

Innovations

School-Based Management: Strategic Planning Practices of Secondary School Heads in Baguio City

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Abstract: *This paper examines the crucial role of strategic planning in school-based management (SBM), a global educational reform strategy that decentralizes decision-making at the school level. SBM empowers school heads and stakeholders to define their vision, mission, and goals collaboratively, fostering a more inclusive and context-specific educational environment. Effective strategic planning enables schools to take ownership of their development, promoting focused, efficient, and effective learning. The process involves a shift from traditional top-down management to a collaborative approach, actively engaging school leaders, teachers, parents, students, and community members in shaping the school's trajectory. The success of SBM and strategic planning, however, is influenced by several factors. School heads require strong leadership skills, including the ability to create a compelling vision, allocate resources, and monitor progress. Challenges such as inadequate training, limited resources, resistance to change, and difficulties in stakeholder engagement can hinder effective implementation. To overcome these obstacles, schools must adopt a data-driven approach, adapt strategies to their unique contexts, and ensure the availability of necessary resources. Research indicates that effective strategic planning can lead to improved school performance, including enhanced academic outcomes and organizational efficiency. Key elements for successful implementation include active stakeholder involvement, robust leadership capacity, data-driven decision-making, contextual adaptation and flexibility, and sound resource management. This study will utilize survey questionnaires and interviews as primary research methods to gather data from secondary school heads of Baguio City. These methods aim to capture both quantitative and qualitative insights into current strategic planning practices and their effectiveness. The expected outcome of this study is to identify strategic planning practices that significantly enhance school effectiveness and academic performance, particularly within the context of secondary schools in Baguio City. This paper also emphasizes that future research should explore the specific strategic planning practices that lead to improved school effectiveness, identify effective strategies for supporting school heads, and investigate the unique dynamics of strategic planning within specific contexts.*

Key Words: *strategic planning, collaborative approach, school-based, management, data-driven approach*

Introduction

School-Based Management (SBM) has emerged as a significant global educational reform strategy, aiming to decentralize decision-making authority to the school level. This model empowers school heads and stakeholders—including teachers, parents, students, and community members—to collaboratively manage their institutions and shape their future. At the heart of SBM is strategic planning, a fundamental process that provides a clear roadmap for defining a school's vision, mission, and goals, and for outlining the strategies and actions needed to achieve them. Strategic planning fosters school-level autonomy, encourages data-informed decisions, and promotes a more focused, efficient, and context-specific learning environment. It also marks a crucial shift from traditional top-down management toward inclusive, participatory leadership and decision-making.

Strategic planning in education represents a deliberate and systematic endeavor undertaken by educational leaders and administrators to chart a course for institutional advancement and enhanced student outcomes. As highlighted by Bryson (2018), strategic planning serves as a structured methodology that ensures an organization's fundamental mission and overarching objectives are harmoniously aligned with its existing resources while also taking into careful consideration the dynamic influences of the external environment. Within the specific realm of educational settings, the strategic planning process extends beyond the purview of school heads and administrators, actively engaging faculty members, the student body, and various community stakeholders. This inclusive approach is paramount in ensuring that a diverse array of perspectives is thoughtfully considered and integrated into the planning framework, fostering a sense of shared ownership and commitment to the envisioned future.

In the specific context of secondary schools, the implementation of strategic planning empowers school heads to assume a proactive and influential role in critical decision-making processes. This proactive stance enables them to effectively address both the immediate, short-term needs and the more enduring, long-term aspirations of the institution. Berman and McLaughlin (2019) underscore that the efficacy of strategic planning hinges upon the continuous and rigorous evaluation of both internal factors, such as pedagogical approaches and resource availability, and external factors, including curriculum reforms, evolving educational policies, and broader societal shifts. This ongoing assessment ensures that the strategic plan remains relevant, adaptable, and responsive to the ever-changing landscape of education.

Furthermore, contemporary research continues to support the notion that effective strategic planning in educational institutions transcends a purely hierarchical, top-down approach, evolving into a more dynamic and emergent process that thrives on the collective wisdom and experiences of individuals across

all levels of the organization (Harris, 2020). This perspective recognizes that valuable insights and innovative ideas often originate from those directly involved in the daily operations of the school, including teachers, staff, and even students. By actively fostering a collaborative environment where these diverse voices are not only heard but also genuinely valued and integrated into the planning process, secondary schools can cultivate strategic plans that are more robust, contextually relevant, and ultimately more effective in addressing the multifaceted needs of the institution and its learners (Bryson & Edwards, 2021). As Fullan (2022) emphasizes in his recent work on educational change, sustainable improvement and enhanced student success are more likely to be achieved when strategic initiatives are co-created and embraced by the entire school community, fostering a shared sense of ownership and collective responsibility for the envisioned future.

Recent literature underscores the growing significance of strategic planning in diverse educational contexts. For instance, a systematic review by Rivadeneira et al. (2024) highlights strategic planning as a crucial tool for enhancing educational quality, optimizing resource allocation, and adapting to the evolving demands of the educational landscape in Peru. Similarly, research from the Philippines indicates that the development and application of strategic planning are pivotal in improving the quality of educational institutions, facilitating better coordination among stakeholders, and promoting the achievement of shared objectives (as cited in Rivadeneira et al., 2024).

Furthermore, a systematic review by Garcia and Cerado (2020) analyzing strategic planning in education identified key challenges, including the lack of knowledge and skills in strategic planning, improper conduct of strategic planning, and low stakeholder involvement. These studies collectively emphasize that effective strategic planning, while essential for school improvement, requires careful consideration of contextual factors, active stakeholder engagement, and ongoing evaluation to ensure its successful implementation and impact.

This study investigates the strategic planning practices of secondary school heads in Baguio City within the framework of School-Based Management (SBM). In response to evolving educational policies and stakeholder demands, effective strategic planning has become essential for the successful implementation of SBM, which grants school leaders greater autonomy in decision-making.

Despite SBM's promise to enhance education quality, strategic planning remains a critical challenge. This research aims to examine:

1. The strategic planning practices currently used by secondary school heads;
2. Their alignment with SBM principles and guidelines;
3. The challenges faced in planning and implementation;
4. The extent of stakeholder involvement; and

5. The perceived impact of strategic planning on school performance and management.

The study's findings will offer insights and practical recommendations to strengthen leadership and strategic planning in secondary schools under SBM.

Review of Related Literatures

Global Perspectives on Strategic Planning in School-Based Management

School-Based Management (SBM) represents a significant shift in educational governance, characterized by the decentralization of decision-making authority from central or regional offices to individual schools. This empowerment grants school heads, or principals, greater autonomy in managing resources, formulating policies, and making critical decisions that shape the daily operations and overall effectiveness of their institutions. As noted by some researchers, this empowerment aims to enhance student outcomes by providing school leaders with increased control over crucial school functions, including budgeting, staffing, curriculum development, and student welfare.

School-Based Management (SBM), which entails the decentralization of authority to individual schools, is recognized across the Asia Pacific region as a framework that necessitates effective strategic planning for optimal implementation and outcomes. Strategic planning, in this context, is not merely an administrative exercise but a fundamental process that enables schools to articulate a shared vision, set measurable goals, and chart a course for sustainable improvement (Baltabayeva et al., 2020). It empowers school leaders to make informed decisions about resource allocation, curriculum development, and overall school operations, aligning these with the specific needs of their communities. The emphasis on strategic planning within SBM is driven by the understanding that schools operate in dynamic environments, requiring them to be proactive and adaptive. As Khalilov, Alikhanov, Hasanov, and Ahmadova (2024) highlight, strategic planning allows educational institutions to anticipate future challenges, address current issues, and foster a culture of continuous improvement. This process typically involves a range of stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, students, parents, and community members, whose collective input is crucial in shaping the school's direction and ensuring that its goals are relevant and achievable.

Moreover, strategic planning in the Asia Pacific context is often linked to broader educational reforms aimed at enhancing school effectiveness and student outcomes. Research indicates that the practice of strategic planning contributes to improvements in various aspects of school functioning, such as teacher performance, teaching quality, and administrative efficiency. For instance, studies have explored how strategic planning can facilitate collaboration among teachers,

students, and administrators towards the attainment of common objectives. In essence, strategic planning is considered a cornerstone of successful SBM implementation in the Asia Pacific region, providing schools with a roadmap for navigating complexities, fostering stakeholder engagement, and ultimately, improving the quality of education.

Integrating Strategic Planning and Positive School Culture in SBM: Insights from the Australian Context

Drawing from Australian perspectives on School-Based Management (SBM), the integration of strategic planning with initiatives that bolster student well-being and cultivate a positive school culture is paramount for sustainable school improvement. Huber's (2020) insights, alongside the emphasis of the Australian Positive Education Schools Association, underscore that effective SBM necessitates a cyclical process encompassing continuous planning, diligent implementation, consistent monitoring, and adaptive adjustments. This dynamic approach, further supported by Slee, Weiner, and Tomlinson's (2023) observations, highlights the significance of distributed leadership models in empowering stakeholders and the intentional creation of a supportive school environment as key drivers for meaningful and lasting change within educational settings.

Data-Driven and Collaborative Strategic Planning in the U.S. SBM Framework

In the American context, strategic planning within School-Based Management (SBM) is a critical process that empowers schools to define their direction, allocate resources effectively, and enhance student outcomes. This approach recognizes that schools are not monolithic entities but rather have unique needs and operate within diverse community contexts. Strategic planning, therefore, enables schools to tailor their efforts to address specific challenges and opportunities. A core tenet of SBM in America is the emphasis on stakeholder involvement. Effective strategic planning necessitates the inclusion of teachers, parents, students, and community members in the process. This collaborative approach ensures that the school's goals and strategies are aligned with the needs and expectations of those it serves. As Austin (2020) notes, strategic planning provides a framework for school leaders to make informed decisions and ensures that all stakeholders are aligned with the school's vision and mission.

Moreover, strategic planning in American schools often involves a data-driven approach. Schools utilize various forms of data, including student achievement data, demographic information, and community feedback, to inform their planning process. This emphasis on data helps to ensure that decisions are based on evidence rather than assumptions, and that resources are allocated in ways that are most likely to improve student learning. Hall & Lulich (2021) affirm that data-

driven strategic planning ensures resources are allocated where most needed and progress is measurable and transparent. The implementation of strategic planning in American SBM can vary across different states and districts, reflecting the decentralized nature of the U.S. education system. However, the underlying principles remain consistent: empowering schools to take ownership of their improvement efforts, fostering collaboration among stakeholders, and using data to guide decision-making.

Leadership, Strategic Planning, and the Challenges of SBM Implementation in the Philippine Context

In the Philippines, the implementation of SBM was a key component of the Education for All (EFA) initiative, designed to foster stronger community involvement, enhance accountability, and cultivate local ownership of education. However, the success of SBM is not guaranteed; it hinges on several factors. Specifically, the capacity and commitment of school heads to engage in strategic planning, coupled with effective collaboration with key stakeholders, are paramount. This necessity for effective leadership and meticulous planning underscores the complexities inherent in SBM implementation. Recent studies, such as those focusing on SBM practices in the Philippines, continue to emphasize the importance of leadership and governance within the SBM framework. A study by Suriyanti et al. (2020) in Davao City revealed high levels of strategic planning among public school teachers, with a significant, albeit small, effect on enhancing the quality of education. This suggests that while strategic planning is present, its impact might be influenced by other factors within the SBM framework. One of the factors is seen in the research conducted by Verbo et al (2023) in Mandaluyong City, where their study concludes that there is a significant relationship between the principals' leadership style and the status of the SBM level of practice. Most of the participants of the study perceived that the leadership styles of the principals directly affect the performance of the whole team in achieving the status of SBM level of practice. A school head with strong leadership would mean significant and better results as compared to a school head who delegates most of the tasks directly to his team.

Studies within the Philippines, including Baguio City and other regions, provide valuable insights into SBM practices. A study in Benguet (Mountain Journal of Science and Interdisciplinary Research) found that school heads' application of SBM knowledge significantly influences their governance capabilities, though developmental needs in management skills were also noted. Reyes (2021), as cited by MIJRD, highlights that deficiencies in strategic planning skills among school leaders can hinder the effective implementation of SBM reforms in the Philippines. Conversely, Al Omari (2020) emphasizes the importance of data-driven decision-making skills for effective strategic planning within educational institutions.

Research Gate's analysis of different SBM principles in the Philippines underscores the importance of school leadership in effectively implementing SBM.

Synthesizing these studies reveals a consistent recognition of strategic planning as a crucial element within SBM across diverse global contexts. However, the Philippine experience underscores that the successful implementation and impact of strategic planning are contingent upon several interconnected factors, including the leadership capacity of school heads, the extent of stakeholder involvement, and the presence of necessary skills in strategic planning and data-driven decision-making. While some studies indicate the presence of strategic planning practices, others highlight significant challenges, particularly concerning leadership skills and the effective application of planning principles. This suggests a potential gap between the adopted importance of strategic planning in SBM and its actual implementation and impact on the ground in the Philippines, warranting a focused investigation into the specific context of secondary schools in Baguio City. The current study aims to contribute to this understanding by examining the nuances of strategic planning practices at the school level within this specific locale.

Conceptual Framework

School-Based Management (SBM) empowers school heads to make decisions aligned with their specific contexts, and strategic planning serves as a crucial mechanism for translating this autonomy into tangible improvements. It posits that the strategic planning practices of secondary school heads significantly influence the effectiveness of SBM implementation and ultimately impact school performance. Effective strategic planning in an SBM environment involves several key interconnected elements.

First, participatory planning, where school heads actively engage stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, and community members, in the development of the school's vision, mission, and goals (DepEd, 2020; UNESCO, 2022). This inclusive approach fosters ownership and ensures that the plan reflects the diverse needs and perspectives of the school community.

Second, data-driven decision-making is paramount. School heads who utilize relevant data, such as student achievement, attendance rates, and resource allocation, to inform their strategic priorities are more likely to develop targeted and effective interventions (Bernhardt, 2020; Datnow & Park, 2021).

Third, alignment of resources with strategic goals is critical. School heads must ensure that financial, human, and material resources are strategically allocated to support the implementation of planned activities and initiatives (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2023).

Finally, continuous monitoring and evaluation are essential for tracking progress, identifying challenges, and making necessary adjustments to the strategic

plan (Earl & Fullan, 2024; OECD, 2025). These elements, when effectively integrated into the strategic planning practices of secondary school heads, create a dynamic and responsive SBM environment that is more likely to achieve its goals of improved teaching, learning, and overall school effectiveness.

The Role of School Heads in Strategic Planning

School heads are indeed central to the strategic planning process, serving as the driving force behind the development and implementation of school-wide goals. Their role extends beyond mere administration; they are visionaries who shape the school's future and foster a culture of continuous improvement. As leaders, school heads are tasked with creating a compelling vision that aligns with the broader educational goals and community needs (Robinson, 2019). This involves not only setting strategic goals but also effectively allocating resources and diligently monitoring the progress of initiatives. Furthermore, effective school heads in SBM environments recognize the importance of empowering their staff and fostering collaboration among all stakeholders. They understand that successful strategic planning requires a balanced approach, where administrative duties are harmonized with instructional leadership to ensure that plans are both feasible and have a meaningful impact on student learning (Baker, Bete benner, & Linn, 2019).

In the context of secondary schools in Baguio City, this leadership is shaped by the unique socio-cultural environment. School heads in urbanized areas like Baguio City face distinct challenges, including heightened expectations for community engagement and responsiveness to the diverse needs of their student populations (Miranda & Velasco, 2021). Moreover, given Baguio City's role as a center of education and its complex socio-cultural dynamics, school heads may need to navigate factors such as the influence of indigenous cultures, the demands of a highly mobile student population, and the need to balance traditional values with progressive educational approaches (Philippine Business for Education, 2025).

Challenges in Strategic Planning and SBM Implementation

Despite the potential benefits, strategic planning and SBM implementation face several challenges. Santiago and Mijares (2020) identify a lack of training and professional development for school heads as one of the primary barriers to effective strategic planning. Many school heads in the Philippines, especially in rural and semi-urban areas like Baguio City, may lack the necessary skills and experience in managing resources, leading to ineffective planning and implementation of SBM.

Moreover, Ball & Lusk (2018) highlight systemic obstacles that impede the success of SBM. Their research points to the detrimental effects of limited resources, resistance to change within the school community, and unclear or restrictive policies emanating from higher educational authorities. These factors can create an

environment where even well-conceived strategic plans falter. School heads may lack the financial, material, or human resources required to bring their plans to fruition. Furthermore, a reluctance to embrace new ways of doing things, coupled with bureaucratic constraints that limit school-level autonomy, can stifle innovation and prevent schools from fully realizing the benefits of SBM.

In Baguio City, De Guzman (2022) work reveals the challenges that school heads encounter in stakeholder engagement and collaboration. The urban setting of Baguio City, with its diverse population and complex social dynamics, presents a unique set of demands and expectations from various stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and local government units. This diversity can complicate the SBM process, as school heads must navigate competing interests, build consensus among disparate groups, and foster a shared sense of ownership over the school's direction. Effectively managing these relationships and facilitating meaningful collaboration is crucial for successful SBM implementation, yet it represents a significant hurdle for many school leaders in the city.

Impact of Strategic Planning on School Performance

Research indicates that strategic planning can lead to improved school performance when effectively implemented. Fullan (2016) suggests that schools with clear, well-structured strategic plans tend to show improvements in both academic outcomes and organizational efficiency. For instance, strategic planning in SBM can lead to better resource allocation, teacher development, and student engagement.

In a study on Philippine secondary schools, Salazar (2021) found that schools with strong strategic planning practices under SBM were more likely to improve student achievement, as well as the overall learning environment. Furthermore, Banilad & Martinez (2023) found that in urban areas like Baguio City, effective strategic planning helped schools address specific local issues, such as the integration of new technology and the accommodation of increasing student populations, leading to better educational outcomes.

The Situation of Secondary Schools in Baguio City

Secondary schools in Baguio City are unique in that they cater to a mix of urban and rural populations. The city's educational system faces distinct challenges such as high population density, rapid urbanization, and diverse socio-economic backgrounds. According to Tan (2020), strategic planning in secondary schools in Baguio City requires adapting to these factors while ensuring that the needs of students from different communities are met. Additionally, Reyes and Delos Santos (2022) found that the effectiveness of SBM in Baguio City largely hinges on the leadership capabilities of school heads to adapt to changing policies and collaborate

with various stakeholders, including local government units and community organizations.

Emerging Themes of School-Based Management Stakeholder Involvement

Effective strategic planning within SBM necessitates the active and meaningful involvement of various stakeholders. This includes teachers, parents, students, and community members, in the decision-making processes that shape the school's direction (Jaso & Moleño, 2024). This inclusive approach is crucial for ensuring that school plans and initiatives are responsive to the diverse needs, perspectives, and expectations of the entire school community. Research indicates that when stakeholders are genuinely engaged, there is increased ownership of school goals, improved communication, and a greater likelihood of successful implementation of strategic plans. The participation of stakeholders also fosters a sense of shared responsibility, which is fundamental to the collaborative nature of SBM.

Leadership Capacity

The strategic planning skills and overall leadership capacity of school heads are paramount for the successful implementation of SBM. Deficiencies in these critical areas can pose significant challenges and obstacles to reform efforts and hinder the effectiveness of SBM initiatives (GEM Report, 2025). School leaders play a vital role in setting the vision, fostering a collaborative culture, and empowering teachers and other stakeholders to take ownership of school improvement. Effective leadership in SBM involves not only administrative competence but also the ability to inspire, motivate, and guide the school community towards achieving its goals. This includes providing professional development opportunities for staff, promoting shared decision-making, and creating a supportive environment that encourages innovation and continuous improvement.

Data-Driven Decision Making

Utilizing data to inform strategic decisions is an increasingly emphasized and crucial aspect of effective school management within the SBM framework (Bickmore et al., 2020). This involves the systematic collection, rigorous analysis, and practical application of data pertaining to various aspects of school operations, including student performance, resource allocation, and other relevant indicators. By using data to guide planning and improvement efforts, schools can identify areas of strength and weakness, track progress towards goals, and make informed decisions about resource allocation and instructional strategies. This evidence-based approach enhances accountability, promotes transparency, and ensures that decisions are aligned with the school's overall mission and objectives.

Contextual Adaptation and Flexibility

Successful SBM and strategic planning require the adaptation of strategies to align with the unique context, circumstances, and needs of each individual school (Fullan, 2020). Flexibility in planning allows schools to respond effectively to their specific challenges, opportunities, and the diverse characteristics of their student populations and communities. Recognizing that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to school improvement, SBM empowers schools to tailor their plans and initiatives to their particular situations. This contextual adaptation ensures that strategies are relevant, feasible, and sustainable, and that they address the specific priorities and goals of the school community.

Resource Management

Strategic planning in SBM also involves the effective and efficient management of all school resources. This includes financial resources, human resources (teachers, staff), and material resources, all of which are essential to support the achievement of school goals (Dep Ed, 2025). SBM empowers schools to make decisions about how to allocate and utilize these resources in ways that best support their strategic plans and priorities. This may involve developing budgets, recruiting and retaining qualified staff, procuring necessary materials and equipment, and seeking out additional sources of funding or support. Effective resource management ensures that schools have the necessary means to implement their plans, provide quality instruction, and create a positive learning environment for all students.

Discussion

The concept of School-Based Management (SBM) represents a fundamental shift towards decentralizing educational governance, empowering schools to take ownership of their direction and improvement. Strategic planning is crucial within this framework, enabling school communities to collaboratively define their vision, mission, and goals, and to chart a course for achieving them. This process, which necessitates a move away from top-down management to a more inclusive model, recognizes that schools operate within unique contexts and require the active participation of all stakeholders, including school leaders, teachers, parents, students, and community members. The role of school heads is central to this process, as they provide the vision, allocate resources, and monitor progress, while also fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement.

However, the effective implementation of strategic planning and SBM is not without its challenges. These challenges include a lack of adequate training and professional development for school heads, systemic obstacles such as limited resources and resistance to change, and difficulties in stakeholder engagement,

particularly in diverse urban settings. To overcome these challenges, schools must adopt a data-driven approach, adapting their strategies to their specific contexts, and ensuring that they have the necessary resources to support their plans. When implemented effectively, strategic planning can lead to improved school performance, including enhanced academic outcomes and organizational efficiency. Ultimately, the success of SBM and strategic planning hinges on empowering schools to make informed decisions, fostering collaboration, and remaining flexible and responsive to the evolving needs of their communities.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Effective strategic planning under SBM requires strong leadership, active stakeholder involvement, data-driven decision-making, contextual adaptation, and sound resource management. It indicates that strategic planning in SBM can significantly impact the effectiveness of school leadership and school performance. The context of secondary schools in Baguio City presents its own unique challenges and opportunities for strategic planning. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for improving the effectiveness of school-based management and educational leadership in the region. While school heads face challenges such as limited resources and resistance to change, the opportunities for enhanced school autonomy, accountability, innovation, and community engagement are substantial.

Future research should continue to explore the specific strategic planning practices that lead to improved school effectiveness in diverse contexts, identify effective strategies for supporting school heads in their crucial roles within SBM frameworks, and to explore the specific practices, challenges, and outcomes of strategic planning among secondary school heads in Baguio City, as this could inform policies and practices aimed at improving educational outcomes across the city.

Paper Focus and Scope

The research focuses on examining the strategic planning practices employed by secondary school heads within Baguio City in the context of School-Based Management (SBM). The study aims to provide a detailed account of how these school leaders approach, develop, and implement strategic plans to achieve their school's objectives. The scope of this research encompasses all public and/or private secondary schools in Baguio City, Philippines. It will investigate the specific strategies, processes, and tools utilized by school heads in formulating their plans, the level of stakeholder involvement in the planning process, and the factors that influence their strategic planning practices. Ultimately, the study seeks to identify effective strategic planning practices and determine how these practices contribute

to school improvement and the attainment of educational goals within the Baguio City context.

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