Practices, Challenges, and Prospects of Implementing School-Based Management (SBM) System in Ethiopian Schools: Implications for Policy Makers

Kelemu Zelalem Berhanu* (iD)

University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa

Abstract	Article Info

The purpose of the study was to investigate the level of practice, challenges, and prospects of SBM in Ethiopian schools. A holistic multiple-case study was utilized. In addition to document review, the researcher collected data via semi-structured interviews with maximum diversity sampling from eight participants. Thematic analysis was employed for analysing data. Results showed that implementing SBM in Amhara regional state, Ethiopia, was ineffective. The significant challenges identified were: the low administrative capacity of crucial members of the SBMs, uncertainty, overload, lack of cooperation from the school leaders, and teachers' misunderstanding of the importance of the SBM. To improve school management at the school level, Ethiopian schools should take the following prospects into account: Commission a steering committee to introduce SBM, make a pilot project to allow some schools to have greater control over their budgets, give legal authority to schools to define themselves, increase the direct relationship between district education bureaus and regional educational bureaus, provide in-service training and so forth. In addition to the theoretical implications to the literature about SBM in the Ethiopia context, this study has several practical implications for many stakeholders of education, such as the Ministry of Education and school administrators, to understand the challenges in implementing SBM and to overcome the challenges in their respective schools by considering the suggested prospects.

*Corresponding author
E-mail: lkelemu@yahoo.com

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Introduction

Education is one of the most vital elements in several countries' development (Rohma et al., 2020). Many countries around the globe are experiencing increased school enrolments and the situation has strained the capacity of their central governments to maintain the quality of education (UNESCO, 2020). In response to this rapid enrolment of students, new initiatives have begun emerging, such as SBM to manage and improve the quality of education and the school's effectiveness at various levels (Cheng, 2023). SBM is a type of school management that transfers power and authority to local schools over financial, personnel, and curriculum matters (Caldwell, 2005; Paul & Bonan, 1993).

Regarding its benefits, after examining several studies in different countries, the following conclusions have been made about the importance of SBM. SBM can: (1) increase students' learning outcomes (e.g., Aturupane et al., 2022; Bandur et al., 2022; Briggs & Wohlstetter, 1999; Cheng, 2023; Di Gropello, 2006; Garcia-Moreno, 2020; Yamauchi, 2014); (2) improve the teaching-learning environment (Bandur et al., 2022); (3) increase administrative efficiency and tighten professional control (Aturupane et al., 2022); (4) increase parental involvement

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(Bandur, 2022); (5) enhance school commitment (Bandur, 2022), and enhanced accountability, satisfaction and performance of teachers (Arar & Abo-Rome, 2016; Rohma et al., 2020).

Over the last two decades, Ethiopia has had 85% enrollment of young generations, and half complete final primary school, Grade 8th (MOE, 2015). In response to this change, the Ethiopian Government has introduced many initiatives and associations (for instance, cost-sharing policies (MOE, 2005), Parent Teacher Student Associations (PTSAs) (MOE, 2015), and school self-evaluation and improvement planning (MOE, 2010)). The idea of SBM or decentralization has begun in Ethiopia in 1998 when the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) I was drafted (MoE, 1998). Even if parents are an asset and a source of social and intellectual capital for schools, distributed leadership and decentralization are poorly functioning in many schools in Ethiopia (Mitchell, 2017).

The rationale for this research is based on three considerations. First, much of the SBM literature focused on transferring power to the local level (The World Bank, 2008); however, this study is delimited to the school-based governance practices, challenges and prospects. Second, the researcher found that previous studies on SBM demonstrated varied findings about SBM. For example, numerous scholars (e.g., Aturupane et al., l2022; Bandur et al., 2022; Briggs & Wohlstetter, 1999; Cheng, 2023; Di Gropello, 2006; Moradi et al., 2016) separately found that SBM practice is a tool to enhance students' performance. However, other scholars (e.g., Botha, 2006) found that SBM practices have added additional tasks to school principals and have no influence on students' performance. Contrasting findings by various scholars about SBM practices motivated

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this researcher to investigate the present issue. Lastly, in Ethiopia, several studies on stakeholder involvement in school affairs have revealed that parental involvement was limited (MoE, 2017; Mitchell, 2017). Taddese and Rao (2022) and Tulu (2019) also studied the practice of school-based teachers' endless development in Ethiopia. These previous studies focused on the involvement of parents in school and school-based teachers' development. However, no studies have been found on the practices, challenges, and prospects of implementing SBM in Ethiopian schools context so far. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to investigate the practices, challenges, and prospects of SBM in the Ethiopian context. To achieve this objective, the following research questions were raised:

1. How is SBM in Ethiopia practiced?

2. What are the challenges in implementing SBM in Ethiopia?

3. What are the prospects for implementing SBM in Ethiopia?

This study will be important to several stakeholders of education. First and foremost, it will enable school administrators to understand the challenges of implementing SBM and through this encourage them to devise the means to sustain it. The findings of this study will also enable schools' principals, educational planners, and policymakers to tackle the various challenges in their respective schools by considering the suggested prospects. The findings of the study will serve as major contributions to knowledge in the area of educational leadership, management, and planning. Lastly, this study will contribute to knowledge about the Ethiopian Education Development roadmap for

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2017-2030, the 1990 World Conference on Education for All, and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) on quality education

Theoretical Framework

This part of the study intends to explore the theory of management which is linked to SBM. SBM is based on the modern management theory called the principle of equifinality, which assumes that schools can use various methods to achieve their goals. The modern management theory recommends that schools may be managed in their ways in line with their conditions to make a big difference (Cheng, 1993). SBM is also supported by McGregor's (1960) Theory X and Theory Y assumptions of human nature in management. According to McGregor (1960), there are Theory X and Theory Y assumptions of human nature in management. From these main assumptions, SBM followed Theory Y because it suggests that human beings are complex and changeable, and every school member has various interests and skills. Hence, SBM is more crucial to satisfy teachers' and students' needs. Furthermore, SBM is also associated with the Participatory Democracy Theory that guarantees stakeholders' involvement (Booyse, 2018).

Another theory that supports SBM is Falleti's (2010) sequential theory of decentralization which identified three types of decentralization (fiscal, administrative, and political). Administrative decentralization is aimed at transferring responsibility for planning, financing, and management from the central to local levels. Political decentralization contains the creation of subnational units (region, state, provincial, district, or municipality) of the central government that are endowed with independent decision-making powers. Fiscal decentralization allows

local units to self-finance or recover costs through user charges. This theory departs from other models in that it analyzes three decentralization dimensions together, as components of the same process of decentralization. Lastly, school-based management is also linked to Riker's theory of federalism (Riker, 1964) which emphasizes the constitutional autonomy of subnational units.

Based on several aforementioned theories, the conceptual frameworks of SBM vary in several forms in different countries (Garcia-Moreno, 2020). SBM's main domains are resource management, leadership, and governance, curriculum, and learning, continuous improvement, and accountability (Martin, 2019). Rosyida and Purwanto (2022) identified six critical stages for practicing SBM: the socialization stage, formulation of the school's goals, arranging educational resources, carrying out SWOT analysis, preparing plans or programs for quality improvement, and (f) the evaluation of plans or programs implementation. Cheung and Cheng (1997) developed three main stages of practicing SBM: unfreezing (holding various meetings and conducting environmental analysis), changing and reinforcing

This study followed an electric approach, which is selecting what appears to be best from all the aforementioned theories. This paper's main contribution to the education management literature on SBM is in line with modern management theory (principle of equifinality) (Cheng, 1993), sequential theory of decentralization (Falleti, 2010), Theory Y (McGregor, 1960), Participatory Democracy Theory (Booyse, 2018), and Riker's theory of federalism (Riker, 1964). All these theories emphasize the decentralization of government structure and are crucial for SBM practice. In line with the ideas of the above theorists, Ethiopia also runs a

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federal type of government, giving the government constitutional autonomy over regional states. Furthermore, to review SBM developments, good practices, challenges, and results of several countries and to support the present findings, Stufflebeam's (2003) model of Context, Input, and Process (CIP) was used.

Literature Review

SBM has been adopted by several countries with the same or different names to increase school autonomy and to share decision-making with teachers, students, parents, and community members. For instance, in New Zealand, SBM is named 'Tomorrow's Schools,' and in Hong Kong, it is named 'School-Management Initiative' (Abu-Duhou, 1999; Soga, 2004). The following five countries were selected due to their high level of practice of SBM (World Bank, 2008). All of them are categorized from moderate to strong or almost complete control of schools by councils, parents, or school administrators (World Bank, 2008). Hence, in this part of the study, using Stufflebeam's model of Context, Input, and Process (CIP), detailed accounts of SBM developments, good practices, challenges, and results of several countries are detailed reviewed.

Netherlands experience- In the Netherlands, the experiments began with financial autonomy, appointing teachers, and purchasing material resources such as books and equipment. Accepting these autonomies by parents led other schools to demand these independences (Abu-Duhou, 1999). In the Netherlands, parents have full choice and control over all educational (Abu-Duhou, 1999; World Bank, 2008).

USA experience- Chicago's schools and Charter Schools - USA's SBM initiative in Charter Schools was implemented in the 1970s and 1980s to escalate efficiency and enhance teachers' empowerment and involvement of the community in schools (World Bank, 2008). In the USA, various districts, particularly Los Angeles and Montgomery, implemented SBM in a few schools on a trial basis. Additional schools were added gradually to the piloted schools (Paul & Bonan, 1993). The most evident challenge that Montgomery County and Los Angeles faced was hard to persuade teachers and principals (Paul & Bonan, 1993).

In 1987, Chicago's schools were the worst in America; then Chicago; Illinois Legislature introduced SBM in 1988. Initially, the legislature was authorized to form the school council, which contains 13 members from the principal, teachers, parents, students, administrative staff, and community (Department of Chicago Public Schools 2016). Initially, despite some limitations such as a lack of cooperation and participation from the teachers' side, many states in the USA took many good practices from Chicago's SBM efforts (Fitzpatrick, 2012). In addition to Chicago, other cities in the U.S., such as Houston, Cincinnati, Seattle, and Oakland, have tremendously grown SBM structures (Fitzpatrick, 2012). Weiss's (1992) experimental study in twelve schools (6-had implemented SBM, and the other six were run traditionally) in 11 states in the USA. Upon these, scholars identified the strategic implications, strategies, and related issues for implementing SBM (Fullan & Watson, 2000).

Israel experience- In 1997, Israel as a country started implementing SBM reforms to improve the public school system and school management (World Bank, 2008). Before implementing SBM, the Minister

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of Education commissioned a steering committee to introduce SBM in schools and offered 1-year training program for principals (Adam, 2002; MoE, 1993). Schools in Israel initially needed more resources to effectively implement SBM reform (Arar & Abo-Rome, 2016). In 2020, 560 primary school administrations were demarcated as SBM (Arar & Nasra, 2020). Despite its success in some aspects, the Israeli educational system inhibits, to some extent, the freedom granted to schools (Arar & Nasra, 2020).

New Zealand experience- Tomorrow's Schools reforms- New Zealand started the implementation of SBM reforms in 1990, intending to increase community autonomy and efficiency (World Bank, 2008). Initially, schools faced great rush, ambiguity, and mixed messages that contributed to distrust of government agencies. Thus, in the second phase, the support also focused on capacity building in teaching and learning rather than administration (Sleegers & Wesselingh, 1993).

Nicaragua experience- In Nicaragua, in 1990, the Autonomous Schools Program became a target of the government to increase community participation and efficiency (Rivarola & Fuller, 1999). Schools faced opposition from unions at the beginning of autonomy (Arcia & Belli, 1999). Nicaraguan schools legitimately sustained SBM in autonomous schools through frequent contact with school stakeholders in various workshops and training (Pettigrew et al., 2021). From the aforementioned various countries' lessons, it is clear that SBM is experimenting and implementing in different ways with varying objectives (Matthew, 2020). Furthermore, a systematic review of various empirical studies showed that, in all situations, critical challenges for the failure of SBM were retaining authority at the regional and central levels and failure to carry out day-to-day activities for school improvement at

the school level (Fullan & Watson, 2000).

Africa Context

Several educational reforms occur in Africa. However, improving school effectiveness through SBM remains a challenge (Aturupane et al., 2022; Gamage et al., 1991; Iyengar, 2021; Rosyida & Purwanto, 2022). The practices of SBM were challenged due to the principals' lack of commitment and transparency and low support from stakeholders (Iyengar, 2021). In Sri Lanka, the impact of the SBM program took more than five years to reform the management culture in SBM (Aturupane et al., 2022). Gamage et al. (1991) found that poor resource utilization was a significant challenge faced by school leaders in running SBM effectively and impacting the student's success. School autonomy and transparency in budget management are challenges faced by Negeri school principals in implementing SBM (Rosyida & Purwanto, 2022). According to Mwinjuma et al. (2015), Tanzania is a model of education decentralization devolved to the local level. They found that Tanzania's schools mostly manage their resources through school committees which are elected democratically. They added that it is the principals' role to act as a guide to the school committee, report the utilization of school resources, and keep the financial records up to date.

In addition, the South African government adopted SBM to endorse quality education by restructuring schools. However, most schools remain ineffective (Booyse, 2018; Setoaba, 2020). The study revealed that the poor quality management system was attributed to poor SBM performance since the quality management system was associated with managerialism, rejecting stakeholders' autonomy of self-management and decision-making.

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The Ethiopian Context

This part of the paper analyses how Ethiopian education policy enables schools to make decisions and what the actual implication looks like on the ground, in terms of some empirical studies. Even if the introduction of the modern school system in Ethiopia by missionaries during the 19th century, additional schools were built by the subsequent regimes (Nekatibeb, 2012). The rise of various regimes in the country was complemented by various educational reforms and policies. After the rise of power, the current Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia issued two main policies namely 'Education and Training Policy' and 'Education Sector Strategy' in 1994. Initially, these policies emphasis on enhancing access and quality of education and then started to focus on school governance.

Later on, in 1998, ESDP I established a decentralized structure of school governance at the federal, regional, and district levels (MoE, 1998). In 2002 when ESDP II was drafted, the government comprehended the importance of decision-making at the district and school levels. This was further affirmed with ESDP III (2005) when the government determined to decentralize the main decision-making from regions to the district and school level. This decentralization aimed at making education more responsive at the school level (MoE, 2005). However, in actual practice, the district education had more powers of making decisions such as appointing teachers and managing the resources of the schools (MoE, 2005). ESDP III also underlined the unavoidability of community involvement in school decision-making and preparing annual action plans.

The Ethiopian Government realized the importance of management and decision-making at the district and school levels. This was later strengthened with ESDP III (2005) when the government decided to decentralize critical decision-making to the district and municipalities to build the capacity of District Education Offices through training in educational and financial management (MoE, 2005). The district administration was responsible for hiring teachers and managing the financial and material resources of the schools (MoE, 2005). ESDP III also noted the importance of community participation in school decision-making, financing, and preparing annual action plans (MoE, 2010). At the end of ESDP III, in practice, the lack of strong communication and relationships between regions and districts and limited capacities for planning and management are identified as challenges the government faces to decentralize schools properly and effectively. In addition, district offices in emerging regions do not have sufficient expertise to function effectively (MoE, 2010). In addition to the district councils, provinces affect the direct relationship between district education bureaus and regional educational bureaus. ESDP IV emphasized the further devolution of key decision-making to the school level by strengthening school management and parent and community partnership through capacity-building programs (MoE, 2010). Principals were also responsible for the administration of material resources in the school; however, the purchases of education materials are carried out at the district level (Abebe, 2012).

Despite the efforts of education stakeholders in Ethiopia, mainly school management needs to be better (Mitchell, 2017). These days, as Ethiopian Education Development Roadmap, 2017-30 found, delays in decision-making and lack of accountability in managing various

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resources are hindering effective service delivery in schools (MoE, 2017). In Ethiopia, still there are very limited studies about school-based practice (Mitchell, 2017). Thus, this study aimed to investigate the level of practice, challenges, and prospects of SBM in Ethiopian schools.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a holistic multiple-case study, allowing the investigator to establish cause and effect, keep the holistic and meaningful features of actual activities, and seek insights (Yin, 2012). Case studies observe effects in real contexts by recognizing contexts as the unique, dynamic, and influential factors of causes and effects. Therefore, case studies were used in this study to examine and report the complex interfaces of activities, human relations, and other factors in an Ethiopian school's context (Cohen et al., 2007)

Participants

In qualitative research, there is no specific sample size determination formula; however, saturation is the most common regulatory principle for adequate samples (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). In this study, eight participants were used for data collection. The participants were diverse and comprised four school leaders (principals and vice principals) from two schools (Ethio-Japan high school and Bureh Tesfa primary school), one education expert from Bahir Dar University, and one education expert from Debre Markos University and two from Debre Markos district education heads). The study was carried out in the Amhara region, Ethiopia (mainly, samples were chosen from the Debre

Markos district education bureau, two schools in Debre Markos town, Bahir Dar University, and Debre Markos University). Amhara region was selected due to several reasons. First in the last two years, due to the conflict in northern Ethiopia, several schools in this region have been completely or partially damaged and looted – a grave violation of children's rights. SBM is the best strategy for managing education-related crises at the local level. Thus, this study will contribute a lot for managing the education crises in the region by suggesting some prospects of implementing SBM for Governmental and non-governmental organizations such as UNICEF Ethiopia that launched initiatives to deliver education to children affected by crises in Ethiopia. The second reason was there was no study on the present topic in the region. Therefore, participants from Amhara region have served as sources of primary data.

Generally, all the sampled institutions were selected purposively due to the outstanding experiences they had in the education sector in Amhara Regional State (2021/22 Amhara Regional State Education Bureau office report). For instance, Bahir Dar University and Debre Markos University excelled in education. One expert was selected from each university. Experts are selected based on their experiences and areas of expertise. Selected experts have over ten years of experience and good academic knowledge or skill in education planning and management. District education heads are experts and leaders in different education positions and graduated from educational leadership and management. In addition to their outstanding experiences, two schools were selected for their excellent position in preparing their school leaders to implement SBM. These are role model schools in Amhara regional state, Ethiopia. Therefore, collecting data from diverse interviewees could provide a

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relatively balanced viewpoint. Table 1 presents the demographic information of the interviewees.

Table 1.

Case profile of the Working Group.

Interviewee code	Length of service	Gender	Prev.Administrative Role in the school	Age
P1	20	Male	Yes	40
P2	17	Male	Yes	42
VP1	18	Female	Yes	42
VP2	14	Male	Yes	38
Expert 1	20	Male	Yes	43
Expert 2	18	Male	Yes	39
Head 1	24	Male	Yes	48
Head 2	26	Female	Yes	51

Ethics and Data Collection

Initially, this research was approved by the ethics committee. Then participants have been informed and become part of the study voluntarily. Interview responses were recorded anonymously. To anonymize participants, abbreviations were used, e.g., P1- Principal; VP1- Vice Principal 1.

To address all research questions of this study, semi-structured interviews and document reviews were done. For different types of interviews, a semi-structured interview form was used since it allowed the researcher to be flexible, probe, and follow various directions as information emerges from the interviewees. The interviews with each participant took about an hour and the audio were recorded by the

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researcher using audio tapes. The mapping of semi-interview questions was carried out in three significant levels (Cohen et al., 2007). First, the interviewees were asked an initial question: What are your views on the practices of the SBM policy system in Ethiopia so far? What are your views on the challenges of the SBM system in Ethiopia? What are your views on the prospects of an SBM policy system in Ethiopia?

In the documents analysis, necessary education policies and reports in related to SBM practice were reviewed. In this study, document analysis is used in combination with semi-structured as a means of triangulation and substantiating interview findings (Bretschneider et al., 2017). Documents that were reviewed for systematic evaluation as part of a study contained two schools' reports, agendas, minutes of meetings, and manuals. In addition, the researcher typically reviews prior ministry education policies, and initiatives, as part of a study and incorporates that information in reports. The systematic process of document review entails searching, choosing, making sense of, and synthesizing data (Bretschneider et al., 2017).

Data Analysis

The interview data were analyzed qualitatively using a thematic approach since it enables the researcher to construct main themes and to report interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data were also analyzed in line with three key research questions. After collecting data via audio tape, the researcher first, converted the audible data into written or text data (Data transcription). The researcher listened to those audio recordings again to ensure the correctness of the transcription. Next, the researcher labeled and organized written data to identify different words, phrases, and the relationships between them using NVIVO software (data

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coding). This allowed the researcher to find common themes and concepts as a part of thematic analysis which focused on extracting themes from the text. Assigning codes to words and phrases first and identifying common themes in each response helped the researcher to better analyze and summarize the results of the entire interview findings. **Finally, direct quotes were also presented to substantiate the main themes**. To sum up, transcribing, coding, identifying themes, summarizing, and interpreting were used as a guide to analyzing qualitative data with the help of NVIVO (Cohen et al., 2007).

In the first stage of the data analysis, participants' view of the practice of SBM in Ethiopia was presented. The document review report on SBM practice was narrated qualitatively. Document analysis was intended to gain a contextual understanding of the interview findings. No themes were found at this stage. In the second step, the researcher analyzed the interview reports about challenges in implementing SBM. **In the third step,** the researcher analyzed the interview reports about prospects in implementing SBM by following the same procedure as step two. For the second and third research questions, the aforementioned analyzing qualitative data steps (transcribing, coding, identifying themes, summarizing, and interpreting) were employed.

Trustworthiness

To make sure the trustworthiness of the findings, triangulation was employed (Patton, 2014) by applying multiple data sources, including a semi-structured interview, and document analysis and multiple theoretical approaches (e.g., principle of equifinality (Cheng, 1993), sequential theory of decentralization, and Theory Y). In addition, transcript qualitative data were sent to the interviewees for verification of

the accuracy of the data. To check the reliability of interview data and to see inter agreement among experts over themes about practices and challenges of in implementing SBM. The researcher used Cohen's kappa coefficient (κ), and the agreement's value was 0.714. This value showed that the expert coding agreement or inter-reliability was very high (Holzmann, 1996). In addition, to confirm that the results of this study are derived from the narratives of participants and not from the potential personal narratives of the researcher, an audit trail was also maintained (Polit & Beck, 2018). Direct quotes were also added under the main causes, to gain a better understanding of participants' responses and ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

Results & Discussion

Practices of school-based administration system in Ethiopia so far

In addition to participants' responses, this section reviews documents on how Ethiopian education policy enables SBM to make decisions and how the implementation looks at the ground based on different studies. Documents review of schools' financial reports showed that most resources including teaching materials were purchased by the district education office (in Ethiopia called the woreda education office). In school minutes, some PTSAs members did not participate and sign their signatures.

Related to the practice of SBM in Ethiopia, a school principal reported:

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Even if SBM is not adequately implemented, we are working with local actors on many occasions; for instance, the village (kebele) administration plays a significant role in promoting parent and community participation in school management and decision-making. Particularly in rural areas, the schools and PTAs report the lists of children who dropped out to the kebele administration since the administration is in close contact with the communities. They can influence parents to send their children to school and reduce school drop-out rates.

The school vice principal confirmed this by reporting, "We were not consulted even on the formulation of the *school grant* policy (one practice for SBM), and we heard about it only during orientations for implementation. Thus, it takes many years to practice SBM in our context". This is consistent with other scholars (e.g., Kelil et al., 2014).

At the school level, as participants reported (district education office head 2), "The *block grant* budget is expected to cover recurrent expenditures, salaries, and running cost". However, in the study of Kelil et al. (2014), in Oromia and Somali national, regional states in Ethiopia, the salaries of the teachers were managed at the district level and in some cases the running costs as well. Thus, based on document review and interviews with concerned bodies, this study revealed that SBM was not adequately consulted and implemented in Ethiopian schools.

Challenges for implementing school-based administration in Ethiopia

While the schools operate school-based administration, the schools may face the following challenges:

Lack of time

In Ethiopia, as participants reported, the implementation of SBM faces obstacles such as a lack of time to advance education from the community, particularly women. Some of them contribute more money than the contribution of thought, like in the decision-making process, due to scarcity of time.

A high school principal stated that:

Even if school committee member input to the school is very high, the biggest challenge is the lack of time since most school committee members have their businesses and tasks

This is affirmed by a study in Victoria (Gamage et al., 1991). Thus, the participants of this study strongly suggested that the government should make a clear policy to increase the participation of the community (a university expert 1). This is consistent with the study conducted by Swift-Morgan (2006) in southern Ethiopia.

Lack of capacity

As the participants reported, the implementations of the SBM face the challenges of the administrative capacity of crucial members of the SBMs, and lack of cooperation from the school managers. This result is in line with the studies of Kelil et al. (2014) who did find that some principals do not have the skills to manage school resources efficiently.

Uncertainty and overload

An expert from the university reported that overload, particularly with principals, would be a significant challenge for implementing SBM.

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A district education head 2 explained the challenges in implementing SBM as "I am afraid that they will be in trouble due to workload." This is affirmed by a study in Victoria (Gamage et al., 1991) and New Zealand experience (Sleegers & Wesselingh, 1993) where the principal works more than 60 hours soared weekly.

Others

Participants also reported inadequate finances, government interference, poor attendance, teachers' misconception of SBM, non-cooperation of the school community, the lack of inappropriate knowledge of school activities, the lack of resources, low involvement of parents and community, the lack of decision-making skills, the lack of communication, and trust among stakeholders and misunderstanding about new roles and responsibilities, as challenges facing in implementing SBM. This finding thus corroborates earlier findings by Matthew (2020) in Nigeria and Victoria (Gamage et al., 1991) and Ethiopia (Mitchell, 2017).

Principal 1 described the interference of the Government as a challenge in school stated:

> *School administration and committees are susceptible to their roles and functions and ready to take accountability for what happens in our school. However, the district education office sometimes imparted many tasks to report weekly and monthly, which is seen as interference by most school members.*

Thus, the Ethiopian Government should decentralize finance toward the schools in an identical form, as the Netherlands established lump-sum funding for facilitating SBM (Karsten & Meijer, 1999).

Prospects for implementing SBM in Ethiopia

Below are some responses from participants on the prospects of implementing SBM in Ethiopia.

Commission a steering committee- The Minister of Education has decentralized activities- from federal to regions-provinces (zones)-districts (woreda). Nevertheless, the school was not successful and did not try at all. To do this successfully, most participants stated that, first, the Minister of Education should commission a steering committee to introduce SBM in schools, like the case of Israel (The Minister of Education, 1993; Caldwell, 2005).

A principal in primary school described his ideas on this issue:

> *We should formulate school-based guidelines with the sub-committees in our school and discuss all the required support information, finance, and physical and material resources to implement the SBM policy (P1)*

Vice Principal also stated: *"It seems to work in our school most efficiently and effectively if we begin with forming various task forces under the principal close supervision and direction" (VP2)*

This is also affirmed by a study in Victoria (Gamage et al., 1991), which recommended initially establishing a committee responsible for developing a clear definition of focused goals and a clear work plan to implement SBM.

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Make pilot projects- The second thing participants reported was that Ethiopia should begin experiments or pilot projects to give some schools greater control over their budgets.

A university expert 2 stated the usefullness of the pilot as follows:

The experimental study should take some schools to implement SBM and other traditional schools as control variables. Then see the difference between schools with SBM and traditional schools over the issues of school effectiveness. Then all schools will follow the footprint of these schools and be granted SBM as a system.

This present finding is consistent with studies conducted in Dade County, Houston, Cincinnati, Seattle, and Oakland, which have tremendously grown SBM structures (Fitzpatrick, 2012; Paul & Bonan, 1993; Weiss, 1992). They revealed that the pilot project helped identify implementation problems, learned from the pilot, and could adopt SBM confident of continued support. Work with international organizations such as UNESCO and UNICEF to get funds for piloting some schools, like the case of Indonesia (Caldwell, 2005). Theoretically, this finding was supported by a sequential theory of decentralization that defines decentralization as a process, not an immediate output since it takes ample time and trials for increasing the power of local management.

Give legal authority to schools to define themselves and to use block grants and school grants.

Giving legal authority to schools to define themselves is another opportunity to implement SBM in Ethiopia, as reported by principals and education experts.

One participant commented about this issue as follows:

As for me, the transference of decision-making, planning, and monitoring authority to school levels is very important since we will be scolded when we decide. The district education office constructed and managed school buildings and facilities years ago (P1).

Similarly, in New Zealand, one of the first tasks for schools in the new management system was to define themselves through their charter. The present study is in line with the studies of Martin (2019) and Iyengar (2021), who suggested making decision-making at the heart of the school as a remedial measure for ineffective SBM implementation in the Philippines. This is true in Nicaragua; the role of the MoE at the school level should involve primarily supervisory (Arcia & Belli, 1999). In line with the present study, the sequential theory of decentralization (Falleti, 2010) also argues that the sequencing of different types of decentralization (fiscal, administrative, and political) is a key determinant of the evolution of the intergovernmental balance of power. In addition in a similar vein to the present study, based on Cheng's (1993) principle of equifinality, schools should define themselves and assume different ways to achieve their goals according to their conditions. Due to the complexity of present educational tasks and the big differences among schools, SBM does not deny that schools need to achieve policy goals, but there should be many different ways to achieve them by defining themselves independently (i.e. the principle of equifinality). Therefore it is necessary to let schools become a self-managing system and possess considerable autonomy to develop teaching objectives and management strategies, distribute manpower and resources, solve problems, and accomplish goals according to their

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conditions. As the schools are self-managing, they are more likely to take the initiative for their responsibility.

Increase the direct relationship between schools, districts, and regional educational bureaus.

Participants reported that poor communication between the district education office and the regional bureaus yielded poor monitoring of the district's performance and supports that those in need. Some participants underlined the usefulness of improving the relationship between the school, the District Education Office, and regional education bureaus in reducing the problems related to resource management, selection of teachers' capacity building and training, and ensuring transparency. Good internet access is essential in increasing the relationship between district and regional educational bureaus. Studies by Martin (2019) and Iyengar (2021), were also supported the present study by suggesting open communication among stakeholders as a remedial measure for ineffective SBM implementation in the Philippines.

Provide in-service training for all school stakeholders

Ethiopia may provide in-service training for teachers, principals, and other school stakeholders with new central-policy measures to implement the SBM system fruitfully. Participants of this study commented about the importance of training for better implementation of SBM as follows:

A high school principal (P2) commenting about the usefulness of training stated:

> *Even if the school committee could determine the number of training and workshops, ongoing support and training workshops are required for all stakeholders about school leadership, managerial practices, SBM worldwide practices, and challenges.*

This finding aligns with the Netherlands, New Zealand, and Indonesia experiences (Adam, 2002). This was true in Sri Lanka (Aturupane et al., 2022), Nicaraguan (Pettigrew et al., 2021), and in the New Zealand social context (Sleegers & Wesselingh, 1993) emphasizing the use of in-service training for school partners for the implementation of SBM.

See teachers as a driving force in improving school management

Respondents marked the critical role of teachers in helping to increase community participation and in school management, leading the activities of PTSAs, reducing drop-out, and coordinating student clubs. All these activities are crucial for the implementation of SBM effectively and efficiently. Related to this, a university expert 1 stated:

> *By creating open communication and feedback sessions and stimulating and motivating teachers, we can make teachers actively present in the classroom and implementations of SBM.*

This is in line with the study of a school in the Philippines by Iyengar (2021). This finding was also supported by theory Y, which argues that when democratic participation is practised in the organization, humans including teachers are willing to serve for their shared goals and to look for more responsibilities to take up.

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Give more voice to Village (kebele) administration, parents, and community.

To implement SBM in Ethiopia, participants reported that the Ministry of Education should give more voice to parents and the community. The present study was also supported by the study of Kelil et al. (2014). Referring to the importance of parent and community involvement, a district education expert stated:

> *Parents and the community at large have the perspective to build students' social and intellectual capital by connecting them to the real world. Although we have PTSAs, school improvement committees, and parent committees, unfortunately, these bunches of committees need to be sufficiently working.*

Another respondent (VP1) recommended, "Sharing with parents about the SBM in an informal way to reduce resistance is important."

A third participant recommended," Bringing parents of community members as guest speakers to the school or classrooms, to promote the participation and commitment of the parents and students" (a district education expert 2).

A university expert 1 commented on this issue stated:

> *For the success of SBM, walking on two legs means the school and community should work together by promoting community awareness of SBM and the schools' goals and missions. By doing so., various people around the school will be more likely to exert their efforts for the success of schools.*

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This finding aligns with a study by Iyengar (2021) and Arcia & Belli (1999)., who found the significant importance of community and parent involvement in post-Covid-19 in the educational setting. The present result was also supported by Booyse's (2018) Participatory Democracy Theory which emphasizes the importance of involving stakeholders in decision-making processes. In the case of schools, Participatory Democracy Theory can be used to ensure the involvement of stakeholders such as students, teachers, parents, and community members in school governance and decision-making. Booyse (2018) argues that since the goal of a school is multiple and complicated, they need the intelligence, imagination, and effort of more people to accomplish them. In addition, since federalism supports the voice of local stakeholders, Riker's theory of federalism (Riker, 1964) also supported the present study.

Give voice to students beyond student clubs and parliaments

For better implementation of SBM, participants extended the voice of students beyond student clubs and parliaments**.** Participants confirmed this. For instance,

> *By supplying information to school members in oral and written form before any discussion, principals can get students' views in the decision-making process (a university expert 1).*

In line with the present study, students have begun to play a significant part in school decision-making about teaching and learning by participating in activities (Gamage et al., 1991, Kelil et al., 2014). In the same vein, self-managing schools link to participatory democracy theory that ensures the involvement of students in decision-making,

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contrary to Managerialism which rejects stakeholders' independence in self-management and decision-making. Theory Y also supported this result by suggesting democratic participation in the school as a crucial element to motivate students.

Conclusion and Implications

This study followed theories that emphasized on decentralization of management such as modern management theory (principle of equifinality) (Cheng, 1993), sequential theory of decentralization (Falleti, 2010), Theory Y (McGregor, 1960), Participatory Democracy Theory (Booyse, 2018), and Riker's theory of federalism (Riker, 1964). This study presented evidence-based learning processes of SBM implementation in various countries. Thus, experiences learned from these countries' cases can assist Ethiopia in implementing SBM. This study found that implementing the SBM in Ethiopian schools was ineffective, leaving much to be desired because of the various challenges in implementing it properly. Low administrative capacity; uncertainty, overload, poor attendance of members at meetings, the lack of cooperation from the school managers, inadequate finance, government interference, teachers' misconception of SBM, and low involvement of parents and community were obstacles in the implementation of SBM in Ethiopia.

To improve school management at the school level, Ethiopian schools can take the following lessons or prospects into account: Commission a steering committee to introduce SBM, make a pilot project to allow some schools to have greater control over their budgets, give legal authority to schools to define themselves and control budgets,

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increase the direct relationship between schools, district education bureaus and regional educational bureaus and so forth.

For SBM to succeed, all school stakeholders are required to support proper implementation of SBM activities in schools and ensure accountability in the management of SBM's funds. This study has several implications. Theoretically, the findings of this study contributed the literature by adding knowledge and clarifying the effectiveness and challenges of implementing SBM in the Ethiopian context. Practically, these findings also help educational policymakers in their attempts to plan and formulate operational policy guidelines for the effective operation of the SBMs to improve school effectiveness and students' academic performance. This study has many implications for many stakeholders of education, such as school administrators, to understand the challenges of implementing SBM and to tackle the various challenges in their respective schools by considering the suggested prospects. This study will also help school leaders to develop their framework or strategy to manage human, financial, material, and physical resources and empower schools' management boards, teachers, and communities to make informed decisions to improve the use of resources and service delivery.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

One of the limitations of the present study is the limited number of samples, which means that from a limited number of cases of experts and principals, it is difficult to statistically generalize to other schools in the country (Stake, 1995). Thus, future researchers can conduct studies about SBM's practices, challenges, prospects, and its contribution to school effectiveness and school improvement in a different context by using a

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large sample and mixed research methods. Thus, this study will serve as a springboard for future researchers to study SBM, educational leadership, management, and planning.

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Ethics approval

The author declares that all information in this study has been complied with institute of education and behavioral science, Debre Markos University. Also the author informed the participants about the purpose and process of the research. Participants were informed that their names and institution names would be kept confidential and their privacy rights were protected. Participants were included in the process on a voluntary basis.

About the author:

Kelemu Zelalem Berhanu, a postdoctoral research fellow at University of Johannesburg, South Africa. He holds a PhD in Educational Management, inspection, economics and planning from Akdeniz University – Turkey. His research focuses on leadership, empowerment, school-based management, and organizational commitment and behavior. His research has been published in several international journals.

E-mail: lkelemu@yahoo.com