



Implementation of school-based management in improving early childhood education quality standards

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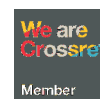
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Implementation of school-based management in improving early childhood education quality standards

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ABSTRACT

This research addresses the challenges in enhancing early childhood education (ECE) quality standards through the application of School-Based Management (SBM). Despite widespread recognition of the importance of SBM in educational settings, many schools, especially in early childhood education, struggle to meet established quality standards due to limited decision-making autonomy, inadequate leadership, and insufficient community involvement. The research problem revolves around the gap in understanding how SBM can be effectively applied to improve ECE standards, particularly in decentralized school systems. The study aims to investigate the key factors influencing the successful implementation of SBM in early childhood education, focusing on leadership engagement, teacher involvement, community participation, and alignment with quality standards. Using a qualitative literature review approach, the analysis synthesizes data from academic articles, reports, and case studies published in the past decade. Key factors identified through thematic content analysis highlight the importance of decentralized decision-making in improving educational outcomes. The findings suggest that SBM can lead to measurable improvements in educational practices, resource allocation, and community engagement when implemented effectively. Specifically, leadership autonomy, teacher involvement in decision-making, and active community participation are critical drivers for enhancing ECE quality. These results provide actionable insights for policymakers and school administrators to tailor SBM implementation strategies, ensuring that they align with both local needs and established national and international quality standards. This study contributes to the academic understanding of SBM's role in early childhood education, offering practical recommendations for policy reforms and school management practices aimed at improving ECE quality through decentralization.

Keywords:

School-based management
Early childhood education
Quality standards
Teacher involvement
Community engagement
Decentralized education

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Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing focus on improving the quality of education at all levels, with particular emphasis on early childhood education (ECE), due to its pivotal role in shaping lifelong learning (Ydo, 2022). However, despite global recognition of its significance, many early childhood education institutions continue to face challenges in meeting established quality standards. These challenges include inadequate resources, inconsistent teaching practices, and a lack of effective leadership (Chacha, 2022). To address these issues, School-Based Management (SBM), a decentralized

governance model, has emerged as a promising solution. SBM seeks to empower educators, administrators, and local communities by transferring decision-making authority from central education authorities to individual schools (Swargiary, 2024). By decentralizing decision-making, SBM enables schools to tailor strategies that best meet the unique needs of their students and communities, thus improving educational outcomes (Elyana & Das, 2022). However, despite its recognized benefits in primary and secondary education, SBM's effectiveness in the context of early childhood education remains underexplored.

The research problem addressed by this study is the lack of empirical evidence on the practical implementation of SBM in early childhood education and its direct impact on quality standards. While SBM has been extensively studied in primary and secondary education, its application in early childhood settings remains limited. This gap is particularly concerning given the unique developmental needs of young children, which require specialized educational strategies (Wang & Ho, 2020). This research aims to explore how SBM can be implemented effectively in early childhood education to address the specific challenges faced by these institutions and to improve educational practices in this context.

The objectives of this study are to critically assess the role of decentralized decision-making in enhancing the quality of education in early childhood settings. Specifically, this research focuses on how the delegation of decision-making power influences educational practices, teacher involvement, community participation, and leadership in early childhood education. By narrowing the scope to the delegation of authority within SBM, this study aims to provide a focused analysis that avoids the overly broad discussions present in previous research.

Previous studies have demonstrated the positive effects of SBM in primary and secondary education, particularly in areas such as student achievement, teacher performance, and school management (Wang & Ho, 2020). However, there is limited research on SBM's impact in early childhood education, where developmental needs require tailored approaches. This study contributes to filling this gap by providing empirical evidence on SBM's application in early childhood education and its role in enhancing quality standards.

The findings of this research are significant for policymakers, school administrators, and educators, offering insights into how SBM can be implemented in early childhood education to improve quality standards. The results may provide guidance for future policy reforms aimed at addressing the unique needs of early childhood education institutions. In this study, we discuss the theoretical framework of SBM, the methods used to assess its impact, and the key findings that can guide the improvement of early childhood education through SBM.

This study employs a qualitative research approach, including interviews with key stakeholders such as school leaders, teachers, and parents, as well as surveys and an analysis of educational outcomes in SBM-implemented schools (Jeini, 2021). The research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how SBM can be adapted to meet the challenges of early childhood education and its potential for improving educational outcomes in this sector.

School-Based Management (SBM)

School-Based Management (SBM) is a decentralized governance model that aims to improve the quality of education by transferring decision-making authority from central education authorities to individual schools (Berhanu, 2023). This model empowers school leaders, teachers, and local communities to make decisions that directly affect the educational process, including curriculum design, budgeting, staffing, and resource allocation (Khanal & Guha, 2023). The core idea of SBM is that schools, being closer to the students and communities they serve, are in a better position to make decisions that reflect local needs and preferences (Neupane et al., 2022). This approach is rooted in the belief that decentralizing power enhances accountability and responsiveness, and provides schools with the autonomy to address their unique challenges and opportunities (Kameshwara et al., 2024).

Despite the clear advantages of SBM, its implementation remains complex and often context-dependent. Within the realm of early childhood education, SBM offers the flexibility to tailor educational approaches to young children's developmental needs, ensuring that teaching methods, learning environments, and school activities align with the specific needs of early learners (Jonker et al., 2020). However, its success heavily depends on the commitment and capabilities of school leaders, and the active participation of the school community in decision-making processes (Dian, D., et al., 2022). Furthermore, SBM can only be truly effective when there is adequate training for teachers and leaders, as well as support from local communities.

Studies have shown that SBM can enhance teacher engagement, increase parental involvement, and improve the overall quality of educational services when implemented effectively (Manuel et al., 2024). Yet, challenges persist, particularly in early childhood settings where additional resources are required to accommodate the developmental needs of young children. Therefore, this study will examine how SBM influences the quality of early childhood education, focusing on its impact on leadership, teacher involvement, and community participation. The study will specifically address how the delegation of decision-making authority in SBM affects quality standards, with an emphasis on local adaptation and implementation in early childhood settings.

Standards for Quality in Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education (ECE) plays a critical role in influencing the cognitive, emotional, and social growth of young children during their formative years (Rumbidzai & Achebe, 2023). The establishment of quality standards in ECE ensures that children receive a solid foundation that supports their lifelong learning and well-being (Ramey & Ramey, 2023). These standards typically encompass a variety of dimensions, such as curriculum content, teaching practices, educator qualifications, child safety, and learning outcomes (OECD, 2017). Ensuring these standards are met is crucial not only for children's development but also for ensuring equity and inclusion, as they help provide all children, regardless of their background, with access to high-quality learning experiences.

One of the most widely adopted frameworks for assessing and ensuring ECE quality is the accreditation system of the National Association for Early Childhood Education (NAEYC), which sets forth rigorous standards for early childhood programs (Whitaker et al., 2022). These standards focus on key areas, including the appropriateness of teaching strategies, the learning environment, health and safety practices, and the ongoing professional development of educators. Research has shown that ECE programs meeting these standards are more likely to foster positive developmental outcomes in children, particularly in areas such as language development, cognitive skills, and social-emotional competencies (Rankin et al., 2022).

In many countries, government and educational institutions collaborate to create national ECE standards that align with global best practices while also considering the cultural and social contexts of the regions in which they are implemented (Sisson et al., 2020). These efforts often include localized adaptations, ensuring that educational strategies are culturally relevant and developmentally appropriate.

In the context of SBM, improving the quality of early childhood education through the application of these standards becomes a shared responsibility among school leaders, teachers, and communities (Amos et al., 2022). SBM provides schools with the flexibility to adapt these standards to local needs, enhancing the effectiveness of ECE programs (Snyder, 2024). Studies suggest that when SBM is implemented with a clear focus on maintaining high-quality standards, schools can significantly improve educational outcomes for young learners (Berhanu, 2023). By incorporating these quality standards into the SBM framework, schools can create an environment that not only responds to local needs but also aligns with national and international benchmarks for early childhood education.

Methods

This research adopts a qualitative approach using a Literature Review method to explore the implementation of School-Based Management (SBM) in improving early childhood education quality

standards (Ginting et al., 2025). The primary objective is to synthesize existing research, theories, and case studies related to SBM and preschool education quality standards, with a focus on understanding the relationship between these two concepts. The literature review method was selected due to the nature of the study, which seeks to understand the impact of SBM on early childhood education by analyzing existing scholarly works, rather than conducting direct empirical experiments (Kirby et al., 2021).

The data sources for this study were selected from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and reports (Teesside, 2021). These sources were chosen based on their relevance to SBM in early childhood education and quality standards established across various countries (Andreella et al., 2024). A systematic search was conducted using multiple academic databases, including Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ScienceDirect, with key search terms such as "School-Based Management," "early childhood education quality standards," "education decentralization," and "early childhood development" (Van de Kuilen et al., 2023). Articles published between 2013 and 2023 were prioritized to include the most current findings, ensuring relevance and up-to-date information.

In total, X number of documents were identified during the initial search, and inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to narrow down the selection. Studies were included if they focused on SBM implementation in educational settings (particularly in early childhood education) and provided insights into quality standards. Excluded studies were those not related to the topic or those published in languages other than English. Duplicates were removed during the screening process, and the final selection of documents was reviewed based on the relevance to the research objectives.

Search Process and Protocol

The search protocol was designed to ensure systematic and reproducible results. The initial search terms were combined using logical operators (AND, OR) to capture a wide range of relevant articles. The process involved several stages, including: (1) Initial Search: Conducted using key terms to gather a broad pool of articles; (2) Screening: Applied inclusion and exclusion criteria to filter relevant studies; (3) Data Extraction: Relevant data from selected articles were extracted based on themes related to SBM implementation and quality standards in early childhood education; (4) Duplicate Removal: Any duplicates identified across databases were removed.

Flow diagrams documenting this search process, including the number of documents screened, included, and excluded, will be provided in the supplementary materials for transparency.

Data Analysis and Thematic Synthesis

Thematic content analysis was employed to analyze the collected data. This method involves recognizing, examining, and documenting recurring patterns (themes) within the literature. The themes were generated inductively from the literature, focusing on key aspects such as the role of school leadership, teacher involvement, community engagement, and how these elements influence the quality standards in early childhood education. Each theme was critically evaluated to assess the effectiveness of SBM in enhancing educational outcomes in early childhood settings.

The coding process was carried out manually in two stages: (1) Initial Coding: Identifying key concepts, terms, and phrases from the literature; (2) Theme Development: Organizing the identified codes into broader themes. To ensure the reliability of the coding process, inter-coder reliability checks were performed. Two independent researchers coded a subset of articles and compared results to ensure consistency. Any discrepancies between coders were resolved through discussion and a final consensus on the coding structure.

Reflexivity and Researcher Positioning

As this study relies on secondary data, reflexivity was an essential aspect of ensuring transparency and credibility. The researchers acknowledge that their prior knowledge and assumptions about SBM and early childhood education may influence the synthesis and interpretation of findings. To mitigate potential bias, the researchers maintained an open and iterative process during data analysis, engaging in ongoing discussions about the themes and interpretation of the results.

Validity and Limitations

The reliability and validity of the findings were ensured by selecting studies from reputable, peer-reviewed sources. However, several limitations should be noted: (1) Secondary Data: This study only relies on secondary data, which limits the ability to draw definitive causal conclusions about the effectiveness of SBM. The findings should, therefore, be interpreted as exploratory rather than conclusive; (2) Generalizability: The focus on literature from the last decade means that the findings may not fully represent historical perspectives on SBM or its implementation in earlier contexts. Additionally, the findings may not be fully generalizable across all regions, given differences in local educational policies and practices; (3) Causal Claims: Since the research is based on a literature synthesis, causal claims are presented with caution. The research suggests correlations and relationships, but primary data (e.g., longitudinal studies or natural experiments) would be required for stronger empirical evidence on the causal impact of SBM on early childhood education quality standards.

Suggestions for Future Research

Given the limitations of secondary data, future research could address these gaps by conducting primary empirical studies, including longitudinal studies or natural experiments, to provide stronger evidence on the causal effects of SBM on educational outcomes in early childhood education. Further research could also examine the specific challenges and successes of SBM implementation in various regions, which would provide a deeper understanding of its contextual applicability.

Results and Discussion

The findings from this literature review provide key insights into the role of School-Based Management (SBM) in improving early childhood education (ECE) quality standards (Anderson et al., 2023). The analysis indicates that SBM significantly contributes to the enhancement of education quality through various channels, including leadership engagement, teacher involvement, community participation, and alignment with established quality standards. The results of the reviewed studies underscore the importance of a balanced and localized approach to school management, particularly in the context of early childhood education, where developmental needs and environmental factors are critical (Neuman & Powers, 2021).

Major Findings

The review reveals that the effective implementation of SBM in early childhood education can result in several positive outcomes. **Leadership Engagement:** One of the most prominent findings is that SBM allows for greater autonomy and empowerment of school leaders. By decentralizing decision-making, school leaders can tailor educational strategies, improve resource allocation, and implement policies that best address the needs of the school community. Albadawi (2023) suggests that school leadership plays a central role in creating a vision for change and in motivating educators to achieve higher standards (Albadawi, 2023). This is particularly important in early childhood education, where leadership is directly tied to the establishment of a supportive learning environment and the fostering of a culture of collaboration.

Teacher Involvement: The literature indicates that active teacher participation in school management decisions is a key driver of improvement. Teachers who are involved in curriculum development, goal setting, and resource distribution demonstrate greater commitment to their roles, which translates into higher-quality teaching. According to Oppi and Eisenschmidt (2022), teacher leadership within SBM frameworks encourages professional growth and pedagogical innovation (Oppi & Eisenschmidt, 2022). This involvement fosters a sense of ownership, leading to more motivated educators and ultimately better educational outcomes for young children.

Community Engagement: Community involvement is another critical component of SBM in early childhood education. Engaging local communities, including parents, in the decision-making process ensures that educational practices are culturally relevant and responsive to the needs of the children. Oppi and Eisenschmidt (2022) emphasize that community engagement in school management

fosters a collaborative environment where educational practices are better aligned with local values and expectations (Oppi & Eisenschmidt, 2022). In early childhood education, this results in more inclusive programs that consider diverse cultural and familial backgrounds, which is crucial for the development of young children.

Curriculum Adaptation: SBM allows for greater flexibility in adapting the curriculum to meet the specific needs of students. In early childhood education, this flexibility is essential, as young children develop at different rates and have diverse learning styles. According to Merlin and Saliendrez (2024), SBM enables schools to implement curricula that are better aligned with the developmental needs of children, ensuring that learning experiences are both age-appropriate and engaging (Merlin & Saliendrez, 2024).

Resource Allocation: SBM enables schools to allocate resources more efficiently based on their specific needs, rather than relying on centralized directives. This results in better utilization of materials and staff, leading to improved educational practices. Swargiary (2024) highlights that decentralized management allows schools to prioritize resources where they are most needed, which can enhance the overall learning environment in early childhood education settings (Swargiary, 2024).

Quality Standards Alignment: Aligning SBM with national and international early childhood education standards, such as those set by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), is crucial for ensuring that improvements in school management lead to measurable educational outcomes. Cunningham et al. (2023) note that adherence to established quality standards, when coupled with SBM practices, leads to better developmental outcomes, including cognitive, social-emotional, and language development in young children (Cunningham et al., 2023).

Explanation of Findings and Importance

The findings from this literature review highlight the importance of SBM in enhancing the quality of early childhood education. The empowerment of school leaders, increased teacher involvement, and active community engagement all contribute to creating an educational environment that is more responsive to the needs of young children. This aligns with the work of Bendini and Devercelli, who emphasizes that high-quality early childhood education is fundamental to children's long-term success, and SBM can be a key mechanism in achieving that quality (Bendini & Devercelli, 2022). By allowing schools to adapt their approaches based on local needs and resources, SBM provides a tailored and inclusive approach that is particularly important in early childhood education, where individualized care and learning are paramount.

Moreover, the review shows that SBM supports the alignment of educational practices with established quality standards, which has been proven to lead to better developmental outcomes in young children. When SBM is implemented in conjunction with quality standards, schools are better positioned to provide a nurturing and effective learning environment. This finding suggests that policymakers and educators should focus on supporting SBM as a strategy for improving the quality of early childhood education.

Relation to Similar Studies

The results of this study align with previous research on SBM in primary and secondary education. For instance, studies by Isa et al. found that SBM positively impacts teacher performance, school management, and student achievement (Isa et al., 2020). The present study extends this body of knowledge by showing how SBM can specifically improve early childhood education quality standards. The findings from this literature review also support the conclusion reached by Silabay and Alegre, who found that SBM can lead to positive changes in educational outcomes by fostering a collaborative approach to school governance (Silabay & Alegre, 2023).

However, the literature also suggests that SBM's effectiveness is contingent upon several factors, including the capacity of school leadership, the involvement of teachers, and the engagement of the community. In some cases, the benefits of SBM may not be fully realized if these elements are not

adequately addressed. This highlights the importance of a holistic approach to SBM implementation, which considers all aspects of the school environment.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

While this study provides valuable insights into the impact of SBM on early childhood education, it is limited by its reliance on secondary data from published studies. Future research could explore the implementation of SBM in specific early childhood education settings, conducting case studies to gather primary data on the challenges and successes of SBM in different cultural and geographical contexts. Additionally, longitudinal studies that track the long-term impact of SBM on children's educational outcomes would provide more concrete evidence of its effectiveness. Further studies could also investigate the barriers to SBM implementation, particularly in low-resourced settings, and explore strategies for overcoming these challenges.

Table 1. Key Themes in SBM and Early Childhood Education Quality

Theme	Description	Impact on ECE Quality
School Leadership	The autonomy granted to school leaders in SBM to make key decisions.	Empowered leadership can tailor educational strategies, improve decision-making, and enhance resource allocation.
Teacher Involvement	Teachers are actively involved in the decision-making process.	Increased teacher engagement leads to improved teaching quality and educational outcomes, as teachers feel a sense of ownership.
Community Engagement	Active participation of parents and local communities in school management.	Fosters a supportive learning environment, ensures cultural relevance, and creates a community-driven educational approach.
Curriculum Adaptation	Flexibility to adjust the curriculum based on local needs and resources.	Provides a personalized learning experience that better suits the developmental needs of children.
Resource Allocation	Schools have the power to allocate resources based on local needs rather than relying on centralized policies.	Efficient allocation of resources, including teaching materials and staff, ensures that educational programs are adequately supported.
Quality Standards Alignment	Ensuring that SBM practices align with established early childhood education quality standards such as NAEYC.	Alignment with quality standards ensures that SBM leads to measurable improvements in student outcomes, such as cognitive development.

This table clearly summarizes the key themes related to SBM and how they impact early childhood education quality. By understanding these themes, educators, leaders, and policymakers can better leverage SBM to improve educational outcomes for young children.

Conclusion

The findings of this literature review highlight the significant role that School-Based Management (SBM) plays in enhancing the quality standards of early childhood education (ECE). By decentralizing decision-making, SBM empowers school leaders, teachers, and communities to tailor educational practices to the specific needs of young learners, thereby improving the overall educational environment. The evidence reviewed underscores that effective leadership, teacher involvement, community engagement, and alignment with established quality standards are critical elements for achieving positive outcomes in early childhood education. These findings are consistent with existing literature, which demonstrates that SBM, when implemented effectively, can lead to improved educational practices, more engaged teachers, and a stronger connection between schools and their communities.

However, the success of SBM is not universal, and its implementation is highly context-dependent. The evidence also reveals that the effectiveness of SBM can be influenced by several factors, including leadership capacity, resource availability, and community readiness. For example, schools with limited resources or inadequate support may face challenges in implementing SBM effectively. In such cases, the anticipated benefits of SBM such as increased teacher engagement and improved educational outcomes may not be fully realized. Similarly, if school leaders lack the necessary skills or if the community is not sufficiently involved, SBM's potential to improve educational quality could be hindered. Therefore, while SBM holds considerable promise, its success hinges on a supportive and well-resourced environment.

This study offers a deeper understanding of SBM's potential to improve ECE quality and highlights the importance of adopting a flexible, localized approach to school management that aligns with both national and international quality standards. However, it is essential to recognize that SBM cannot be seen as a one-size-fits-all solution. Policymakers and educators must carefully consider the specific context in which SBM is implemented to ensure that the necessary resources, leadership capacity, and community support are in place.

The implications of this study are valuable for policymakers, educators, and school leaders. By supporting the implementation of SBM in early childhood settings, these stakeholders can create more responsive and effective learning environments that cater to the developmental needs of young children. Furthermore, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on SBM, particularly in the context of early childhood education, an area that has not been extensively studied in relation to SBM. The findings provide a foundation for further exploration into the specific strategies and challenges of implementing SBM in early childhood education settings across diverse cultural and regional contexts.

While this study provides valuable insights, there is a need for more empirical research to examine the practical application of SBM in early childhood education. Future studies could involve case studies or longitudinal research that tracks the impact of SBM on early childhood educational outcomes over time. Additionally, research should explore the barriers to effective SBM implementation, particularly in low-resource settings, and identify strategies for overcoming these challenges. For example, studies could focus on the specific difficulties encountered by educators in decentralized decision-making processes, such as lack of training or insufficient support. Furthermore, exploring the role of parents and local communities in SBM could provide valuable insights into the community dynamics that influence the success of SBM initiatives.

Another important area for future research is examining how SBM impacts child development outcomes across different socio-economic groups. This would help provide a deeper understanding of SBM's effectiveness in fostering equitable learning opportunities for all children, ensuring that the benefits of SBM are accessible to children from diverse backgrounds. Exploring the potential risks and limitations of SBM in various settings will also provide a more comprehensive view of its applicability and limitations, guiding policymakers toward more informed decisions about its implementation.

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