

Involving the Community: Its Impact on School Governance

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Abstract

Community involvement is crucial to improve educational outcomes. The goal of the study is to assess how community involvement affects school governance, focusing on how school heads and teachers in public and private elementary schools view its impact on student progress, school culture, and policy decisions. To measure the extent of community involvement and to explore the aspects of community engagement and its perceived effectiveness, the researchers utilized a quantitative approach. Questionnaires were given to 40 school heads and teachers in randomly selected public and private elementary schools in Baguio City. The findings show the differences in community involvement in schools. Both the benefits and challenges associated with increased community participation were considered. Furthermore, schools that involve themselves actively in the community report better student achievement, increased financial opportunities, and stronger relations with the community members. Strong community connections are shown to be essential for enhancing school governance. With this, the study seeks to contribute to the understanding of community involvement's impact in enhancing governance within educational institutions.

Keywords: community involvement, school governance, policy decisions, school culture, student achievement

Introduction

School administrators have responsibilities that go beyond the walls of their institutions. Administrators can be agents for positive change, architects of community engagement, and managers of school transformation. Schools must be managed by administrators who have desirable leadership behavior for their relationships among themselves and with the people in the community (Nobis, 2022).

One important responsibility of the school is to look forward to community involvement. In pursuit of exemplifying effective school governance in society, it must be in good collaboration with the community. Epstein (1995) argued that to successfully meet the goal of improving education for all children, there must be considerably more involvement from parents, the community, and other stakeholders working together to promote the success of all students. This demonstrates how active participation from community members can enhance decision-making processes, promote transparency, and foster a sense of ownership among stakeholders.

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), successful schools understand the importance of creating good and harmonious relationships with their nearby community. Schools with significant community ties often see better results in students' performances through increased resources and improved learning environments. In the study of Guldmond, H. et al. (2010), the findings show that coherence between school governors, school leaders, teachers, and the school community (parents) produces a sense of community that, in turn, shapes conditions in schools that have a positive effect on pupil achievement.

The Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1990) set partnerships as a voluntary national goal for all schools. Every school promotes collaboration that will increase the involvement and participation of parents in fostering the social, emotional, and academic growth of children. Many states have created or are in the process of developing policies. These policies reflect research results and the prior successes of leading educators who have shown that these goals are attainable (Epstein, 1995).

Recent research conducted in different countries has shown that school-based management can have a positive impact in terms of increasing access to education and improving learning outcomes (AusAID ERF, 2011). However, success depends critically on parental participation, political support, and effective implementation (Gertler et al., 2007). One factor that affects the effectiveness of the management is how school heads manage their respective systems.

On the other hand, parents and community members need to exert initiative to participate in the formulation of school policies and conduct of school activities. School programs and projects call for the assistance of the community members. Without the active participation and involvement of the community, goals and endeavors will not be understood. When school leaders are not open to the idea of collaboration, the result is "a lose-lose situation with the school standing to lose the most" (Green, 2013).

In the Philippines, community involvement has always been embedded in Filipino culture. The idea of 'bayanihan' signifies the spirit of unity among townspeople to achieve common goals. Most schools were established mostly as a result of 'bayanihan'—a concerted effort by the community to educate the youth. However, although the community was at the forefront of establishing a school, they were relegated to the margins in its actual management as this function was directed by a centralized bureaucracy at the national level since the 1920s (Abulencia, 2013).

Furthermore, schools are focal social institutions that are intrinsically linked to their community's welfare and growth (Dayaram, 2011). Strong, sustained community participation in school governance can enhance transparency and accountability in the education system and promote a sense of ownership and responsibility for positive change. The more contribution from the community, both financially and in kind, the more likely it is to demand accountability from the members.

Globally, the effects of community participation in education have been extensively studied (Abbas, 2012; Bray, 2001); however, studies that have investigated its impact in the context of the Philippines' basic education governance have not been undertaken. This study endeavors to address this gap.

This study aims to assess the impact of community involvement on school governance in some public and private elementary schools in Baguio City.

Problem Statement

The purpose of this explanatory sequential research was to assess the impact of community involvement on school governance among school heads and teachers in some private and public elementary schools in Baguio City. The study will explore the perspective of school heads and teachers through the following questions:

- What is the extent of the school's community involvement along:
 - a. Policy decisions;
 - b. School Culture and
 - c. Student achievement

Research Design

The researchers used a quantitative approach to determine the extent of the school's community involvement on school policy decisions, school culture, and student achievement within private and public elementary schools in Baguio City.

Population and Locale of the Study

The research focused specifically on the perspectives of school heads and teachers. The respondents of the study were 40 school heads and teachers from public and private elementary schools in Baguio City to determine the extent and perceived impact of community involvement on school governance.

Data Gathering Instruments

Random sampling was used in this study. Survey questionnaire was administered to a randomly selected sample of participants. The data were collected through a self-made survey questionnaire, validated by research experts, that uses Likert-style scales to assess the type and degree of community involvement through Google form.

Data Analysis

The researchers summarized the survey results and participant demographics using Descriptive analysis (Creswell, 2013). This provides a clear and concise overview of data.

Ethical Considerations

Letters were sent to the participants explaining the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights, including the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality, and the ability to withdraw at any time. Participants were assured of anonymity in publications or presentations.

Treatment of Data

The researchers used general weighted mean to determine the extent of the school's community involvement along: policy decisions, school culture, and student achievement. A 4-point Likert scale was utilized.

Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the data gathered from the survey conducted among the respondents. Each presentation of the data is based on the identified research problems of the study.

Table 1. Extent of the School’s Community Involvement along Policy Decisions

Item	Statement	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
1	School involves parents in the decision-making process regarding policies that affect their children.	3.60	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
2	The school actively promotes community involvement in its activities and initiatives.	3.55	Agree	Involved
3	The school regularly updates the community on policy changes and seeks their input.	3.33	Agree	Involved
4	The school consults the community when deciding on policies.	3.30	Agree	Involved
5	Community members participate in school board meetings or discussions regarding policy changes.	3.28	Agree	Involved
6	The school considers community feedback when reviewing its policies and procedures.	3.23	Agree	Involved
7	Community members are invited to serve on committees related to school policies.	3.15	Agree	Involved
SUBMEAN (VALUE)		3.35	Agree	Involved

The first problem of the study focused on the extent of school’s community involvement along policy decisions.

Table 1 shows that the overall sub mean of community involvement along policy decisions is 3.35, or “involved”. This indicates that the schools engage the community across different aspects of decision-making.

It was shown that Item 1, stating “School involves parents in the decision-making process regarding policies that affect their children”, has the highest mean of 3.60 translated into “strongly agree” or “highly involved”. This implies that schools make significant efforts to include parents specifically in the policy-making process concerning their children.

The result of this study is similar to the studies of Epstein (2001) and Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997). They found out that parental involvement is crucial for educational success and that schools which actively engage parents in policy development see better outcomes in student achievement and community satisfaction. Schools should involve families and communities in decision-making processes which influence academic programs, policies, and the school environment, according to Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement. Similarly, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) assert that when schools include parents in meaningful decision-making, they can foster an environment that supports students' intellectual and social development. The high response rate suggests that a well-established understanding of the significance of parental involvement in decision-making has a direct impact on children.

With a weighted mean of 3.15, Item 7, stating “Community members are invited to serve on committees related to school policies”, came in last. This suggests that while schools invite community members to serve on policy-related committees, there are still areas for improvement in how schools actively involve community members in policy discussions.

This implies that while efforts to include community members in the decision-making process may exist, they are not yet totally effective in ensuring contributions. Schools must specify the roles and responsibilities of community members within committees and make sure that their input is not just asked but also significantly included into the policymaking process. Schools must realize that community involvement is more than just participation.

Due to the diverse viewpoints and resources that community members contribute, Auerbach (2009) corroborates that one of the challenges in community engagement is that community members may not fully understand or be aware of their role in the process. These difficulties may contribute to the low level of community involvement in policy committees. Schools lose the effectiveness of their community involvement programs and are unable to profit from the rewards of these collaborations if these challenges are not overcome.

Table 2 Extent of the School’s Community Involvement along School Culture

Item	Statement	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
1	School gives chances for the students to interact with community groups, organizations, and leaders.	3.53	Agree	Involved
2	Local cultural practices and traditions are reflected in school celebrations and events.	3.53	Agree	Involved
3	School administration encourages teachers to enrich the educational experience.	3.50	Agree	Involved
4	School integrates community values and perspectives into their curriculum and activities.	3.48	Agree	Involved
5	Community members are invited to participate in school events and programs.	3.43	Agree	Involved
6	The school organizes community-building activities to foster a positive school culture.	3.28	Agree	Involved
7	School gathers community feedback regarding school values and practices.	3.23	Agree	Involved
SUBMEAN (VALUE)		3.42	Agree	Involved

The second problem of the study focused on the extent of school’s community involvement along school culture.

Table 2 shows that the overall assessment of the school’s community involvement along school culture is 3.42, or “agree/ involved”. This indicates that schools’ practices are involved, with an emphasis on integrating community values, encouraging feedback, and providing opportunities for interaction with the community.

The item, stating “School gives chances for the students to interact with community groups, organizations, and leaders, has the highest mean of 3.53, which corresponds to “Agree/ involved”.

This implies that the schools actively create opportunities for students to engage and interact with various community groups, organizations, and leaders. Children learn social responsibility at school. These include extracurricular educational activities including field trips, volunteer work, and partnerships with local groups.

Sanders (2009) supports the benefits of such experiences by pointing out that they significantly enhance students' social and civic skills. Students become more conscious of their responsibilities as active community members. The degree to which educational institutions support this type of involvement demonstrates their dedication to fostering students' social consciousness. This approach places a strong emphasis on the importance of educating students to be informed, responsible citizens who significantly impact society.

With a weighted mean of 3.53, or Agree/ Involved, the statement, "Local cultural practices and traditions are reflected in school celebrations and events," likewise scores the highest.

This shows that schools contribute to the preservation and promotion of local culture by incorporating traditions and customs in the events and celebrations. Students, teachers, and their families feel prouder of their community. Additionally, it creates an atmosphere that encourages students to appreciate and engage with the traditions that define their cultural identity.

According to Gay (2013), culturally relevant pedagogy enhances student engagement, learning, and identity by reflecting students' own cultural backgrounds. By emphasizing local cultural practices, the schools help students develop a sense of belonging and understanding of their heritage. The school's integration of local cultural practices into celebrations and events reflects a commitment to these educational and social goals.

The item that ranked lowest was the statement, "School gathers community feedback regarding school values and practices.", having a weighted mean of 3.23, or "Agree/Involved".

This indicates that the schools are making efforts to obtain feedback on its values and practices. It suggests that although the feedback procedure is in place, it may not be as thorough or consistent as it could be.

According to Henderson and Mapp (2002), schools that successfully gather and respond upon community feedback build stronger ties with local groups and parents, which leads to better educational outcomes and more community support. Gathering and implementing community feedback is essential for ensuring that the school's values and practices align with the needs and expectations of the community. Increasing the frequency and scope of these feedback processes may lead to stronger school-community relationships as well as a more active, inclusive, and responsive school culture.

Table 3 Extent of the School’s Community Involvement along Student Achievement

Item	Statement	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
1	Community members attend events, such as award presentations, that recognize and celebrate student achievements.	3.48	Agree	Involved
2	Community provides resources or support to the school’s academic program.	3.33	Agree	Involved
3	The community collaborates with the school to provide scholarships or recognition for academic excellence.	3.30	Agree	Involved
4	Community organizations offer programs that help students succeed academically.	3.28	Agree	Involved
5	The community collaborates with the school to provide scholarships or recognition for academic excellence.	3.28	Agree	Involved
6	Community connections and partnerships enhance student learning opportunities, such as mentorships and internships.	3.25	Agree	Involved
7	Local businesses offer internships or hands-on learning experiences to enhance student skills.	2.95	Agree	Involved
SUBMEAN (VALUE)		3.26	Agree	Involved

The third problem of the study focused on the extent of school's community involvement along student achievement.

Table 3 shows that the overall sub mean of community involvement along school culture is 3.26, or "agree/ involved". This indicates that the school has a moderate level of involvement from the community in supporting and enhancing student achievement. The responses suggest that while the school benefits from community support in various ways, such as recognizing achievements, providing resources, and offering opportunities for scholarships or academic excellence, the overall engagement could be more extensive or impactful.

The weighted mean for the statement "Community members attend events, such as award presentations, that recognize and celebrate student achievements," is 3.48, which corresponds to an " Agree/Involved" rating is the highest.

This implies that community members regularly attend school events honoring student achievements. Strengthening this involvement could further boost students' appreciation and encouragement. By highlighting the importance of both extracurricular and academic accomplishments, increased community involvement in these events may help encourage children to pursue excellence.

According to Epstein's (2001) framework on school-community partnerships, when schools actively involve community members in recognizing student achievements, it not only builds school-community relationships but also creates a supportive environment that reinforces student motivation and success. Sanders and Sheldon (2009) demonstrate that community involvement in recognizing academic excellence motivates students and reinforce the value of hard work and achievement.

One area identified for improvement, which is the lowest in rank, is the item stating, "Local businesses offer internships or hands-on experiences to enhance student skills, with a weighted mean of 2.95, falling into the "Agree/Involved" category.

This indicates that local businesses do offer some internships or hands-on learning opportunities, but the involvement is relatively moderate compared to other areas of community engagement in student achievement. It also suggests that local businesses and schools were unable to collaborate effectively to provide these kinds of possibilities. Building stronger partnerships with local companies to offer more internships or other experiential learning opportunities may improve students' employability and practical skills.

According to research, student performance usually improves when schools build close relationships with local businesses (Barton, 2018). Internships and experiential learning significantly increase students' readiness for the workforce by providing them with real-world experience, and practical skills.

Findings

The study reveals that schools exhibit a moderate level of community involvement across various areas, including policy decisions, school culture, and student achievement. In terms of policy decisions, schools actively engage parents, with a mean score of 3.60, particularly in areas affecting their children. However, community members' involvement in policy-related committees is less pronounced, with a mean score of 3.15, suggesting the need for clearer roles and more meaningful participation from the community.

Regarding school culture, schools are moderately involved in integrating community values and offering opportunities for interaction. The highest involvement is seen in student engagement with community groups and local cultural practices, both scoring 3.53. However, the process of gathering community feedback on school values and practices, with a mean score of 3.23, needs improvement to strengthen school-community relationships.

When it comes to student achievement, community members are actively involved in recognizing and celebrating student successes, with a mean score of 3.48 for attending award presentations. However, the lowest involvement is in providing internships or hands-on experiences, with a mean score of 2.95, highlighting the need for stronger partnerships with local businesses to offer more experiential learning opportunities, which would enhance students' skills and employability.

In summary, while schools are engaged with the community in various capacities, there are areas for improvement in deepening involvement, particularly in policy-making, gathering feedback, and increasing collaboration with local businesses for student development.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the study highlights that while schools demonstrate moderate levels of community involvement across policy decisions, school culture, and student achievement, there is room for improvement in each area. Schools show strong engagement with parents in policy decisions, particularly those that directly affect students, and actively integrate community values into school culture. However, community members' participation in policy-related committees and the process of gathering feedback on school values require further development to enhance collaboration and ensure a more inclusive decision-making process. In terms of student achievement, community involvement in recognizing student successes is high, but there is a notable gap in local businesses providing internships or experiential learning opportunities. Strengthening these partnerships and expanding community involvement in these areas would contribute to greater educational outcomes and better prepare students for their futures. Therefore, fostering deeper, more consistent, and impactful community involvement remains essential for achieving the full potential of school-community partnerships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings and conclusions, the researchers recommend that schools increase community members' participation in policy-making in order to ensure that their participation has a meaningful impact. Schools and communities should collaborate to develop flexible meeting and involvement schedules that take into consideration the different schedules of community members. Evening meetings or virtual platforms may be viable solutions to ensure greater participation. Schools should strengthen the systems for collecting and incorporating community feedback. Regular surveys or focus group discussions could provide valuable insights and enhance community-school relations. Schools should improve communication with the community, using more accessible language and offering flexible meeting times could encourage wider participation. This may include offering simpler explanations of school policies for those with limited educational backgrounds and ensuring that information is disseminated clearly and regularly.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the guidance, support, and encouragement of several individuals. We would like to take this opportunity to express our deepest gratitude to those who contributed to this research in various ways.

First and foremost, we extend our heartfelt appreciation to our instructor, Dr. Jonathan C. Iglesias and Dr. Shayne Klarisse E. Dimaling, whose expertise, patience, and insightful guidance have been invaluable throughout this journey. Your constructive feedback and encouragement have greatly shaped this study, helping us refine our ideas and strengthen our research. Your dedication to mentoring and academic excellence has been truly inspiring, and we are sincerely grateful for your unwavering support.

We also want to express our profound gratitude to our loved ones—our families and friends—who have stood by us throughout this journey. To our parents, Mama and Daddy, thank you for your unconditional love, sacrifices, and encouragement. Your unwavering belief in us has been our greatest source of strength. To our siblings and close friends, thank you for your constant motivation, emotional support, and patience during the challenging moments of this research. Your presence in our lives has been a source of inspiration and comfort.

Furthermore, we would like to extend our sincere appreciation to our co-authors, Ronna Lee A. Belington, Eryl Justine D. Nacis, and Faith B. Subilla, for their dedication, hard work, and valuable contributions to this research. This study is the result of our collective efforts, and we are truly grateful for the collaborative spirit, insightful discussions, and shared commitment that made this work possible. The synergy of our teamwork has enriched this research, and we deeply value the knowledge and experience we have gained together.

Additionally, we would like to acknowledge all those who, in one way or another, contributed to the successful completion of this thesis. Whether through academic discussions, technical support, or words of encouragement, your kindness and assistance have been greatly appreciated.

Finally, we are grateful for the opportunities and challenges that this research has presented, as they have contributed to our personal and academic growth. This journey has been both demanding and rewarding, and we are thankful to everyone who has been a part of it.

With deepest appreciation,

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