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Perceived Functionality of School Governance Councils in Small and Medium Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur: Basis for a Context-Responsive Enhancement Framework

Ghizelle G. Balao[1*]

[1]Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College – Sta. Maria Campus, Graduate School, Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur, Philippines

Corresponding Author: Ghizelle G. Balao[1*]

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Abstract: School Governance Councils (SGCs) are intended to provide a structure through which school stakeholders can participate in governance, offer feedback, and support school improvement. However, the existence of a council does not by itself demonstrate that members understand their roles, receive adequate institutional support, or sustain council activities over time. This review examines literature and policy relevant to the perceived functionality of SGCs in small and medium public elementary and secondary schools in the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur. It brings together international research on school governance, governing-body relationships, community-based school management, and school autonomy with Philippine studies on SGC implementation, stakeholder engagement, and School-Based Management (SBM). The literature points to three connected areas: member capacity, operational and institutional support, and continuity and sustainability. Direct Philippine evidence on SGC implementation identifies funding, training, scheduling, commitment, role clarity, and stakeholder engagement as continuing concerns. Broader SBM studies add evidence about communication, access to information, monitoring, and participation, although their findings should not be treated as direct measures of SGC functionality. Local studies in Ilocos Sur provide context on school networking and school leadership but do not directly examine SGCs. The review identifies a specific local evidence gap concerning how designated SGC Co-Chairpersons in small and medium public elementary and secondary schools perceive council functionality. It concludes that a context-responsive enhancement framework should be informed by the conditions reported by council representatives and should not be treated as an official DepEd assessment tool or as proof of school compliance.

Keywords: *School Governance Council, School Governance, School-Based Management, Stakeholder Participation, Member Capacity, Institutional Support, Sustainability.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

School governance concerns the ways authority, participation, accountability, and decision-making are organized within schools. It involves more than the formal assignment of responsibilities to a school head. It also includes the participation of teachers, parents, learners, community representatives, and other stakeholders in discussions and decisions that affect school priorities. In the Philippine basic education system, [15] provides the policy foundation for shared governance and school-level accountability. DepEd Order No. 026, s. 2022 [6] sets the implementing guidelines for establishing School Governance Councils (SGCs), while DepEd Order No. 007, s. 2024 [7] provides the policy guidelines for the revised School-Based Management (SBM) system.

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A formal governance structure, however, does not automatically ensure meaningful participation or sustained council activity. Members need to understand their roles, have access to relevant information, communicate with one another, and receive practical support to carry out council work. They also need ways to preserve decisions, records, and working arrangements when council membership or school leadership changes. These concerns are especially important when considering schools that differ in size, resources, staffing, and community context.

This review examines literature relevant to the perceived functionality of SGCs in small and medium public elementary and secondary schools in the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur. It retains the study's three organizing dimensions: (a) capacity of SGC members, (b) operational and institutional support, and (c) continuity and sustainability of SGC activities. The review distinguishes research that directly examines SGCs from broader studies of SBM, school boards, stakeholder engagement, and school leadership. This distinction is necessary because findings from related governance structures may inform the present topic but cannot automatically be treated as evidence about Philippine SGCs.

II. INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE ON SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

- *Governance as Participation, Autonomy, and Accountability*

Mifsud and Wilkins [10] reviewed 361 journal articles on school governance published from 2000 to 2023. Their synthesis identified five broad themes: school participation politics; autonomy and control; policy reform; global education influences; and digital governance. The review shows that school governance is a broad and contested field rather than a single administrative practice. Its value for the present review is conceptual: it places stakeholder participation and school-level decision-making within wider debates about authority, accountability, and institutional control. It does not, however, measure the functionality of Philippine SGCs or provide a specific SGC assessment scale.

Mincu and D'Addio [11] examined how school leaders make decisions in systems where school autonomy is limited. Their theory-building article explains how central rules, restricted decision-making power, and limited operating budgets can constrain school-level action. The authors also describe how leaders use negotiation and collaboration to respond to these constraints. This work is relevant to the operational and institutional support dimension because the work of a council takes place within a wider system of authority, resources, and policy requirements. It cautions against interpreting limited council activity only as a lack of member commitment when institutional conditions may also restrict what members can do.

- *Relationships Between Governing Bodies and School Leaders*

Ho and Chen [8] synthesized 79 empirical studies of relationships between school boards and principals. Their review identified role clarity, mutual accountability, trust-based communication, and co-leadership as important features of collaborative governance. They also found that control-oriented relationships and unclear roles can be associated with conflict and reduced legitimacy. These findings support attention to role understanding and communication among SGC members and school leadership. Nevertheless, school boards in the reviewed studies may differ from Philippine SGCs in their authority, composition, and legal responsibilities. The findings are therefore used as related governance evidence, not as direct evidence about SGC practice in Ilocos Sur.

- *Practical Support and Committee Activity*

Cantet et al. [4] examined a multi-part intervention supporting School Management Committees in rural India through a cluster-randomized trial. The intervention increased the number of committee meetings by 17% and the number of completed school improvement plans by 38%; these gains remained one year after the intervention ended. The study also reported a 14% increase in hired teachers but no other improvement in infrastructure. The authors found that committee activities and teacher hiring explained only a small and statistically insignificant portion of the overall programme effect on learning. This finding is important because it separates increased committee activity from wider school outcomes. For the present topic, it supports examining what practical support enables councils to perform their assigned work, while avoiding claims that activity alone proves improved learning or school performance.

III. PHILIPPINE LITERATURE AND STUDIES

- *Policy Basis for Shared Governance*

Republic Act No. 9155, or the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001 [15], provides the statutory basis for decentralization and accountability in basic education. DepEd Order No. 026, s. 2022 [6] establishes the guidelines for SGCs as structures for shared governance and feedback. DepEd Order No. 007, s. 2024 [7] sets the guidelines for the revised SBM system. Together, these policy documents establish the formal setting in which school-level participation and governance are expected to take place. They provide policy expectations, but they do not by themselves show how consistently councils operate in particular schools.

- *Direct Evidence on School Governance Councils*

Nabus and Homillano [12] provide directly relevant Philippine evidence because their study examined SGC implementation in DepEd Camarines Sur. The authors used a qualitative descriptive design involving interviews and survey information from 176 participants, including teachers, school administrators, SGC members, and community stakeholders. Their findings identified funding

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availability as a major factor affecting programme sustainability. Inadequate training and scheduling conflicts contributed to interruptions in implementation, while limited commitment, time constraints, and difficulties sustaining external partnerships also affected continuity. The study reported improvements in school climate, school–community relations, and shared governance, alongside gaps in community involvement, resources, role understanding, and member training. These findings directly inform the three dimensions of the present review: member capacity, operational support, and continuity. The Camarines Sur setting and the mix of participant groups differ from the proposed focus on designated SGC Co-Chairpersons in Ilocos Sur, so the results should not be assumed to describe the latter setting.

- *Stakeholder Engagement and Broader SBM Implementation*

Arguelles and Sarsale [2] studied stakeholder engagement in rural and remote Philippine schools using a mixed-methods design. Their quantitative component involved assessments from 218 school leaders, while the qualitative component included accounts from 11 participants. The study reported a moderately high level of implementation across stakeholder identification, planning, engagement, management, and monitoring. Its qualitative findings emphasized stakeholder identification and engagement, communication and information sharing, collaboration and partnership, and monitoring and improvement. The authors also identified the need to strengthen communication, teamwork, and data-informed decision-making. The study does not directly evaluate SGC functionality, but it provides Philippine evidence about the relationships and communication practices that can support school–community participation.

Alcala and Quesea [1] examined barriers to stakeholder engagement in SBM programmes in public secondary schools in Lucena City. The publication record and abstract confirm that the study used a convergent parallel mixed-methods design and focused on resource limitations, communication issues, and inconsistent stakeholder participation. The available abstract-level information supports using the study as evidence that SBM participation can be constrained by practical and organizational barriers. More detailed claims about sample size, specific barrier rankings, or interview themes are not included because the full article findings were not independently checked for this review. The study concerns broader SBM participation rather than SGCs specifically.

Patiam [13] used a convergent parallel mixed-methods design to assess contextualized SBM practices in selected Philippine public elementary schools. The study reported that all six SBM dimensions were frequently manifested, with mean scores ranging from 2.99 to 3.08. It also identified limited stakeholder engagement, difficulties in resource tracking, and gaps in follow-through on planned actions. These findings show that the presence of SBM structures does not remove implementation challenges. They are relevant to the present review's concern with institutional support and continuity, but they should not be interpreted as direct ratings of SGC functionality.

Casilla [5] conducted a qualitative study of Level 3-recognized public secondary schools in the Schools Division of Samar. Using interviews with school heads, the study identified active stakeholder engagement, distributed leadership, transparency, and shared decision-making among the strengths associated with SBM implementation. Miranda and Lugo [9], in a quantitative descriptive study of 314 governance-level stakeholders in the Division of Mati City, reported very high implementation of SBM governance and accountability and very high stakeholder participation. Considered alongside Patiam's [13] findings, these studies illustrate variation in reported SBM implementation across settings and measures. Their findings are useful for identifying possible enabling practices, but none of these three studies provides a direct assessment of SGC functionality in Ilocos Sur.

- *Local Studies in ILOCOS Sur*

Rafanan and Azarias [14] examined school networking in Suyo District, Ilocos Sur, through in-depth interviews with six school administrators. They described internal, government and civic, and community-based networks that support school programmes and initiatives. They also identified challenges involving stakeholder resistance, differing perspectives, time constraints, and resource management. The study is relevant to the local context because it describes the networks and relationships within which school governance activities may take place. However, school networking is not the same as the formal functions of an SGC, and the study did not examine the perceptions of designated SGC Co-Chairpersons.

Cabildo [3] examined the supervisory practices and challenges of public elementary school heads in the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur. The study involved 115 school heads and identified challenges related to knowledge and skills, time, and teacher resistance. Since its focus was instructional supervision, these findings should not be presented as evidence of SGC difficulties. Its contribution is limited to local context: it illustrates some of the leadership and workload conditions within which school-level initiatives are carried out.

- *Synthesis of the Literature*

The literature reviewed points to three connected conditions that may shape how school governance councils carry out their work. First, member capacity matters. Nabus and Homillano [12] identified gaps in role understanding and training among SGC participants. Ho and Chen [8] similarly emphasized role clarity and competent governing bodies in their review of school board–principal relationships. These sources support examining whether members understand their responsibilities and have the knowledge and skills needed to participate. The two sources differ in context and governance structure, so their findings should be connected conceptually rather than treated as identical evidence.

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Second, operational and institutional support can enable or constrain participation. Nabus and Homillano [12] identified funding, time, scheduling, and partnership challenges in SGC implementation. Arguelles and Sarsale [2] highlighted communication, information sharing, collaboration, and monitoring in rural and remote schools. Patiam [13] reported issues in stakeholder engagement, resource tracking, and follow-through in SBM implementation. Mincu and D'Addio [11] add that the authority and resources available to schools shape the decisions that leaders can make. Together, these studies suggest that member willingness alone may not be enough; members also need information, time, resources, guidance, and workable institutional arrangements.

Third, continuity and sustainability require more than one-time participation. Nabus and Homillano [12] directly identified funding, training, commitment, and external partnerships as factors affecting the sustainability of SGC initiatives. Cantet et al. [4] showed that structured support can increase committee meetings and completion of school improvement plans, although the intervention did not improve every school outcome. Rafanan and Azarias [14] described the role of school networks in sustaining school programmes in Suyo District. These findings point to the value of maintaining relationships, records, routines, and support beyond a single activity or change in personnel.

The studies also differ in what they measure. Some examine SGC implementation directly; others study school boards, SBM, stakeholder engagement, school networking, or instructional supervision. They cannot be combined as if they measured the same construct. Direct SGC evidence is particularly important but remains limited in the set of sources reviewed. Broader governance studies help explain possible influences and practices, while local studies provide contextual information. This distinction supports a focused investigation of perceived SGC functionality rather than an assumption that findings from other governance structures apply without qualification.

- *Research Gap and Relevance of the Present Study*

The literature reviewed includes a Philippine study by Nabus and Homillano [12] that directly examines SGC implementation in DepEd Camarines Sur, studies of stakeholder engagement and SBM implementation in other Philippine divisions, and local studies in Ilocos Sur on school networking and instructional supervision. However, within the sources located and checked for this review, no study directly examines perceived SGC functionality in small and medium public elementary and secondary schools in the Schools Division of Ilocos Sur from the perspective of designated SGC Co-Chairpersons. This is a bounded gap based on the reviewed sources; it is not proof that no related study exists in unpublished theses, institutional repositories, or records not available through the searches conducted.

The present study addresses this gap by examining perceived SGC functionality through three areas: member capacity, operational and institutional support, and continuity and sustainability. It will gather quantitative ratings and written qualitative accounts from designated SGC Co-Chairpersons in eligible small and medium public elementary and secondary schools. Because the study relies on respondents' perceptions and reported experiences, its findings will not be treated as an independent audit of school records, means of verification, or policy compliance. The resulting Context-Responsive SGC Enhancement Framework will be based on the combined findings and subjected to expert review; its implementation and effects will remain outside the scope of the study.

IV. CONCLUSION

The reviewed literature shows that school governance depends on the interaction of member capacity, institutional conditions, and the ability to sustain council practices over time. Philippine research on SGC implementation identifies concerns involving funding, training, time, role understanding, commitment, and stakeholder participation. Studies of broader SBM and stakeholder engagement add evidence about communication, access to information, resource management, monitoring, and follow-through. International research further highlights role clarity, trust, collaboration, and the limits created by restricted autonomy and resources. Local studies in Ilocos Sur provide useful context but do not directly address SGC functionality. A study focused on designated SGC Co-Chairpersons in small and medium schools can therefore contribute local evidence to guide a context-responsive enhancement framework, provided that perceived functionality is clearly distinguished from independently verified compliance or school performance.

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- *Conflict of Interest*

The author declares no conflict of interest.

- *Ethical Considerations*

This article is a review of published literature and publicly available policy documents. It did not involve the recruitment of human participants, animal subjects, or the collection of personal data.

- *Data Availability*

No new datasets were generated or analyzed for this review. The sources examined are identified in the reference list.

- *Originality and Submission*

The author confirms that this manuscript is original, has not been published previously, and is not under consideration by another journal.

- *Authorship*

The author confirms sole authorship and responsibility for the content of this manuscript.

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