

## School-Based Management Approach in Improving Academic Performance: A systematic Review

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### Abstract

School based management (SBM) and the academic outcomes of the students are subjects of theories but not evenly supported, on the bases of evidences, in the context of education. This systematic review summarizes results of ten high-quality studies published in 2013-2024 and consider in detail how SBM affects academic outcomes and when its positive effects can be achieved. The review ascertains that SBM has the ability to boost academic performance especially when underpinned by effective leadership, interscholastic types of school cultures and good based management practices. Further examination has, however, thwarted by the existence of formidable contextual contingencies; the success of SBM, based on leadership ethics, community participation, structural equity and political support. Additionally, the existing evidence base has several major limitations, such as the lack of longitudinal research, the underemphasis on the aspect of equity, and bias towards the middle-income and urban environments. Unless specific protection mechanisms and capacity-building are put in place, space is created to expand the established inequalities instead of realizing the promised democratizing effects of SBM. The results encourage a new generation of SBM research that will seek to be more critical about the questions of power, equity and justice without being too narrowly balled as a strictly technocratic procedure with the aim of enhancing more inclusive and transformational modes of school governance.

## Introduction

The improvement of students' academic performance is the primary goal of every educational institution worldwide. However, traditional approaches to school management are often ineffective in optimizing student learning outcomes. The School-Based Management (SBM) approach offers the potential to enhance academic performance through the decentralization of decision-making and the participation of the school community. In recent decades, SBM has become a central focus in various efforts to improve academic performance in educational institutions (Saro et al., 2022; Saliendrez & Merlin, 2024).

The academic supervision by the principal plays a key role in the SBM approach (Herlina, 2023). Demonstrates that the principal's academic supervision significantly influences teacher performance at SMPN 2 Pammana, while Zulqaidah (2023) highlights academic supervision strategies in improving teacher performance through qualitative research. These findings are consistent with Kustanti (2024) research, which indicates that academic supervision, teacher competence, and work motivation significantly affect teacher performance at SD Negeri Inti and Imbas Se-Kecamatan Ringinarum, Kendal Regency. Furthermore, research by Novebri & Lubis (2022) also confirms the positive contribution of academic supervision to teacher performance at the Adnani Islamic Education Foundation.

Principals play a central role in implementing academic supervision. Putri (2023) highlights the influence of the principal's academic supervision on teacher performance in elementary schools, while Fathuroh (2022) shows similar influence in SD Negeri Se-Kecamatan Getasan, Semarang Regency. Additionally, factors such as self-efficacy, achievement motivation, and organizational culture are also crucial in improving academic performance. (Warni, 2024) highlights the impact of self-efficacy and achievement motivation moderated by academic supervision, while Fasa (2020) emphasizes the importance of educational supervision in enhancing the performance of Indonesian language teachers.

In facing challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic, academic supervision has become key in ensuring the continuity of learning (Rosalina et al., 2021; Regehr & McCahan, 2020; Ochieng & Katende, 2024; Muftahu, 2020). Highlight the role of academic supervision on the performance of elementary school teachers during the pandemic, demonstrating the relevance of academic supervision in emergency situations. The school-based management approach, focusing on academic supervision, is an effective strategy for improving academic performance (Nzoka & Ordho, 2014; Susilo et al., 2024; Ayeni & Ibukun, 2013). Through proper supervision, principals can provide the support, guidance, and feedback needed to enhance the quality of teaching and teacher performance. By considering factors such as compensation, motivation, competence, self-efficacy, and organizational culture, educational institutions can achieve better academic goals (Al-Ansi et al., 2023). In evaluating the effectiveness of SBM in improving students' academic performance, several relevant references are synthesized. Research by Kakingo & Lekule (2021) highlights the influence of Total Quality Management (TQM) on students' academic performance in public high schools in Ifakara City. The implementation of TQM not only improves students' academic performance but also teachers' job satisfaction, indicating that a quality-focused management approach can positively impact academic performance.

(Widianti et al., 2023) emphasize the importance of excellent management programs in creating quality schools at SMAIT Thariq Bin Ziyad in Bekasi. The quality of education can be seen from students' achievements in both academic and non-academic fields, reaffirming that good management significantly contributes to the quality of education and students' academic performance. Research by (Nakiyaga et al., 2021) discusses a conceptual model explaining how stakeholder participation in school management can enhance students' academic performance in public high schools in Uganda. This research underscores that quality educational outcomes require continuous improvement in the learning process and instructional activities in schools.

(Winarti, 2024) discusses the efforts of principals in implementing supervision based on coaching to mobilize teachers. This model aims to improve teachers' competence in conducting academic supervision activities through pre-supervision, supervision, and post-supervision stages in schools. This approach shows that school-based management, which pays attention to the development of teachers' competence, can positively impact students' academic performance. From various synthesized studies, it can be concluded that school-based management plays a significant role in improving students' academic performance. The implementation of Total Quality Management, excellent management programs, stakeholder participation, and supervision based on coaching can create an environment that supports the improvement of students' academic achievements. By considering these factors, educational institutions can enhance their management effectiveness to achieve better academic goals.

This study aims to test the hypothesis that the School-Based Management approach significantly improves students' academic performance compared to traditional school

management approaches. This hypothesis will be tested through a comparative analysis of various published studies over the past 20 years that evaluate the impact of SBM on students' academic performance in different countries. This study uses a systematic review with inclusion criteria covering quantitative and qualitative studies that assess academic outcomes as one of the dependent variables. Additionally, this research will explore various aspects of SBM implementation, including community participation, decision-making decentralization, and government support. By understanding and analyzing various findings in the context of SBM, this research hopes to provide significant contributions to the development of more effective educational management strategies. The results of this study are expected to provide insights for policymakers and educational practitioners in their efforts to improve students' academic performance through a more participatory and decentralized management approach.

## Methods

This study employs a literature search strategy across various databases, including books, national and international journals, and other reputable sources. The primary focus in selecting the sources is the quality of the articles, their relevance to the topic, and the completeness of the data. The literature search was conducted through databases such as Google Scholar, PubMed, and Scopus using keywords like 'school-based management' and 'academic performance.' The exclusion criteria applied are as follows: (1) Articles not published in journals indexed by the Scimago Journal Rank (SJR) and the Science and Technology Index (Sinta), (2) Articles written in English and Indonesian, (3) Articles published outside the last 10 years, specifically between 2013 and 2023, (4) Articles that do not explicitly mention the challenges in school-based management. The initial search identified 150 publications through the databases (Google Scholar: 50 articles, SINT: 50 articles, and Scopus: 50 articles). After applying the exclusion criteria, only 10 relevant articles remained. The reduction from 150 articles to just 10 after applying the exclusion criteria raises concerns about the comprehensiveness of the literature search. While it is typical for databases to yield a large number of results initially, it is unusual for such a high number of articles to be excluded in the process.

The study notes that the majority of the articles were excluded because they did not address the impact of school-based management on academic performance, which is a valid exclusion criterion. However, the reasons for prioritizing academic performance as the primary focus of this study need to be more clearly articulated. By narrowing the focus exclusively to studies examining academic performance, the research limits itself to a very specific outcome. Therefore, it would be helpful for the study to explain why academic performance was chosen as the main lens to evaluate the effectiveness of school-based management. School-based management encompasses various dimensions such as autonomy, decision-making, leadership, and resource allocation, all of which can influence educational outcomes in ways that may not be directly measurable through academic performance alone. For example, SBM might also improve school climate, teacher satisfaction, or student engagement, none of which may be reflected in academic scores but could still be valuable outcomes of the intervention. The study should clarify whether these other dimensions were considered or excluded from the search, and if so, why.

Additionally, the study could provide more clarity on how "academic performance" is defined and measured in the context of the selected articles. Is it limited to standardized test scores or grades, or does it also include broader educational indicators such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and student well-being? A more precise definition of academic performance would

help ensure that the remaining studies are aligned with the research question and that the analysis accurately measures the intended outcomes.

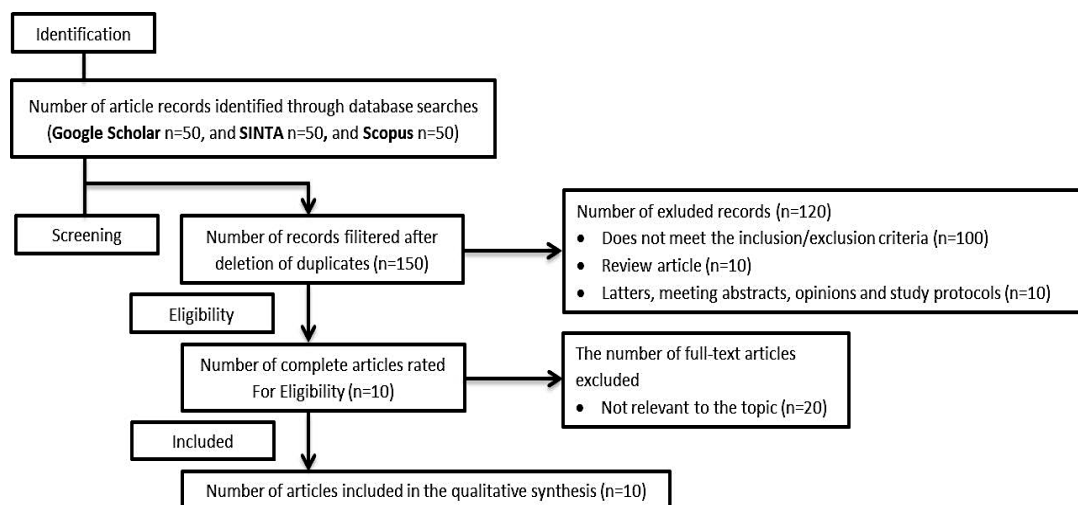


Figure 1. Selection process of articles used to utilise PRISMA guidelines

This would also help readers understand whether the research on school-based management can be generalized to different educational contexts, or if it is confined to a specific set of outcomes that may not fully represent the broader educational impacts of such management practices. Finally, the sharp reduction in the number of articles raises questions about whether the remaining 10 articles adequately represent the full spectrum of literature on the topic or if the stringent criteria unintentionally overlooked valuable studies. For instance, were any articles excluded that discussed the indirect or long-term impacts of school-based management on academic performance because they did not explicitly focus on immediate or direct outcomes? Discussing these points would help justify the decision to focus solely on academic performance and demonstrate that the exclusion process was thorough and reasonable.

## Results and Discussion

Researchers have linked the SBM approach to improved student academic performance, developed adaptive SBM models responsive to policy and technological changes, and proposed innovative school management approaches focusing on collaboration among schools, parents, and communities. Despite some differences, the majority of studies affirm the significant role of SBM in enhancing student academic performance, though evidence remains limited. Therefore, further research is needed for a more comprehensive understanding of the existing literature. However, it is essential to acknowledge that the success of SBM may vary across different educational contexts and is influenced by external factors such as government policies, available resources, and social-political dynamics. The findings of the literature review are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Article Summary of School-Based Management Approaches in Improving Academic Performance

Author and Year	Method and Type of Research	Article Title	Research Objective	Research Results
(Agirdag & Muijls, 2023)	This study uses a research design Quasi-experimental design	School leadership development and academic achievement:	This study evaluates the effectiveness of the High Performing Schools (HPS)	The analysis showed that schools in the HPS program had higher academic achievement, with gains equivalent to six to eight months of learning. Schools in the PLC version

		Effectiveness of the High Performing Schools programme.	programme in the Netherlands, which focuses on school improvement and evidence-based leadership.	performed best, significantly in math and writing, but not in reading. The study concluded that the HPS program is promising.
(Ali et al., 2020)	This study used a cross-sectional design with a stratified random sampling technique.	"School role in improving parenting skills and academic performance of children"	This study examines the role of schools in improving parenting skills and its impact on children's academic performance in Malakand.	The results showed that there was an association between the role of schools in improving parenting skills with children's academic performance. Variations in children's academic performance were also influenced by the child's gender, parental literacy status, and the importance of education according to parents.
(Ozer, 2022)	This study uses quasi-experimental and analytical methods to evaluate the "1000 Vocational Schools" project.	Factor Environment School, Characteristics Students, and Achievements Academic : Case Student School Intermediate First in the District West Krachi, Ghana	This study evaluates school improvement in Türkiye in a project to improve the climate and facilities in 1,000 vocational schools.	Research shows that the project successfully improved the climate and physical facilities in 1,000 vocational schools. More than 100,000 students received academic support, 400,000 received psychosocial support, and 300,000 teachers received training. Parent participation increased by 11,000 people. The project became a practical model for the "10,000 Schools in Basic Education Project".
(Wulandari et al., 2019)	This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach.	"School-Based Management in the Graduated Empowerment Perspective"	This study analyzes human resource management in Islamic boarding schools to empower graduates and achieve educational goals through school-based management.	The results of the study show that human resource management at the Da'arul Rahman Islamic Boarding School includes selection, placement, development, and retirement of teachers and education personnel. Selection is carried out through agreement, prioritizing graduates of Islamic boarding schools who meet the established educational standards.
(Parveen et al., 2024).	The research used an exploratory sequential mix-methods research design.	"The contribution of quality management practices to student performance: Mediated by school culture"	This study aims to explore the perceptions of principals regarding quality management practices and their relationship with school culture and student performance in government secondary schools in Punjab province, Pakistan.	This study uses SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) analysis to obtain quantitative results, and the results of the analysis show that all hypotheses proposed are supported by the data. This study provides empirical evidence that the implementation of quality management practices can improve school culture and, in turn, improve student performance.
(Tamm et al., 2024)	This study tested a school intervention with an exploratory mixed design in a pilot study.	"Improving academic performance through a school-based intervention targeting	This study evaluated the feasibility, satisfaction, and initial efficacy of a school-based "AIMS"	The study showed that the school-based AIMS intervention was highly feasible and acceptable to students. There was improvement in academic executive functioning skills and academic behavior as reported by parents and teachers. These findings

		academic executive functions – a pilot study"	intervention in 6 students with ASD.	support the continued development of the intervention and provide evidence that academic executive skills can be improved in students with ASD.
(Amon & Rajib Bustami, 2021)	This study uses a literature review method with descriptive analysis.	"Implementation of School-Based Management in Curriculum and Learning Processes: a Literature Review"	Research shows that the implementation of MBS is still limited. To increase its effectiveness, it is necessary to increase the capacity of school principals, teachers, school committees, and support from the central and regional governments.	This study emphasizes the need for standard MBS evaluation instruments, empowerment of education officials and PTAs, and improvement of leadership quality and teacher empowerment for motivation and guidance of pedagogy, professionalism, accountability, and integrity.
(Bersamin et al., 2017)	This study uses a systematic literature review and process evaluation method.	"Measuring Success: Evaluation Designs and Approaches to Assessing the Impact of School-Based Health Centers"	This research aims review challenge methodological in evaluate Impact of Center -Based Health Centers Schools (SBHCs) on physical , mental, and academic health outcomes academic children as well as teenager.	Research shows that access to School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) is associated with positive academic outcomes such as increased attendance, grade point averages, and decreased dropout. SBHC users also report better relationships with adults, higher expectations from them, and more active participation in school .
(Isa et al., 2020)	This study uses a systematic literature review method.	"School-Based Management (SBM) Practices in Malaysia: A Systematic Literature Review"	This study analyzes studies on School Based Management practices in Malaysia, identifying forms, issues and challenges in its implementation.	The results of the study show that the implementation of SBM in Malaysia is at a good level and uses a combination of two models, namely SBM with administrative control and SBM with professional control.
(Vally & Daud, 2015)	This study uses quantitative methods with data collection through questionnaires.	"The Implementation of School-Based Management Policy: An Exploration"	This study explores the readiness of secondary school principals in Kuala Lumpur to implement SBM, focusing on organizational, leadership, and strategy factors.	Research in Kuala Lumpur shows that principals are effective in setting vision, mission, and human resource management. Their leadership effectiveness is positively correlated with the implementation of vision, mission, and human resource management. They are committed to improving schools and involving teachers, but changes in methods, technology, and delegation of leadership are still less than optimal.

The convert and context diversity of the studies of the role of SBM on academic performance is displayed in Table 1. The evidence is mostly positive in different educational systems (Europe, Asia, Africa) and shows SBM has many ways of improving academic accomplishments: leadership development (Agirdag & Muijls, 2023), collaboration with

parents (Ali et al., 2020), climate and infrastructure enhancement in school (Ozer, 2022), and interventions targeting SBM (Tamm et al., 2024). It is important to note that the effectiveness of academic supervision and TQM interventions as effective levers towards increased academic performance keep cropping up in the studies. However, the variation in measurement approaches (from test scores to behavioral outcomes) suggests a need for a more standardized framework to better compare SBM impacts across settings. Additionally, the relatively limited representation of long-term outcomes and low- and middle-income country contexts leaves a gap in understanding SBM’s sustainability and equity dimensions.

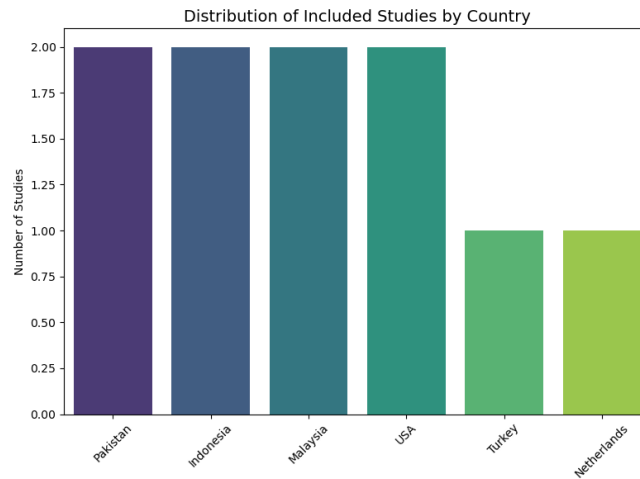


Figure 1. Distribution of Included Studies by Country

It is also evident that SBM research is heavily concentrated geographically, with several studies generated in Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia and the United States of America. There is a lack of studies in the Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe in general, which does not make the findings that universal across the globe. This is unfair to imply that SBM literature presently speaks disproportionately of the educational settings where SBM is more formal or policy led and the educational settings with distinctive governance models are plentifully unrepresented. By extending SBM study to such under-represented regions, it would become important to examine how SBM ideals can work in different sociopolitical and economic settings.

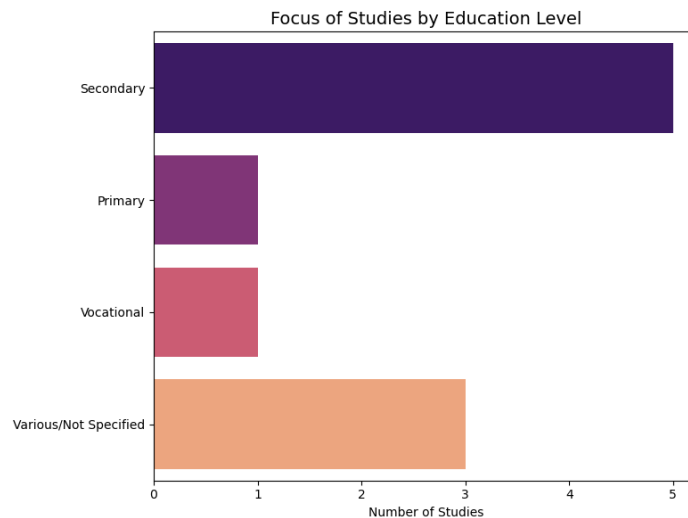


Figure 2. Focus of Studies by Education Level

Most of the SBM studies major on secondary education (5 studies out of 11), less on primary (1 study) and vocational (1 study) education. This is indicative of a possible bias in the literature in middle- and high-school where students performance is more often measured using standardized tests. The existing tendency of underestimating primary and vocational education (and early childhood education in its turn) illustrates another research gap. In light of foundational learning and career readiness being important policy priorities in every country, the key areas of study in response to foundational learning and career readiness which future SBM studies should expand to include are those educational stages at which SBM might uniquely interact and make a difference.

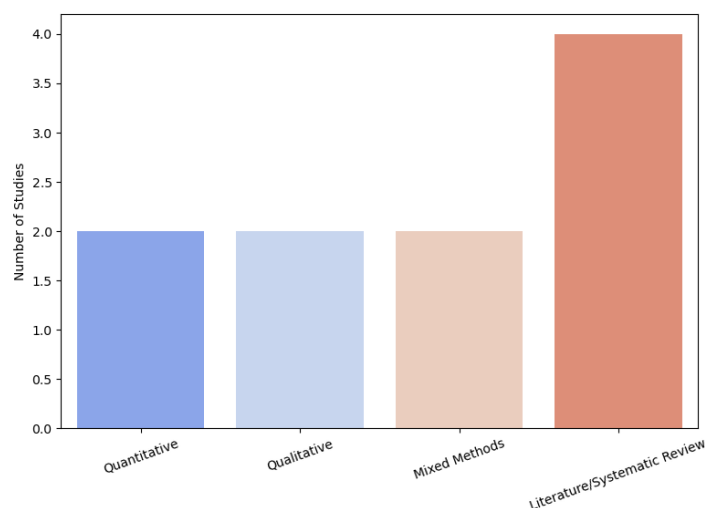


Figure 3. Types of Studies Reviewed

Methodological composition of SBM literature comprehends striking absence of rather stringent experiment designs. Though they make up the greatest portion of the studies (4), literature and systematic reviews can have limitations in studying a particular issue (4). Qualitative/mixed methods are also limited in their positive impact on studying a particular issue due to the contextual information they provide (4 studies). There are relatively few studies with a valid use of causal inference by means of what they refer to as a quantitative study (only 2 studies). Lacking randomized controlled trials or effective longitudinal designs, the soundness of the causal findings on the effects of SBM on the academic performance are questionable. Addressing this methodological gap is critical if the field is to produce more definitive and actionable evidence that can guide policymakers and practitioners.

Table 2. Key Components of School-Based Management (SBM) Influencing Academic Performance

Key SBM Component	Supporting Evidence from Reviewed Studies	Impact on Academic Performance
Academic Supervision by Principals	Herlina (2023); Zulqaidah (2023); Kustanti (2024); Putri (2023)	Enhances teacher performance, leading to improved student outcomes
Leadership Development and Visionary Leadership	Agirdag & Muijls (2023); Wulandari et al. (2019); Fauzi (2021); Yusuf & Basrowi (2023)	Drives school culture change, increases motivation and performance
Quality Management Practices (TQM)	Kakingo & Lekule (2021); Parveen et al. (2024); Widianti et al. (2023)	Creates structured improvement of teaching quality and student achievement

Stakeholder Participation	Nakiyaga et al. (2021); Ali et al. (2020); Ozer (2022)	Builds community support, enriches learning environment
Targeted School-based Interventions	Tamm et al. (2024); Bersamin et al. (2017)	Improves performance of special needs and marginalized students
Inclusive Curriculum and Contextual Management	Mubarok (2024); Makalew (2023); Nashori (2023)	Fosters inclusive culture and improves learning outcomes

The table shows that SBM success does not exist in monolithic proportions and it is based on various synergetic elements. Principal and leadership development become key leverages of academic supervision. Nevertheless, quality management and community integration have a supporting framework to keep the operation of these improvements intact. It is important to note that the study reviewed underrepresents the use of inclusive curriculum practices, which are promising in terms of equity-related results.

Table 3. Mediating Factors Moderating the Impact of SBM on Academic Performance

Mediating Factor	Supporting Evidence	Direction of Moderation
Teacher Self-efficacy and Motivation	Warni (2024); Himmah & Shofiah (2021); Mardiana et al. (2023)	Positive
Organizational Culture	Parveen et al. (2024); Fauzi (2021); Yusuf & Basrowi (2023)	Positive
Government and Policy Support	Amon & Rajib Bustami (2021); Isa et al. (2020); Vally & Daud (2015)	Positive when strong, limiting when weak
School Resource Allocation and Infrastructure	Ozer (2022); Widiанти et al. (2023); Ali et al. (2020)	Positive
Parental Support and Engagement	Ali et al. (2020); Nakiyaga et al. (2021); Rosalina et al. (2021)	Positive
Student Socio-emotional Support	Bersamin et al. (2017); Tamm et al. (2024); Nashori (2023)	Positive

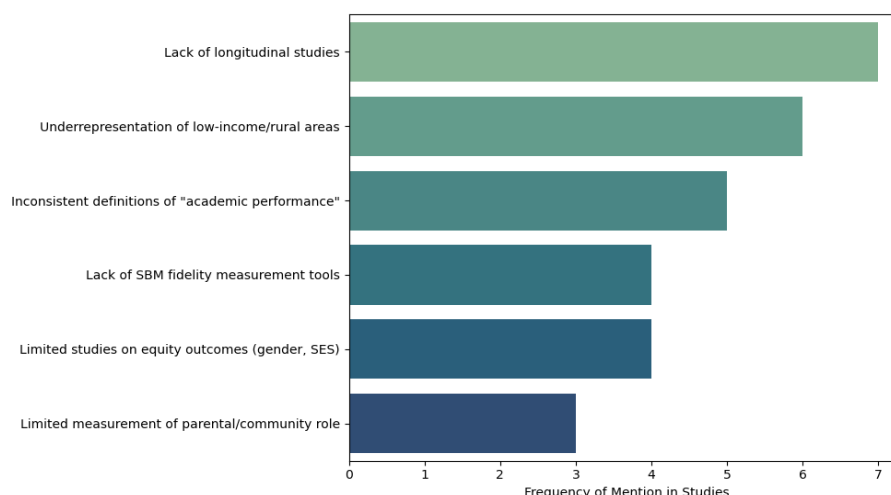


Figure 4. Key Gaps in Current SBM Research

Human (teacher motivation), organizational (culture, leadership) and structural (resources, policy) factors mediate SBM effectiveness. Government and policy support was the most critical issue--with low support, implementation can only be done at a limited amount, and

even the greatest leadership cannot easily overcome. Furthermore, parental and socio-emotional supports also have increasingly been found to be relevant in enhancing academic outcomes, especially in inclusive settings, as has been emphasized in the literature also.

The insufficient number of longitudinal studies is most mentioned (7), and low-income and rural context are noted to be poorly represented (6). The finding indicates that the existing SBM impact analysis is fairly short-term and urban-specific and does not provide many indicators regarding the sustainability and transferability of SBM reforms in various settings. Moreover, the optional definitions of the notion of the academic performance (5 mentions) demonstrate the necessity to use more conceptual evidence and comparable assessment scales in different researches. There is little discussion of the outcomes of equity (gender, socioeconomic status, special needs) and parental/community involvement, which indicates an incomplete knowledge of the potential of SBM to either resolve or create educational disparity. These gaps need to be overcome to assure that SBM can be used in building more balanced and inclusive education systems across the globe.

### **Amplification of School-Based Management on the development of school academic efficiency**

When one reads the literature on School-Based Management (SBM), there is a strong temptation to accept that its reported advantages in improving the academic performance are axiomatic. At first glance, the synthesized findings presented in this review indicate that once schools gain more control and autonomy regarding resource provision, the measurable improvement of student achievement regularly ensues either in terms of better leadership, a more responsive pedagogical process, or a stronger match between school priorities and the needs of its community (Agirdag & Muijls, 2023; Parveen et al., 2024; Kakingo & Lekule, 2021). This reading, though technically correct, however, runs the danger of flattening out the underlying complexities which thump away beneath the surface of evidence. The actual history of the influence of SBM in learning is considerably more multidimensional, sprinkled with contradictions, and finally determined by political, cultural, and moral overtones, which are explored either least, or not at all by most of the studies.

In the middle of this interaction is the factor of leadership. Not leadership as a bureaucratic activity but as a moral and cultural and pedagogic power. When obtaining a more congruent vision (reported, e.g., by Winarti, 2024; Herlina, 2023; Yusuf & Basrowi, 2023) and putting such antagonistic leadership on hold, principals stop doing the work of SBM mandates but they also are doing a different work by introducing a new relational order in their schools. The result of this review is not an easy linkage of causes and effects between autonomy and achievement, but rather the presence of a complex, relational ecology within which the leadership concept changes autonomy to collective agency. The availability of good leaders seems not only to act as a facilitating influence of the success of SBM but as an imperative prerequisite. However, as one of the hidden contradictions of the SBM model, one can frequently witness the Authority often being given to schools without investing in building leadership capacities to engage this authority effectively (Berhanu, 2023; Leithwood & Menzies, 1998). This sets up an absurdity in which schools, which most need empowerment, typically those schools in disadvantaged communities, are the least able to raise leadership capital that would allow them to realize the potential of SBM.

The same tension arises in the sphere of the importance of Total Quality Management (TQM) practices in SBM. In-depth reviews such as Kakingo & Lekule (2021) and Parveen et al. (2024) make it clear that integrating organized improvement cycles structural remodeling with planning based on data and ongoing feedback would lead to practical improvements in student

outcomes. But there is an uncomfortable undertone about the way TQM is being thought about in most of the literature. Imperfectly translated to educational application and borrowed at that by the industrial production paradigms, TQM is imperfect in its vague presuppositions concerning the definition of the quality and methods of measuring it that can potentially be incompatible with more comprehensive and humanistic intent of education (Ball, 2003). It is possible that in their pursuit of technical efficiency and measurable performance SBM implementations destroy the affective, relational, and emancipatory aspects of schooling—turning learning to acquisition of testable skills and marginalizations creativity, development of ethical sensibilities and the development of social critique. It is not an abstract topic of concern. Those studies that do exist, touching upon the effects of SBM regarding the more general developmental outcomes, such as civic engagement, emotional resilience, cultural competence, are surprisingly lacking, possibly indicating that these areas are sidelined in the contemporary debates on SBM.

There is another round of complexity when it comes to participatory ideals behind the SBM theory. De facto, the main argument advocating decentralizing school control is that it encourages a more active involvement of parents and communities thus making schools more sensitive to the local aspirations and needs (Gavin & Stacey, 2023). However, in practice, the levels and quality of stakeholder engagement ranges extremely, sometimes (as it was shown to be by Ali et al. (2020), and (Nakiyaga et al. (2021) along the axis of social inequality. Invitation to enter the school management in communities where people live in poverty or have low literacy levels or a past history of marginalization can be empty, or be in the hands of the local elites (Rose, 2003). What you end up with is a participatory pretense; formal forms of participation that conceal underlying forms of exclusion. These power relations are brushed over in most of the reviewed studies indicating that it is high time to pay more attention to the ways in which participatory spaces within SBM are organized and the population that speaks in them. With SBM reforms such analysis is sorely needed since it is a very real possibility that these reforms could stabilize rather than advance the democratisation of school governance.

The most obvious weakness in the SBM literature is equity—and Parkin (the opposite of systematic engagement with equity). Although multiple studies gesture at inclusion (e.g., those devoted to special needs interventions (Tamm et al., 2024) or character learning (Makalew, 2023), few publish statistically significant data in disaggregated form on the effects of SBM on students along the axes of gender, disability, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. This is worrying because, as always cried out by Mohialdeen (2016), decentralization without an equity focus might be simply disastrous as schools with more social capital and much better leadership will enjoy all possible advantages of the new-found autonomy. This lack of proper equity perspective in most of the SBM literature restricts the rigour of scholarship as well as erodes the ethics of the movement. Future research should always ask after who benefits and who is left behind, and why, in case SBM is to serve the broader purposes of educational justice.

There is also a methodological limitation that obscures the situation. A lack of longitudinal studies (Agirdag & Muijls, 2023; Parveen et al., 2024) denies us the ability to know whether the improvements brought by SBM are long-lasting or short-lived. We will not be in a position to know whether the positive changes that bring in leadership or pedagogy through SBM are permanent even after the principals who bring it have changed, what funding priorities are and especially when political winds shift without sustained tracking. Neither can we look at the more lasting changes that SBM hopes to bring about to culture: changes that happen over years, not months. Just as bad is the geographical bias of the literature (Figure 1), and its strong

bias towards Asia and Europe, visceral gaps in Africa, Latin America and conflict-affected contexts. SBM reforms can face some peculiar difficulties or produce unintended effects that are simply invisible within the existing evidence base in the fragile states where the state capacity in general and the schooling capacity in particular is weak and in which schooling is politicized (Robertson & Dale, 2002; Ball, 1998).

Lastly (and possibly most fundamentally) we have to place SBM within the political economy of international education reform. The decentralization reforms such as SBM have largely been encouraged in the neoliberal policy context where autonomy, choice and accountability along the lines of market is venerated (Ball, 2003). Although such reforms auger well in terms of empowerment, they can also be used to take the heat off states in as far as outcomes of educational processes are concerned in that governments will have succeeded in escape their duties towards the provision of high quality and equitable education through the school and community levels (Robertson & Dale, 2002). This ideological dimension has been mentioned in very few of the reviewed studies, but it is essential. Unless powered by a critical examination of the broader forces informing the diffusion and implementation of SBM, scholars run the risk of naturalizing a rather contestable and politically charged reform agenda.

This review confirms that SBM can in a favorable condition bring about true improvements in student learning. However, the following conditions that include strong, quality, ethically rooted leadership; genuine, inclusive engagement; solid equity protection; and satisfactory state support are not omnipresent at all. Otherwise, without such conditions, SBM can easily turn into a technocratic solution that increases rather than decreases inequalities. Future scholarship must attempt not just to record what works, but to look more deeply into how, why and with whom. It must attempt to grapple with the structural and ideological conditions that constrain and enable what works and what does not.

## Conclusion

As this systematic review documents, at least School-Based Management (SBM), assuming full implementation with fidelity, leadership, and cultural sensitivity, does have actual potential to enhance academic performance among students. In a variety of settings, SBM frameworks that support school leadership, team culture, and make reflective practice a habit of all faculty members demonstrate good impacts, especially when it comes to teacher quality and student performance. However, the synthesis of the literature at the deeper level demonstrates that these achievements are not automatic and inevitable. SBM reforms are conditional on sector-specific, context-sensitive forces of leadership capacity, power relations, social inequality and political economy; these forces occur too frequently as an underdeveloped research area in empirical studies.

Most importantly, this review has revealed that there are potentially huge gaps in the existing body of evidence. The absence of longitudinal studies raises some important queries concerning the SBM as far as long-term effects of gains are concerned. The sheer paucity of measures addressing equity along gender, disability, ethnic and the socio-economic strata are worrying as SBM might unintentionally act as an accelerator of disparities, not a de-accelerator as it is the ideology. Additionally, studies have utilized under-represented middle low-income, urban environments, whereas it is in these areas that structural limitations of school autonomy are most likely to be faced.

Most of all, perhaps, what the review indicates is that SBM cannot be considered as a neutral technocratic solution. It is politically and morally saturated reform whose effectiveness will depend upon how it is an animated project enshrined in an over commitment to educational

justice. Unless there is protection against low-level manipulation of the process, fake community involvement, equity-based leadership, and long-term funding by the state, SBM can become a tool with which the responsibility is decentralized without sufficient resources, which, in turn, can lead to the aggravation rather than the reduction of systemic inequity. The focus of future studies should not be based on mere technical effectiveness of SBM. It must be critically processional in both the ideological processes driving decentralization, question the experiences on the ground of those most involved with reform and prioritize power/agency/justice issues. Only at that point will SBM be able to graduate as a promising - but not yet complete - model of school reform into a truly transformative program in public education.

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