within the SBM context. Each indicator is accompanied by a mean score, a description of the challenge, and an interpretation of its impact on the leadership practices of school heads. Additionally, a weighted mean score for all indicators is provided, along with an interpretation of its overall impact.

The table's findings portray teachers' challenges regarding sustainable leadership practices within the school-Based Management (SBM) framework in Nasipit's public elementary schools and offer insightful implications. The mean scores for individual challenge indicators, ranging from 2.80 to 3.88, with two notably in the "Challenging" category, highlight specific areas of concern. These include the "Lack of supervision in the implementation of school programs, projects and activities" and "Lack of recognition of accomplishment done." School leaders consider such challenges as significant in influencing their leadership practices.

The overall weighted mean of 3.29, categorized as "Neutral," suggests that the present challenges are neither seen as excessively hindering nor as substantial avenues for improvement. This balanced view implies a moderate impact of these challenges on the effectiveness of leadership practices within the SBM context. Supporting this finding, a recent study in educational leadership further elucidates the implications of such challenges. According to Cuesta (2019), challenges like inadequate supervision and lack of recognition can diminish school leaders' motivation and engagement. The success of educational initiatives and the overall climate of a school setting can be affected by several factors. A recent study argues that to enhance the effectiveness of school leadership and drive positive outcomes, it is crucial to have supportive structures and recognition mechanisms in place. The study emphasizes that addressing these challenges is essential for fostering a conducive environment for educational leadership that is both sustainable and impactful. The study suggests that school leadership is a critical factor in creating a positive and nurturing environment for students. In order to achieve this, it is important to have effective leadership structures that provide support and recognition to school leaders.

**Table 1.** Mean Distribution of the challenges encountered by the teachers in sustainable leadership practices in the implementation of School – Based Management in public elementary schools of the Municipality of Nasipit, Agusan del Norte

Indicators	Mean	Description	Interpretation
1. Too much school ancillaries and paper works	2.81	Neutral	The statement neither represents a challenge or opportunities in the leadership practices of your school head)
2. Lack of support to teachers	3.30	Neutral	The statement neither represents a challenge or opportunities in the leadership practices of your school head)
3. Inadequate resources for teachers to use.	2.80	Neutral	The statement neither represents a challenge or opportunities in the leadership practices of your school head)
4. Lack of supervision in the implementation of school programs, projects and activities.	3.64	Challenging	The statement represents a noticeable challenge in the leadership practices of your school head.
5. Lack of recognition of accomplishment done.	3.88	Challenging	The statement represents a noticeable challenge in the leadership practices of your school head.
<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>3.29</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	The statement neither represents a challenge or opportunities in the leadership practices of your school head)

Legend: 4.50 – 5.00 – Very Challenging; 3.50 – 4.49 – Challenging; 2.50 – 3.49 – Neutral; 1.50 – 2.49 – Promising; 1.00 – 1.49 – Very Promising

Table 2 presents the distribution of challenges school heads face in implementing School-Based Management (SBM) for sustainable leadership practices in the Municipality of Nasipit, Agusan del Norte public elementary schools. The table includes specific indicators related to these challenges within the SBM context.

**Table 2** Mean Distribution of the challenges encountered by school heads in sustainable leadership practices in the implementation of School – Based Management in public elementary schools of the Municipality of Nasipit, Agusan del Norte

Indicators	Mean	Description	Interpretation
1. Lack of School Site Documents	2.61	Neutral	The statement neither represents a challenge or opportunities in leading the school.
2. Inadequate time to perform instructional leadership roles	1.83	Promising	The statement represents an opportunity or potential advantage in leading the school.
3. Insufficient resources for physical development of the school.	4.33	Challenging	The statement represents a noticeable challenge in leading the school.
4. Difficulty in mobilizing teachers to perform their duties and responsibilities.	3.50	Challenging	The statement represents a noticeable challenge in leading the school.

5. Difficulty in establishing a positive work environment and culture	3.67	Challenging	The statement represents a noticeable challenge in leading the school.
<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>3.19</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	The statement neither represents a challenge or opportunities in leading the school.

Legend: 4.50 – 5.00 – Very Challenging; 3.50 – 4.49 – Challenging; 2.50 – 3.49 – Neutral; 1.50 – 2.49 – Promising; 1.00 – 1.49 Very Promising

These results reveal a complex scenario in school leadership, characterized by challenges with varying implications and potential impacts. One significant obstacle identified is the need for more resources for the physical development of the school, which received a score of 4.33 and is considered challenging. This highlights the difficulty in providing a conducive learning environment due to resource constraints, which can negatively affect student performance and overall school effectiveness. On the other hand, the inadequate time for instructional leadership roles, scoring lower at 1.83 and viewed as promising, presents an opportunity for school heads. Despite time constraints, it implies the potential for school leaders to find innovative ways to fulfill their roles effectively through better time management or delegation.

The findings of the study by Gaspar (2022) suggest some important implications for school leadership. Firstly, schools must allocate resources strategically to balance physical infrastructure needs and instructional leadership. Secondly, school heads should adopt innovative leadership approaches to overcome time constraints effectively. Moreover, it is crucial to understand the spectrum of challenges, from promising to challenging, to have a holistic view of school leadership and enable more targeted and effective responses. The study found that schools that effectively manage their resources and time have higher levels of student achievement and staff satisfaction. Therefore, balancing resource allocation with innovative leadership practices is crucial to navigating leadership challenges and maximizing educational outcomes. This underscores the necessity for adaptive and strategic leadership in schools to enhance educational results amidst the complexities of resource and time constraints.

Table 3 presents the mean distribution of opportunities experienced by teachers in sustainable leadership practices during the implementation of School-Based Management (SBM) in all public elementary schools of the Municipality of Nasipit, Agusan del Norte. The table focuses on specific indicators related to these opportunities within the SBM context. Each indicator is accompanied by a mean score, a description of the opportunity, and an interpretation of its impact on the leadership practices of school heads. Additionally, a weighted mean score for all indicators is provided, along with an interpretation of its overall impact. The table highlights the opportunities that teachers perceive in relation to their sustainable leadership practices within the SBM framework. The mean scores for the individual opportunity indicators range from 4.04 to 4.56, with all indicators falling within the "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" range. This indicates that teachers generally perceive these opportunities as positive and supportive of their leadership practices within the context of SBM.

The data indicates that teachers strongly support the School-Based Management (SBM) framework to develop leadership skills. This is reflected in the high average score of 4.56, which equates to "Strongly Agree." It is clear that educators widely believe that the SBM framework is an effective way to empower them and enhance their leadership abilities. A recent study conducted by Martin in 2019 studied the effects of SBM practices. The study found that schools implementing SBM strategies significantly improved teacher engagement and leadership skills. Specifically, teachers in these schools reported feeling more empowered to make decisions, contribute to school governance, and improve their job satisfaction and professional growth.

This research supports the initial findings by demonstrating that the SBM framework is well-received by educators and contributes effectively to their professional development. The high level of agreement among teachers on the benefits of SBM, as shown by the weighted mean of 4.32 falling within the "Agree" range, indicates a positive and supportive environment for nurturing leadership skills. Such an environment is crucial for the sustainable development of educational leaders who can adapt to changing educational landscapes and drive continuous improvement in schools.

**Table 3** Mean Distribution of the opportunities experienced by the teachers in sustainable leadership practices in the implementation of School – Based Management in all public elementary schools of the Municipality of Nasipit, Agusan del Norte

Indicators	Mean	Description	Interpretation
1. Building positive work environment.	4.37	Agree	Agree with the statement.
2. Empowerment of teachers to develop leadership skills.	4.56	Strongly agree	Completely agree with the statement
3. Supports professional development of teachers.	4.43	Agree	Agree with the statement.
4. Improves school performance	4.04	Agree	Agree with the statement.
5. Provides teacher’s needs.	4.20	Agree	Agree with the statement.
<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>4.32</b>	<b>Agree</b>	Agree with the statement.

Legend: 4.50 – 5.00 – Strongly agree; 3.50 – 4.49 – Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 – Neutral; 1.50 – 2.49 – Disagree; 1.00 – 1.49 – Strongly disagree

The overall weighted mean for all the opportunity indicators combined is 4.32, for all evaluated opportunity indicators, which falls within the "Agree" category according to the provided legend, strongly suggests that teachers unanimously recognize the presence of opportunities that aid in the development and enhancement of their sustainable leadership skills within the school-Based Management (SBM) framework. This finding is significant in highlighting the SBM framework's effectiveness in fostering leadership qualities among educators.

It underlines the importance of continuous professional development programs tailored to reinforce these skills, ensuring that teachers are well-equipped to adapt to evolving educational challenges. Further supporting this notion, recent studies like those by Chen et al. in 2023 have demonstrated a significant improvement in leadership competencies and school performance metrics when educators participate in SBM-related development programs. Additionally, a 2023 survey by the National Education Association revealed that educators who feel supported in their leadership roles are more likely to remain in the profession and positively contribute to school culture and student success.

**Table 4** Mean Distribution of the opportunities experienced by school heads in sustainable leadership practices in the implementation of School – Based Management in public elementary schools of the Municipality of Nasipit, Agusan del Norte

INDICATORS	Mean	Description	Interpretation
1. Maximized Participation of stakeholders in the school activities.	3.72	Agree	Agree with the statement.
2. Promote Professional development through trainings and seminars and technical assistance extended.	3.11	Neutral	Neither agree nor disagree with the statement.
3. Appropriate benefits for the school heads are enjoyed	3.94	Agree	Agree with the statement.
4. Strengthen collaboration of internal and external stakeholders in planning, implementing and monitoring of projects	3.94	Agree	Agree with the statement.
5. Broaden networking with people at work and in the community.	4.11	Agree	Agree with the statement.
<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>3.77</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Agree with the statement.</b>

Legend: 4.50 – 5.00 – Strongly agree; 3.50 – 4.49 – Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 – Neutral; 1.50 – 2.49 – Disagree; 1.00 – 1.49 – Strongly disagree

The analysis indicates that most school leaders agree on involving various stakeholders in school activities. This is demonstrated by a high mean score of 3.72, suggesting successful integration of stakeholders in the School-Based Management (SBM) process. However, aspects related to professional development, such as training and technical assistance, only received a neutral mean score of 3.11. This points to an area that may require additional attention and improvement. Notably, the strong agreement (mean score of 3.94) on the benefits school leaders receive underscores the value placed on incentivizing leadership roles. These findings highlight the need for a balanced focus on stakeholder engagement, professional development, and leadership incentives in SBM.

According to a recent study by Napitupulu (2022), effective SBM heavily relies on active stakeholder participation. However, the study identified gaps in professional development initiatives. The research suggests that training and development programs need to be more structured. This aligns with the areas for improvement identified in the current analysis and highlights a broader trend in educational management. The trend emphasizes balancing stakeholder engagement, professional development, and leadership benefits to enhance educational outcomes.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing sustainable leadership practices in School-Based Management (SBM) across public elementary schools in Nasipit, Agusan del Norte. Even though teachers valued SBM for leadership development, they lacked supervision and recognition. Principals saw opportunities for stakeholder involvement but struggled with limited resources and teacher motivation. Overall, sustainable leadership in SBM requires navigating complexities. Addressing these challenges and capitalizing on opportunities can create a more supportive environment for effective leadership within SBM. The school may (1) allocate resources strategically to address both physical development needs and support instructional leadership roles. (2) Provide adequate supervision, recognition programs, and targeted professional development opportunities to empower teachers

and enhance leadership skills. (3) Foster active participation from stakeholders in school activities while ensuring effective communication and collaboration. (4) Implement structured training programs to equip school heads with the necessary skills to navigate challenges and lead effectively. (5) Offer appropriate benefits and recognition programs to acknowledge the value of leadership roles and motivate school heads.

By addressing these recommendations, schools can leverage the opportunities presented by SBM and create a more supportive environment for sustainable leadership practices. This, in turn, can lead to a more engaged teaching staff, improved school performance, and ultimately, a positive impact on student success

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