DECENTRALIZATION AND SHARED DECISION-MAKING IN SELECTED SCHOOL IN AL-BATINAH GOVERNORATE, OMAN

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ABSTRACT

School based management (SBM) in public school is a management tool to decentralize the authorities from center to the local school. The purpose of this study was to investigate and analyze the implementation of school based management system and how the principal’s play their role in decision making within this system In Al-Batinah Governorate, Oman. The research question was what are the school community views regarding the implementation of school based management?

This study employed the qualitative approach, using multiple-case study in which data were collected through interviews, observation and documents analysis. The participants in this study were principals, assistant principals, senior teachers, and teachers. Validity and reliability of the study were ascertained through triangulation, on-site engagement, member checks, peer examination and audit trail. Throughout the analysis of data, constant comparative technique was used to investigate within-case and cross case patterns.

Data revealed that participants expressed divergent views concerning the SBM system in Oman. They considered the SBM system is a complex and multifaceted concept comprising many elements. These elements can be interpreted differently, have different emphasis and serve different purpose. This research concluded in a model that may assist the decision makers in the Ministry of Education by providing a new perspective about the implementation of SBM system. The recommended model contributes a new perspective for the implementation of SBM system by suggesting some recommendations for at the Ministry of Education, General Directorate, and schools.

INTRODUCTION

Public education worldwide has encountered different trends where the school management emphasis shifts along a continuum of centralization and decentralization. In this context, Gamage (2008) stated that one of the most significant reforms in the current restructuring of school systems has been the devolution of decision making authority to school level through a move towards school based management (SBM). Since the mid-1970s, the new concept of educational decentralization to Governoral levels with devolution of power and authority to school level and community participation in school governance has been emerging as a new culture in education systems (Gamage, 2008).

Developed countries have implemented this technique in managing school budgeting, curriculum, and personnel decisions. Bandur (2008) asserted that SBM has become the most prominent feature of the public school management system in most countries around the world. Governments around the world differ in the application of
SBM, while the programs lie along a continuum in terms of the degree to which decision-making is devolved to the local level; some devolve only a single area of autonomy, whereas others go further and devolve the power to hire and fire teachers and authority over substantial resources. In the meantime, decision making through SBM was a recurrent theme in the literature as a part of the renewed focus on school administration (Nielsen, 2007).

Undoubtedly, SBM is more successful when schools use their decision making authority to recruit and select staff who support and agree with the school’s vision (Odden, & Busch, 1998). It is clear that SBM has created opportunities for school administration achieve autonomy, flexibility, participation, and accountability. According to the World Bank (2007) SBM reforms around the world are inevitably different from each other.

Adolphine (2008) indicated that the leaders who participated in community school control experiments lacked real understanding of what community control involves as an operational concept, insufficient knowledge about principal role, limited teamwork and lack of problem solving skills has been identified as SBM implementation problems. Furthermore, Duke (2005) asserted there is no consensus on how successful principals manage their schools, or on how principals facilitate teacher participation. Teachers also need to play an active role in developing and operating decisions in teams at school level. Previous studies on SBM implementation have largely focused on staffing and financial problems, and upon the school council as a decentralized institution. (Kim, 2005).

The rhetoric of the literature suggests that under SBM, the school community has the opportunity for many more decisions that affect them than they held previously. Research to date indicates that this has occurred to some extent in some schools, but points to the whole area requiring further examination (Cranston, 2000). Moreover, Barrera, (2009), Kim (2005), and Nielsen (2007) asserted that the discussion of SBM is necessary, because little is known about whether these particular policy options actually alter the nature of decision making practices at the school level. Moreover, because of the dearth of widespread evidence on the impact and effectiveness of SBM in practice, we still have a number of questions that must go unanswered until more evidence is available (World Bank, 2007).

Another element that will need more analysis as the study of SBM reforms evolves over time are political economy issues, such as the roles played by teachers' unions and political elites, and issues of governance (World Bank, 2007). Furthermore, the extent to which a shared vision is a key element of different types of SBM reforms is an important future research issue (World Bank, 2007). In addition, school community might encounter more work, less efficiency, uneven school performance, an increased need for staff development, confusion about new roles and responsibilities, and coordination difficulties (Adolphine, 2008).

In the Omani context, Ministry of Education has taken care to develop a new school administration structure and adopted various administrative projects such as the project of diploma in school administration and school performance evaluation project. These projects aimed at implementing greater decentralization of school administration, thus encouraging school principal autonomy for enhanced roles in school administration (Ministry of Education, 2004). Moreover, Ministry of Education launched the project of SBM with certain responsibilities devolved to pilot schools (two in each Governorate) (Ministry of Education, 2006).

Ministry of Education considered the implementation of SBM system in Oman as a starting point to improve the quality of national education, student achievement, and
principals’ role in decision making (Al-Ghafri, 2008; Ministry of Education, 2006). Initial examination of previous studies has indicated an existing lack of research in the implementation of SBM in Oman. However, some related studies show the need for conducting research in the implementation of the SBM system. Al-Shehi (2003) proposed some procedures, the most prominent of which are: amending the organizational regulations of general education in a way that enables principals to play a more substantial role in the process of educational decision making at the school level. Furthermore, Al-Ghafri (2008) indicated a medium application degree of school self-administration system on all study domains.

The purpose of this study is to investigate in detail the school community concepts, beliefs, experiences, and suggestions that will help to improve the implementation of the system in order to develop their understanding regarding SBM system. Furthermore, it became necessary to investigate SBM implementation to find out whether devolution of power and authority to school level has resulted in school improvements and student achievement. Finally, examination of the implementation of SBM system will add to the existing body of knowledge on better practices that can be used to improve school performance in Oman.

Research Questions

This study aims to explore qualitatively the following specific research question.

1. What are the school communities’ view and understanding about the SBM system?

LITERATURE REVIEW

School-Based Management (SBM): An Overview

School based management system (SBM) is a broad term. However, the idea of SBM is known by many different names surfacing across the globe including decentralization management, site or school based management, and independent school (Moore, 2009). The aim of many of these initiatives is to promote innovation, allow schools to be more responsive to parents’ wishes, provide students with expanded educational opportunities, and encourage more effective and efficient use of school resources (Briggs & Wohlstetter, 1999). Furthermore, SBM system is a popular strategy that came out of the school reform movement, defined as the devolution of decision-making authority to the school site (Oswald, 1995). Consequently, SBM is considered as a structure used to transfer relational power to schools, to be an ideal strategy for countering bureaucratic obstacles (Adolphine, 2008).

According to Hanson (1990), Mohrman and Wohlstetter (1994), and Czubaj (1999), in SBM, central administration shifts decision making authority and responsibility to the school level with a view to improving educational practices. Several studies (e.g. Caldwell, 2005; Leithwood & Menzies, 1998; Lewis, 2006; Malen et al., 1990) viewed SBM conceptually as a formal alternation of governance structure, as a form of decentralization that identifies the individual school as the primary unit of improvement and relies on the redistribution of decision making authority as the primary means for stimulating and sustaining improvement.

SBM also refers to a reform movement that allows schools more autonomy in making decisions about managing their use of human, material, and financial resources (Patrinos & Codina, 2007). On the other hand, while the SBM is a system or structure, the principals’ role represents an internal perception by the principals of having increased authority in their positions. Hallinger, Murphy, and Hausman (1992) referred to this meaning when they re-emphasized that the SBM system consists of endeavors as
the following terms (a) to decentralize the organization, management, and governance of schooling, (b) to empower those closest to students in the classroom (that is, teachers, parents and principals), (c) create new roles and responsibilities for all the players in the system, and (d) transform the teaching-learning process in classrooms.

As the above definitions imply, SBM is a generic term for diverse activities. SBM programs exist in many varied forms, both in terms of who has the power to make decisions and in terms of the degree of decision making devolved to the school level. Whereas some programs transfer authority only to principals or teachers, others encourage or mandate parental and community participation, often as members of school committees (or school councils, school management committees). Finally, implementing the SBM system (SBM) should motivate principals to enhance their own practices, promote self-motivation, and strengthen relationships via decentralizing decision making to the school level.

Previous studies on SBM system

SBM system as an educational reform model for schooling has been well documented in the literature over the past few decades. Despite that, Santibanez (2007) pointed out that only a handful of the studies reviewed use strong empirical methods to support their results. A small number of these more rigorous studies support the claims that SBM system improves access to schooling and slightly reduces dropout and repetition rates, and evidence on SBM system effects on student achievement is mixed. Bandur (2008) suggested that continuous developments and capacity building such as training on school leadership and management, workshops on the SBM system, and increased funding from governments are needed to affect further improvements in school effectiveness with the implementation of the SBM system. According to Briggs and Wohlstetter (2003) successful implementation of school based management requires structures that include teachers in decision making.

Previous studies shows that the critical need is to lead the whole school communities and that the inherent critical requirement is for participation and collaboration among members of the school community in decision making, planning and budgeting under the leadership skills and capacities of principals. Previous studies pointed out that under SBM, school communities (e.g., parents, teachers) have the opportunity, responsibility and accountability for many more decisions that affect them than they held previously (Cranston, 2001). Duke (2005) found that female principals employed a more democratic decision making approach than male principals who frequently used a more consultative decision making approach. According to Cranston (2001), principals were required to make increasingly complex decisions in collaboration with others in their school communities; decisions typically taken previously by those located away from the immediate school environment.

SBM Practice in the Sultanate of Oman

In the Sultanate of Oman, SBM system was introduced as a pilot system in a formal sense in 2006. Ministry of Education has adopted the concept of School Based Management system (SBM) for many reasons, among which the most important are the following:

1. The need to develop education and update its competence in the light of the challenges of the era and its requirements, as well as the future perspectives.
2. The invitation of the forum of the future perspective of the Omani Economy (Oman, 2020) to prepare developed Omani human resources, having competence and skills which enable them to cope with technological development and to
manage the changes that happen in it with great competence as well as facing the local and international constantly changing conditions. (Ministry of Education, 2006).

Consequently, the Ministerial Decision No. (2/2006) was issued, which explicitly stated the following:

1. The aim of the SBM system is application of decentralization that would allow the school practices of certain powers and responsibilities of administrative and technical, as an autonomous unit, within the educational policy of the Ministry and the rules governing the work, in order to consolidate the role of the school and the teachers and their beneficiaries to undertake planning, implementation and follow-up programs proposed to develop the school performance and the achievement of total quality in educational work, as well as ease the burden on directorates of educational areas.

2. Each Educational Governorate identifies two experimental schools for SBM System, and the manager of the area chooses these two schools of general education schools that include grades 10 to 12 and applied them to the School Evaluation Performance System.

3. For principals of the Selected pilot schools practices the following authorities and functions:
   (a) Administration and Financial Affairs.
   (b) Student, examinations, the activities and administrative direction Affairs.
   (c) Supervision Affairs.
   (d) Public projects, Maintenance and Services Affairs. (MOE, 2006).

Since its inception in 2006, the SBM system was implemented in about a hundred schools out of 1050. The initial plan of this system was to be applied gradually (two schools in each Governorate annually) (Ministry of Education, 2009). The Ministry of Education within the implementation this new system is trying to diversify education and to improve it qualitatively in order to keep up with the fast developments taking place. It has to provide the qualified human resources needed for this development, especially in the educational field in general and for school administration specifically. However, the Ministry of Education still reserves the right to intervene to ensure the appropriate levels of outcomes for all students. In this regard Issan and Gomaa (2010) pointed out that the concepts and principles of SBM are strictly implemented and they concentrate on execution of rules and regulations approved by the Ministry of Education. As a result, school administrations as well as teachers have a limited role in decision making concerning curriculum, evaluation, and other aspects relating to post-Basic Education reform.

Methodology

Introduction

Scientists have divided research into two types, qualitative and quantitative (Hussey & Hussy, 1997). While qualitative methods allow the in-depth study of selected issues, cases, or events and can provide critical insights into beneficiaries' perspectives, quantitative methods are better suited to assess causality and reach generalizable conclusions (Abu-Duhou, 1999).

In this study researcher was guided by a qualitative research design, in order to investigate and explore how the Omani the implementation of the school based management system in the Sultanate of Oman.

Researcher was interested in using multiple case study design including a cross-site analysis to investigate the principals’ role in decision making within the context of
school based management system in Omani schools. For the purposes of this study, the case study unit of analysis was principals, principals’ assistant, senior teachers, and teachers in selected schools in Al-Batinah Governorate in Oman.

Researcher used purposeful sampling to identify the four Omani public schools (basic education & post basic education) as well as particular sites for the study. For this study, researcher selected the criterion of sampling strategy. The researcher selected Al-Batinah Governorate according to the following criteria (a) geographical location which makes traveling to and from the schools convenient, (b) accessibility to both school and Governorate because researcher used to work with Al-Batinah north Governorate for about fifteen years, and (c) willingness of school community involvement. Within the Governorate researcher selected the four schools (one school basic education (cycle 2), and three post basic education schools) for the research project based on the following criteria (a) Firstly, schools implementing the Basic Education System. These schools enjoy certain facilities and have sufficient administrative staff. (b) Second, the schools implementing school performance appraisal system and the teachers' performance evaluation. (c) Third, the school has experienced the implementation of school-based management system (SBM) for at least three years. (d) adequate training regarding school based management system (SBM) has been given to the school staff including the administrative staff, and (e) the final requirement is that the principal of each school had tenure of at least three years as the school principal.

Furthermore, this research gathered data from a variety of participants such as principals, assistant principals, senior teachers, and teachers in order to gain a greater understanding of the practices of the principals’ role in decision making. Therefore, the focus of this research was primarily on four principals as unit of analysis, six assistant principals, six senior teachers based on their acceptance to being interviewed, and four teachers because of the time limitation. Thus, participants’ selection in the study was from the basic education and post basic education schools, which essentially should have the following staff (a) the principal, (b) principal assistant, (c) senior teachers, and (d) teachers.

This cross-section of participants has provided a comprehensive representation of basic education schools based upon the principals’ role in decision making within the implementation of school-based management system (SBM). The assistant principals chosen were selected based on the following criteria (a) at least four years experience, (b) involvement in the planning process of enhancement effort in the school, (c) knowledge of school improvement effort and goal realization,(d) and participated in developing the school performance objectives, as will senior teachers and teachers.

The Interview

The semi-structured open-ended interview was utilized in this study. During the interview the researcher taped all of the interviews and took field notes during the process. Notes allowed the researcher to accomplish four things (a) formulated ideas and new questions, (b) helped in determining how the interviews were going, (c) helped during post interview analysis, and (d) provided a backup system if the tape recorder did not work. Notes also help identify key phrases and can help the researcher pace the interview (Patton, 2002). The researcher has taken the following notes: (a) described the participant, (b) added information regarding their tone and nonverbal gestures, (c) described the setting, (d) described what was going on during the data collection, (e) described other activity surrounding the data collection, and (f) described the participants’ behavior. The notes was organized by using a computerized filing system. The researcher printed and filed a hard copy at the researcher’s primary residence.
researcher manually analyzed the data. To ensure data accuracy, the researcher asked for confirmation and feedback from each participant.

**Observation**

For the purpose of this study, the researcher used direct observation for its strengths. The researcher was watching, and making notes for future use. In an attempt to gather rich descriptive data, the researcher kept a daily journal that was used to describe observations made during each school visit to collect insightful data.

Throughout the day, the researcher was monitoring the morning assembly, walking around the school building, observing the principal-staff instructions, attending meetings, and observing the interactions between the principal and the school community in the school. The researcher engaged himself each day with senior teachers and teachers in informal conversations beside formal conversation with principals and their assistants.

**Document Analysis**

Researcher tried to review any documentation, and prepared a summary of interviews, direct observations, and document reviews at the end of each visit. Also, the researcher completed an overall summary of all data collected via direct observation, document review, and interviews. This procedure allowed him to order his thoughts. Furthermore, adjustments were made based upon the reflection of the daily agenda and on the data collection procedures.

By using these procedures, the researcher was able to triangulate data from different sources and strengthen the research design. According to Yin (2003), the most important advantage presented by using multiple sources of evidence (triangulation) is the development of converging lines of inquiry. Thus, any finding or conclusion in a case study is likely to be much more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information, following a corroboratory mode. Additionally, Lincoln and Guba (1985) write, triangulation of data is crucially important in naturalistic studies. Triangulating data sources means comparing and crosschecking the consistency of information gathered at different times and by different means using qualitative methods. According to Patton (2002) one important way to strengthen a study design is through triangulation, or the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomena or programs.

The interview, the field notes, and the documents allowed for data triangulation. This triangulation was strengthened the results of the data collected. All three of these provided sufficient data for the researcher to analyze and obtain an in-depth understanding of the topic.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

The researcher in this study followed systematic steps in the analyses of various types of data gained from different instruments; the researcher was guided by the six steps involved in analyzing and interpreting qualitative data that Creswell (2008) mentioned. These steps are preparing and organizing the data, exploring and coding the database, describing findings and forming themes, representing and reporting findings, interpreting the meaning of the findings, and validating the accuracy of the findings”.

Moreover, the researcher started transcribing the interviews once each interview was completed either by the researcher himself or by the people that the researcher was hiring due to time constraints. The researcher first transcribed the interviews in Arabic language, as it is the participants’ mother tongue. After that, all transcribed interviews were translated from Arabic into English.

Because the strategies and techniques have not been well defined, analyzing case study evidence is difficult. The researcher analyzed the data that were collected from
interviews, direct observation, and document reviews at the end of each school visit. As the researcher progresses, the data were coded and categories developed. These categories emerged from themes, related topics, and patterns.

**FINDINGS**

**Schools’ Description:**
Table 1: exhibits the four schools demography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kind of School</th>
<th>School 1</th>
<th>School 2</th>
<th>School 3</th>
<th>School 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post basic edu.</td>
<td>Post basic education, Cycle 2.</td>
<td>Post basic education.</td>
<td>Post basic education.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Number</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>777</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student age</td>
<td>between 16 to 18.</td>
<td>between 10 to 16.</td>
<td>between 16 to 18.</td>
<td>between 16 to 18.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>females</td>
<td>females</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>11-12.</td>
<td>grade 5-10.</td>
<td>11-12.</td>
<td>11-12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal assistant</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Teacher</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 indicates that demographically the four schools are similar to some extent. The student population in four schools vary, its range between 500-950. Moreover, the most of the student age are between 16-18 years old, while in school basic education, Cycle 2, they are in a wider age range, 10-16 years old. Another notable difference between schools is the grade. As illustrated in table 1 while all schools have grade 11-12, school basic education, Cycle 2 has grade 5-10. The gender composition in the four schools are fifty, two schools are females and two of them are males.

The position titles of school administrator and teachers in four schools may be the same but the responsibilities in terms of academic and administrative work may vary. All administrative staff and teachers are employed as permanent public school administrators and teachers by the Ministry of Education in Oman. Furthermore, the school building in the four schools differ to some extent.

**Participants profile**
Table 2: Involved participants’ job, title and position work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>schools participant</th>
<th>S-1</th>
<th>S-2</th>
<th>S-3</th>
<th>S-4</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Assistant</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows a total number of participants who have been involved in this study. The data gathered from a variety of participants such as principals, assistant principals, senior teachers, and teachers in order to gain a greater understanding of the practices of the principals’ role in decision making. Therefore, the focus of this research
was primarily on four principals as unit of analysis, six assistant principals, six senior teachers based on their acceptance to being interviewed, and four teachers because of the time limitation. Thus, participants selection in the study were from the basic education and post basic education schools.

**School Findings**

Regarding Research Question (What are the school community views and understanding regarding the implementation of SBM?), the data in this paper was based on the analysis of the interviews with school community members including the principal assistant (PA1), senior teachers (ST1), and teacher (T1). The four themes that emerged from the analysis of the interviews with the school community are as follows: increase autonomy of school within the policy of Ministry of Education, manage the school's resources independently, involvement in decision making process and importance of the implementation of SBM system.

**Increase autonomy of school within the policy of (MOE):**

Respondents interviewed had different concepts of what was meant by the SBM system, and indicated that the implementation of this system is a complex and comprising many elements. These elements can be interpreted differently as the participants’ view. Participants indicated that SBM system can increase the authority at school level if the Ministry of Education transfer the decision making process to the school. The upcoming table illustrates this issue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School 1</th>
<th>School 2</th>
<th>School 3</th>
<th>School 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PA1- ST1</td>
<td>ST2</td>
<td>ST3</td>
<td>PA4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3 Increase autonomy of school within the policy of (MOE):**

| PA1: SBM was considered as a kind of decentralization. Yes MOE has transferred authority to school, but with the understanding that the delegated authority can be withdrawn at any time. | ST2: SBM is transferring responsibility of DM authority, to school and they have to conform within a set of policies determined by MOE. As we have seen nothing has changed, the responsibility of these tasks still refer to MOE or GD. | ST3: Actually, it not clear enough for me the conception of SBM. As I heard, decision making authority was transferred to school. At the same time, as more decisions making reverts to school, General Directorate officials who are most likely to lose the authority, resent the loss. | PA4: SBM is giving school some discretion to plan and implement programs, within guidelines set by MOE. The reality is they devolved only authorities, which are trivial. ST4: We were given the authority to manage school based on the guidelines of MOE, with continued intervention of the General Directorate. So we still within the general framework of educational policy. |

**Key finding:** (SBM) encompasses a wide variety of strategies ranging from granting full autonomy to school over every educational, financial, and personnel matter, to more restrictive versions allowing limited autonomy over school operations.

*www.hopejor.tk*
Manage the school's resources independently

Data revealed that participants were expected that the Ministry of Education will give the school freedom and independence over the school’s resources management. In addition, that participants believed that SBM system helped principal to manage the school independency, if implemented perfectly, with all authorities in decision making.

The upcoming tables illustrates this point.

Table 4: Manage the school's resources independently:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School 1</th>
<th>School 2</th>
<th>School 3</th>
<th>School 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PA1 – T1</td>
<td>PA2 – ST2</td>
<td>PA3</td>
<td>PA4 - ST4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PA1**: The core idea behind SBM is that those who work in a school should have greater control of what goes on in the school. I believe that SBM refers to the management of resources at the school rather than GD or MOE.

**T1**: With SBM, I heard the school's administration shared with authority to set up the school budget.

**PA2**: SBM is a modern way, to encourages school's community to manage the school independently.

**ST2**: SBM is shifting the real authority of decision making.

**PA3**: It was supposed under SBM, schools become deregulated from the MOE control. I think, school being given greater responsibility for their own affairs, I mean MOE was supposed give schools independency in decision making process.

**PA4**: SBM relies on the decision making authority given to principal, and in this case principal can practice his work independently.

**PA4**: I SBM system would provide opportunities for principal to prove himself, in terms of his strengths and weaknesses through this system.

**PA4**: The main idea behind SBM is to make school as independent unit of decision making. I think MOE aims to consider school as source of the decisions making.

**ST4**: SBM means that school is responsible for itself without returning to MOE, which means school principal could make decisions independently.

Key finding: The understanding of SBM system differs specifically according to the school community views.
Involvement in decision making

Respondents stated that to implement a system like SBM requires giving administrative staff and teachers an opportunity to involve in decision making process through transferring of responsibilities to the school level rather than Ministry of Education or General Directorate. The upcoming excerpt, illustrate the issue:

Table 5: Involvement in decision making:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School 1</th>
<th>School 2</th>
<th>School 3 – T3</th>
<th>School 4 – ST4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PA1: If the MOE transfers the authority to the school, the school's teachers involvement in decision making would be increased within the Ministry policy.</td>
<td>ST2: SBM contributes positively in the process of decision making by giving absolute powers to the school's principal and school communities.</td>
<td>PA3: SBM mean that MOE encourage school administration to become own the ability to make decisions effectively.</td>
<td>PA4: SBM encourages teachers’ involvement in decision making and school activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST2: I mean MOE supposedly gives full freedom to the school's management to make decisions within the Ministry of Education's principles and laws, without any intervention.</td>
<td></td>
<td>T3: the main target of SBM is, that MOE wants to focuses on involving teachers in the decision making process.</td>
<td>ST4: SBM encouraging teachers’ participation in issues concerning the school administration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key finding: The implementation of the SBM system can lead to high participation in decision making process at school level.
Importance of the implementation of SBM system.
Participants expressed the importance of school community in decision making within the implementation of SBM system. The upcoming table illustrates this point

Table 6: Importance of the of SBM system:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School 1</th>
<th>School 2</th>
<th>School 3</th>
<th>School 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PA1 – ST1</td>
<td>PA2 – ST2</td>
<td>PA3 – ST3</td>
<td>PA4 – ST4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PA1: If SBM system effectively implemented, I am sure it is very useful, because it gives teacher a chance to take part in the issues that concern their school. I mean if the MOE transfers the authority to the school that will help school to plan its programs depending upon its real needs.

ST1: I don’t think SBM is Important, because as I notice there had not been any changing in the terms of authority, responsibility, and roles of the schools' principals.

PA2: SBM is very important, because it gives the principal an effective role in decision making.

ST2: Actually, it is not easy to measure success; SBM must be coupled with school level accountability for results.

PA3: I believe that, SBM system is very important; It provides principal full authority to make decisions.

ST3: SBM has been considered as an effective system, where it provides principal control over school activities, and allowed principal to be more transparency with school teachers.

PA4: I consider SBM system – of course with full authorities as the basic principle of school administration improvement. At the same time, I am sure SBM system will help school to solve problems effectively and positively.

ST4: I think SBM is important, because it leads to increasing financial allocation; school administration became fully responsible in decision making.

Key finding: The thought of the importance of SBM system was supported by the school community members. Where they believe that the SBM is useful and opened wide gate to participate in school decision making.

Discussion of findings
This section provides an integrated summary of the findings of the study. The findings were presented in alignment to following research question:

1- What are the school community’ views and roles regarding the process of SBM system?

The analysis was made as researcher pondered over questions such as: how similar or how different are the principals in their roles in decision making within the implementation of SBM system? Are there underlying reasons for them to behave as such? What does the literature say about all these? What general conclusion can be drawn from the study of these cases?

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the implementation of SBM system in selected schools in Al-Batinha Governorate. Responses to the interview questions concerning the implementation of SBM system revealed the following themes: Increase autonomy of school within the policy of (MOE).

Data revealed that SBM encompasses a wide variety of strategies ranging from granting full autonomy to school over every educational, financial, and personnel matter,
to more restrictive versions allowing limited autonomy over school operations. Supporting this finding, Riesgraf (2002) revealed that SBM increased the decentralization of decision making for special education in some areas, while decision in other areas remained centralized.

Furthermore, this understanding is consistent with understandings of Santibanez (2007) who pointed out that through participative decision making and autonomy, schools under SBM are expected to be more efficient in using resources and are more responsive to local needs. According to Suminatono et al. (2012) analysis of the policy shows that its construction and content has some limitation of empowering school in terms of the context of decentralization to school level.

**Manage the school's resources independently.**

Data revealed that the understanding of SBM system differs significantly according to the school community views. Respondents indicated that the SBM system refers to empowering school community to manage their resources independently. They considered school as the primary educational unit for decision making within the implementation of SBM system. Murphy (1997) offers a similar view, arguing that SBM is a strategy to decentralize decision making to the school site. This finding is inconsistent with Heyward et al. (2011) who stated that the respondents perceived the school committee was not an independent body.

**Involvement in decision making.**

Based on the findings, the implementation of the SBM system can lead to high participation in decision making process at school level. Respondents perceived that the Ministry of Education wants to focuses mainly on involving school community in the school decision making process rather than putting them entirely in control. These findings are parallel with Briggs and Wohlstetter (2003) who asserted that the successful implementation of SBM requires structures that include teachers in decision making. In addition Cranston (2001) indicated that under SBM, school communities have the opportunity, responsibility and accountability for many more decisions that affect them than they held previously.

**Importance of the of SBM system**

Finding showed that the thought of the importance of SBM system was supported by the school community members. Where they believe that the SBM system is useful and opened wide gate to participate in school decision making authority. These findings are consistent with Botha (2006) who has revealed that the leadership role of the school principal is widely regarded as the primary factor contributing to a successful relationship between SBM and school improvement. According to Bandur, (2008) In the final analysis, 99.2% of the respondents believed that SBM is the type of reform needed in enhancing student achievements, in particular and developing better quality schools in general.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

This paper concluded in a model -as figure 1 below shows- that may assist the decision makers in the Ministry of Education by providing a new perspective about the implementation of SBM system. The recommended model contributes a new perspective for the implementation of SBM system by suggesting some recommendations for at the Ministry of Education, General Directorate, and schools, as following:
Ministry of Education Role:
1. Issuing a legislative framework.
2. Considering schools as an area for decentralization of decision making. Furthermore, empowering schools by giving opportunities to be involved in decision making through planning, supervision, and evaluation of educational programs.
3. Ministry of Education should make sure there is a firm commitment to SBM at the school levels from the outset.
4. Seek a qualified SBM consultants.
5. Instructions of the SBM system must be written in a simple way so that it can be understood by the school administration and school community. Explanation of the system can also be illustrated using a flow chart for easy reference.
6. This system should be revised from time to time because schools' demand are change.
7. It is recommended that financial allocation to schools should be increased to make their decisions independently in particular and implement SBM system in general. Therefore a school financing needs to be developed and evaluated in relation to the schools needs, in the manner of transparent, adequacy, efficiency, and equity.
8. Ministry of Education must provide schools with control over their budget.

General Directorate Role:
1- General Directorate must take on the role of trainer as well as motivator to ensure schools are able to comprehend and implement the system.
2- General Directorate officials must be supportive of SBM and ensure that communication channels will be kept open.
3- General Directorate must gather feedback from the schools and discuss it in the Ministry of Education meeting. because, the grievances and suggestions from the school level is important.
4- The principals should take a proactive role in identifying the shortcomings in communication and rectify them soonest possible.
5- Decisions made or reason for not accepting the schools' should be told to them by General Directorate to avoid feeling of frustration among the schools who wants their say in works related to them. In that way, implementation will become more effective because the schools feel that they were partly involved in making decisions and have higher sense of responsibility.
6- General Directorate should focus on developing and a plan for improving the implementation of SBM system.
7- General Directorate officials facilitates instead of controls schools' actions by defining the Ministry of Education polices and educational objectives.
8- General directorate officials also provide training, and create communication links between the Ministry of Education and schools.

At schools level:
1- To ensure SBM success, schools' principals and schools' community need to understand what SBM is and how it is implemented.
2- Each school's principal must understand his or her new roles, responsibilities, and accountability.
3- Establishing a school council which include representatives of school community (principal, assistant principal, senior teachers and teachers), parents, and those with interests in education.

4- Establishing a school council must be depending on the school size, and the students numbers, and comprises of the principal and representatives of teachers, parents, local government, and local communities.

5- Schools must give the opportunity to select or to format a school council in a democratic manner.

The recommended structure of the SBM system.

![Diagram of SBM system]

Figure 5.2. Recommended model of SBM system for school principal to practice their role in decision making

REFERENCES


