

Lived Realities of Stakeholder Engagement in School Based Management Validation: A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Inquiry

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Abstract

This study examines the lived experiences of stakeholders involved in School-Based Management (SBM) validation in public schools under the Department of Education Region 10, Philippines. Employing hermeneutic phenomenology, in-depth interviews were conducted with school heads, teachers, student leaders, Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) members, and community partners to explore challenges and opportunities in engagement. Participants reported difficulties such as retrieving required documents, multitasking, and limited resources, which often led to stress and reduced instructional focus. Despite these barriers, engagement fostered morale, accountability, collaboration, and confidence in decision-making. Guided by Donelson's Behavioral Management Theory, the study interprets how stakeholders ascribe meaning to their roles within socio-cultural and institutional contexts. Findings indicate that SBM validation serves as a transformative process, promoting professional growth, participatory governance, and school development. The study highlights the importance of supportive systems, reflective practices, and streamlined procedures to enhance meaningful stakeholder participation.

Keywords: School-Based Management, Stakeholder Engagement, Validation, Hermeneutic Phenomenology, Educational Leadership and Philippines

1. Introduction

School-Based Management (SBM) in the Philippines represents a strategic effort to decentralize educational governance and empower schools and communities to make locally relevant decisions (Department of Education [DepEd], 2012). Since its institutionalization, SBM has sought to enhance accountability, transparency, and participatory governance, ensuring that stakeholders teachers, school heads, students, parents, and community partners—actively contribute to school improvement [1].

Despite its intentions, SBM implementation across regions is uneven. Schools in DepEd Region 10, comprising Northern Mindanao, face challenges such as resource limitations, logistical hurdles, high student-to-teacher ratios, and diverse cultural contexts. The SBM validation process, which involves verifying compliance with standards, reviewing learner achievement, and assessing school management practices, can be both administratively complex and emotionally taxing for stakeholders. Effective stakeholder engagement in SBM validation is crucial. Research indicates that participatory leadership, collective efficacy, and shared decision-making improve educational outcomes. Yet, little is known about the lived experiences of stakeholders as they navigate this process. This study addresses that gap using hermeneutic

phenomenology to interpret how participants understand, experience, and derive meaning from SBM validation. Drawing on Donelson's Behavioral Management Theory (2011), the study emphasizes accountability, ownership, and responsible engagement. By examining the challenges and opportunities stakeholders encounter, the research seeks to provide practical recommendations to improve participation, promote professional growth, and strengthen school governance [2-4].

2. Research Aim and Objectives

The study aims to explore and interpret the lived experiences of stakeholders participating in SBM validation in public schools in DepEd Region 10. The objectives are:

Identify barriers and challenges stakeholders face during SBM validation.

Examine opportunities and positive outcomes that arise from active engagement.

Interpret how stakeholders make meaning of their roles within institutional, socio-cultural, and educational contexts. Offer practical recommendations to enhance stakeholder engagement and participatory governance.

3. Literature Review

3.1. School-Based Management in the Philippine Context

SBM has been widely implemented as part of decentralization reforms in the Philippines. Its goal is to empower school communities to make decisions that respond to local needs, improving accountability and educational outcomes (DepEd, 2012). Under SBM, school heads and teachers are expected to assume leadership roles, while parents and community partners are included in governance structures, fostering participatory decision-making. Studies have shown that SBM implementation improves school performance when stakeholders are genuinely engaged. However, challenges persist, particularly in rural or under-resourced schools, where administrative burdens, lack of training, and limited resources hinder meaningful participation [5-8].

3.2. Stakeholder Engagement and Participation

Stakeholder engagement involves active participation, collaboration, and shared decision-making. In the educational context, stakeholders include teachers, school leaders, students, parents, and community partners. Effective engagement has been linked to increased accountability, morale, and trust. However, overburdened stakeholders, conflicting responsibilities, and unclear procedural requirements often reduce engagement quality. Globally, participatory school governance has been shown to improve teacher commitment and student outcomes when administrative structures are flexible and supportive. In the Philippines, stakeholder engagement in SBM is often procedural, focusing on compliance rather than developmental reflection, highlighting the need for human-centered approaches [9,10].

3.4. Behavioral Management Theory and Educational Context

Donelson's Behavioral Management Theory emphasizes structured group participation, accountability, and deliberate role engagement. Applying this theory to SBM, stakeholders' active participation, responsibility, and cooperative behavior can strengthen school governance, encourage reflective practices, and promote professional growth [11].

3.5. Hermeneutic Phenomenology in Educational Research

Hermeneutic phenomenology allows researchers to interpret participants' lived experiences within social, historical, and cultural contexts (van Manen, 1990). This approach is particularly suited to exploring how stakeholders ascribe meaning to their involvement in SBM validation, capturing both challenges and transformative outcomes.

3.6. Research Gap

While previous studies have examined SBM compliance and leadership models, few explore stakeholders' interpretive experiences in depth. Understanding these experiences is essential for refining policies, improving participation, and promoting reflective school practices.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological design to capture the lived experiences of SBM stakeholders. This approach allows in-depth exploration of subjective experiences and interpretations within institutional and socio-cultural contexts [10].

4.2. Locale of the Study

Research was conducted in public elementary and secondary schools across DepEd Region 10, representing a mix of urban, semi-urban, and rural schools. Schools were selected based on their participation in SBM validation and diversity in resource availability, student population, and community involvement.

4.3. Participants

Purposive sampling identified stakeholders involved in SBM validation, including school heads overseeing administrative and SBM processes, teachers balancing classroom duties and validation tasks, student leaders supporting activities, PTA members representing parent and community perspectives, and community partners offering external insights. Their combined experiences highlighted both challenges and opportunities, emphasizing collaboration, accountability, and professional growth. The diverse roles reflect the participatory nature of SBM validation, demonstrating the value of inclusive engagement in school governance and fostering reflective, supportive, and collaborative school practices. Participants were selected for their direct involvement in SBM validation and ability to articulate experiences and reflections.

4.4. Research Instruments

A semi-structured interview guide was developed and validated by experts in educational leadership and qualitative research. The guide included open-ended questions on:

1. Experiences and emotions during SBM validation.
2. Challenges encountered.
3. Opportunities and benefits from engagement.
4. Reflections on personal and institutional growth.

Interviews were conducted in person or online, lasting 45-60 minutes, audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim.

4.5. Data Collection Procedure

Data collection followed ethical protocols, including informed consent and confidentiality. Participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect identity. Reflexivity was practiced, with researchers maintaining field notes and reflective journals to acknowledge biases.

4.6. Data Analysis

Hermeneutic phenomenology guided iterative analysis. Using van Manen's (1990) approach:

- Significant statements were highlighted.
- Meanings were formulated.
- Emergent themes were clustered.

Member-checking was conducted to validate interpretations.

4.7. Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the university research ethics committee. Participation was voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any time. Data were securely stored and anonymized to ensure privacy.

5. Results

The results capture barriers, challenges, opportunities, and transformative experiences described by participants.

5.1. Barriers to Engagement

5.1.1. Document Compliance Challenges

Stakeholders reported difficulties retrieving and preparing Means of Verification (MOVs), citing lost files, incomplete documentation, or lack of awareness of new requirements. Teachers described spending hours managing administrative tasks rather than instructional duties:

“Sometimes, instead of teaching, I spend the whole day sorting old files and trying to locate photos for the MOVs.” (Teacher A)

5.1.2. Multitasking and Role Overload

Teachers and student leaders often juggled multiple responsibilities, reducing their engagement quality:

“I helped the teachers, which is why I was not able to participate in our class.” (Student Leader B)

5.1.3. Resource Limitations

Schools in remote areas lacked proper facilities, internet connectivity, and logistical support, affecting the validation process:

“We had to make photocopies manually because the printer was broken, and the internet was slow. It took a lot of extra effort.” (Teacher C)

5.2. Opportunities and Positive Outcomes

5.2.1. Morale and Sense of Belonging

Participation boosted pride and community spirit:

“Being part of the validation made me feel that I am contributing to something bigger than myself.” (PTA Member D)

5.2.3. Accountability and Responsibility

Stakeholders developed ownership of tasks, strengthening school improvement initiatives:

“I realized that my role affects not just my classroom but the whole school.” (Teacher E)

5.2.4. Collaboration and Teamwork

Coordination among stakeholders fostered trust, strengthened relationships, and increased collective efficacy:

“Working with teachers, students, and parents showed me how much we can accomplish when we work together.” (School Head F)

5.2.5. Assessment of Learner Achievement

Validation activities prompted stakeholders to review academic performance, aligning practices with student

outcomes:

“Going through learner data helped me understand where we need to improve in teaching strategies.” (Teacher G)

5.2.5. Policymaking Participation

Stakeholders gained confidence in contributing to discussions influencing school policies:

“I felt my opinions mattered when decisions about classroom and school programs were discussed.” (Community Partner H)

6. Discussion

6.1. Interpretation of Findings

The study highlights that SBM validation is both a challenging and transformative process. While participants faced barriers such as administrative overload, multitasking, and resource limitations, these challenges often became opportunities for growth. Stakeholders reported increased accountability, confidence, teamwork, and reflective thinking, aligning with Donelson’s Behavioral Management Theory emphasizing deliberate engagement and responsibility. The results also underscore the human-centered nature of SBM validation. The emotional and interpretive experiences of stakeholder’s influence participation quality and outcomes. Validation is not merely an administrative compliance exercise but a reflective process that strengthens professional growth, collaboration, and school development.

6.2. Comparison with Literature

Consistent with previous studies participatory governance promotes collective efficacy and professional engagement. However, the study adds a humanized perspective, capturing how stakeholders interpret challenges as opportunities for learning and development.

6.3. Gaps and Opportunities

Despite positive outcomes, gaps persist in support systems, training, and clarity of requirements. Stakeholders in remote schools experienced disproportionate administrative burdens, suggesting the need for context-sensitive policy adjustments and resource allocation.

7. Conclusion

SBM validation is a deeply interpretive and human-centered process. Stakeholders experience barriers that challenge time, resources, and focus. Yet, engagement fosters responsibility, collaboration, professional growth, and participatory governance. Recognition of these experiences is essential for strengthening SBM implementation in diverse contexts.

Recommendations

- **Strengthen Support Systems:** Provide training and guidance on document management, MOV preparation, and policy updates.
- **Promote Reflective Practices:** Include structured dialogues and reflection sessions during SBM activities.
- **Streamline MOV Requirements:** Simplify documentation to align with school realities and resource availability.

- **Encourage Collaboration:** Foster teamwork and shared responsibility among stakeholders.
- **Institutionalize Feedback Mechanisms:** Regular forums to capture diverse stakeholder voices for continuous improvement.



Figure 1: JL4D Banner

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