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School-Based Management Effects on
Educational Outcomes: A Literature Review
and Assessment of the Evidence Base

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Abstract

School-based management (SBM) has been present in schools around the world for well over three decades. SBM reforms range from those granting full autonomy over all school matters, to smaller-scale reforms that grant schools only limited autonomy. This paper presents a review of the literature and an assessment of the evidence base regarding the effects of school-based management on various educational outcomes. It finds 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 improves access to schooling and slightly reduces dropout and repetition rates. Evidence on SBM effects on student achievement is mixed.

Resumen

Las reformas de autonomía escolar (school-based management) han estado presentes en escuelas alrededor del mundo por más de tres décadas. Estas reformas van desde otorgar completa autonomía a directores o padres de familia, hasta reformas menores que dan algo de autonomía a diversos actores sobre asuntos puntuales de la administración escolar. Este estudio presenta una revisión de la literatura y una evaluación de la evidencia disponible para juzgar los efectos de las reformas de autonomía escolar sobre diversos resultados educativos. La revisión arrojó que únicamente algunos estudios cumplen con metodologías empíricamente rigurosas y que ninguno utiliza diseños experimentales. Sin embargo, un número reducido de estudios más fuertes metodológicamente, encontró que estas reformas mejoran el acceso a la escuela y disminuyen ligeramente las tasas de repetición y deserción escolar. La evidencia de las reformas de autonomía escolar sobre el rendimiento de los alumnos no es concluyente.

Introduction

School-based management (SBM) encompasses a wide variety of strategies ranging from granting full autonomy to schools over every educational, financial, and personnel matter, to more restrictive versions allowing limited autonomy over school operations. Despite the various forms it takes, the central tenet of all SBM reforms is to place the locus of decision-making and authority closer to those at the school level. It is believed that this decentralization of autonomy would lead to school improvement (Malen, Ogawa & Kranz, 1990).

The theoretical appeal of SBM reforms is strong. Through participative decision making and autonomy, schools under SBM are expected to be more efficient in the use of resources and more respondent to local needs. And by involving parents in school affairs and in monitoring and evaluating school personnel, SBM reforms can lead to more transparency, higher accountability and an increased focus on improving educational quality.

This appeal as well as early evidence from a handful of SBM efforts motivated governments around the world to implement various kinds of SBM reforms. Today, countries such as El Salvador, Mexico, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Hong Kong, and Israel, have instituted SBM policies varying in form, scope and impact.

This paper reviews the recent empirical literature on SBM effects on a variety of educational outcomes and attempts to assess the rigor of the research base. The goal is to highlight effects supported by a strong evidence base. The analysis suggests that the evidence on the actual effect of SBM reforms on educational quality and other outcomes is mixed at best.¹ It is surprising that after three decades of SBM reforms, only a handful of studies employ what could be considered rigorous methodologies for evaluation research (*i.e.* adequate comparison group, baseline outcome data, etc.) Although none of the studies we reviewed used what was considered very rigorous methodologies (such as experimental designs), recent analyses using better data suggest some consistent effects of SBM reforms around the world.

The literature appears to support the claim that SBM improves access and reduces dropout and repetition rates (at least slightly). Evidence on SBM effects on student achievement, however, is mixed. Generally, studies reporting increases or decreases in this measure are using weak designs, but there are a few rigorous papers that find improved student achievement as a consequence of SBM. Evidence for increased teacher effort, school effectiveness, teacher and principal empowerment and satisfaction, parent

¹ Previous literature reviews conclude that SBM is not an end-in-itself, although the summary of research in the 1990s indicated that it could help foster an improved school culture and allow school personnel to make higher-quality decisions (Wohlstetter, *et al.*, 1996; Summers and Johnson, 1996).

and community involvement, and curricular and teaching innovations was also mixed.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 1 gives a brief description of the methods used to review the literature on SBM and the criteria used to assess the rigor of the evidence base. Section 2 provides a description of forms of SBM introduced around the world. Section 3 summarizes the evidence base on the successes and failures of SMB on various educational outcomes. Last section provides some concluding remarks.

1. Methods and Criteria for Assessing Rigor

Because there have been at least two extensive literature reviews on SBM, Malen *et al.* (1990) and Summers and Johnson (1994), we place more emphasis on the most recent evidence. Papers published after 1995 that dealt with school-based management reform were selected for review. To ensure broad coverage a wide search using engines like ERIC (Education Research Information Center), Google Scholar, JSTOR, and the websites of international organizations such as The World Bank and UNESCO was performed. In addition, each document's reference list was reviewed to make sure no important works were missed. Any document deemed relevant was searched on the Web and if an online version or a library copy was not available, the authors were contacted.

The search yielded a large number of papers, but the focus here is on those of empirical nature. Papers that provide literature reviews, historical analyses, or whose objective is to give a detailed narrative of why and how a certain reform came to be, were used mainly for context and to inform the reader on the basic characteristics of the type of reform implemented. Papers that collected and analyzed data to answer a specific set of research questions were studied in more detail and assessed for methodological rigor.

To assess quality of evidence base the scale shown in Table 1 was used. This scale rates studies from very strong to weak, based on their ability to control for common biases found in the evaluation literature such as self-selection, measurement error, etc. Very strong studies are those that use randomized designs or natural experiments that take advantage of program characteristics to create a randomized-like setting. Weak studies are those that do not have a reasonable counterfactual for program participants or who generalize results based on very flawed data. In the middle are strong and somewhat strong studies which share some of the characteristics, but not all, of the stronger and weaker designs.

TABLE 1. SCALE FOR RATING THE STRENGTH OF THE REVIEWED STUDIES

VERY STRONG	Studies with a very rigorous research design such as randomized trial using baseline data and pre-post program outcomes. Natural experiments, such as regression discontinuity would fall under this category. Studies in this category successfully control for self-selection and other biases commonly found in evaluation literature.
STRONG	Studies with a rigorous design that attempts to create a good comparison or control group using sophisticated techniques. These would include studies using propensity score matching, a strong instrumental variables (IV) model or good use of panel data (e.g. fixed effects) to control for omitted variable and other biases.
SOMEWHAT STRONG	Studies using quantitative or mixed methods design which are based on large, representative samples with generalizable results. Frequently they use survey or questionnaire data with high response rates (above 75%) and large, representative samples. Attempts are made at identifying biases arising from self-selection or other, such as implementing a weak IV design. They could also include a strong empirical strategy with a small sample or non-representative sample. Attempts to produce a comparison group (even if it is not a very strong one) are also included in this category.
WEAK	Studies using surveys with low response rates or small samples. Research based on survey answers or findings drawn from a very self-selected population without any attempts to produce a comparison group. They also include quantitative studies that use cross-sectional data only or which are sure to suffer from self-selection and other biases.

2. SBM reforms around the world

School-based management has been introduced in both developed and developing countries (see Table 2 for a list of countries, date for first SBM implementation and type of reform implemented). However, SBM is hardly a uniform reform. Broadly, Malen *et al.* (1990) define SBM as a form of decentralization that identifies the school as the primary unit of improvement and relies on the redistribution of decision-making autonomy as the primary means through which improvements are brought about. The reality is that there are many flavors of SBM, partly as a result of the reformers' objectives and the broader national policy and social contexts in which the reforms come to be.

TABLE 2. LIST OF COUNTRIES WITH SBM REFORMS – SORTED BY FIRST IMPLEMENTATION DATE

COUNTRY	DATE FIRST IMPLEMENTED	OBJECTIVES/ MOTIVATION OF REFORM	TYPE OF SBM*
AUSTRALIA	1970s	IMPROVE EFFICIENCY	STRONG SBM
CANADA	1970s (EDMONTON) 1996 (ONTARIO)	IMPROVE PARENTAL AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION, GRANT SCHOOLS MORE AUTONOMY	MODERATE SBM
UNITED STATES (CHICAGO, FLORIDA, VIRGINIA, NEW YORK, AND OTHERS)	1970s AND 1980s	IMPROVE EFFICIENCY, EMPOWER TEACHERS, AND PROMOTE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT. SOME REFORMS (E.G. CHICAGO) SOUGHT TO IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT.	MODERATE TO SOMEWHAT STRONG SBM
BRAZIL	1982, 1998	IMPROVE EFFICIENCY AND SELECTION OF SCHOOL STAFF, IMPROVE COMMUNITY AND PARENT PARTICIPATION; PDE PROGRAM (FIRST ESTABLISHED IN 1998 FUNDED SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS.	MODERATE SBM
SPAIN	1985	DEMOCRATIZE EDUCATION	SOMEWHAT STRONG SBM
UNITED KINGDOM	1988	PROVIDE FINANCIAL AUTONOMY TO SCHOOLS, INCREASE EFFECTIVENESS	STRONG
NEW ZEALAND	1990	IMPROVE COMMUNITY AUTONOMY, IMPROVE EFFICIENCY	STRONG SBM
EL SALVADOR	1991	IMPROVE ACCESS IN RURAL AREAS, ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND IMPROVE QUALITY	STRONG SBM
NICARAGUA	1991	INCREASE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION, OBTAIN FINANCIAL RESOURCES BEYOND GOVT. FUNDING, INCREASE EFFICIENCY	STRONG SBM
HONG KONG	1991	ACCOUNTABILITY, PARTICIPATORY DECISION MAKING, AND SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS	STRONG SBM
THE NETHERLANDS	1992	REFORM WAS MEANT TO EMPOWER SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN ORDER TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY	VERY STRONG SBM
CZECH REPUBLIC	1993	MAKE SYSTEM MORE OPEN, FLEXIBLE, AND DEMOCRATIC	MODERATE SBM
GUATEMALA	1996	IMPROVE ACCESS, DECENTRALIZE EDUCATIONAL DECISION-MAKING, IMPROVE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND MAINTAIN LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY	STRONG SBM
ISRAEL	1997	IMPROVE QUALITY THROUGH BETTER MANAGEMENT, MONITORING, AND ASSESSMENT.	SOMEWHAT STRONG SBM
THAILAND	1997	IMPROVE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND COUNTRY'S COMPETITIVENESS	SOMEWHAT STRONG SBM
CAMBODIA	1998	IMPROVE QUALITY OF EDUCATION	SOMEWHAT STRONG SBM
HONDURAS	1999	IMPROVE ACCESS IN RURAL AREAS AND ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	STRONG SBM
MEXICO	2001	IMPROVE QUALITY THROUGH MORE AUTONOMY	MODERATE SBM

* The classification of types of SBM is as follows:

Very Strong: Full or almost full control of schools by councils, parents or school administrators; full choice via possibility of creating new public schools (*i.e.* charters)

Strong: High degree of autonomy given to school councils over budget, staffing, etc.) and control over budgets (*i.e.* schools receive lump-sum funding or grants)

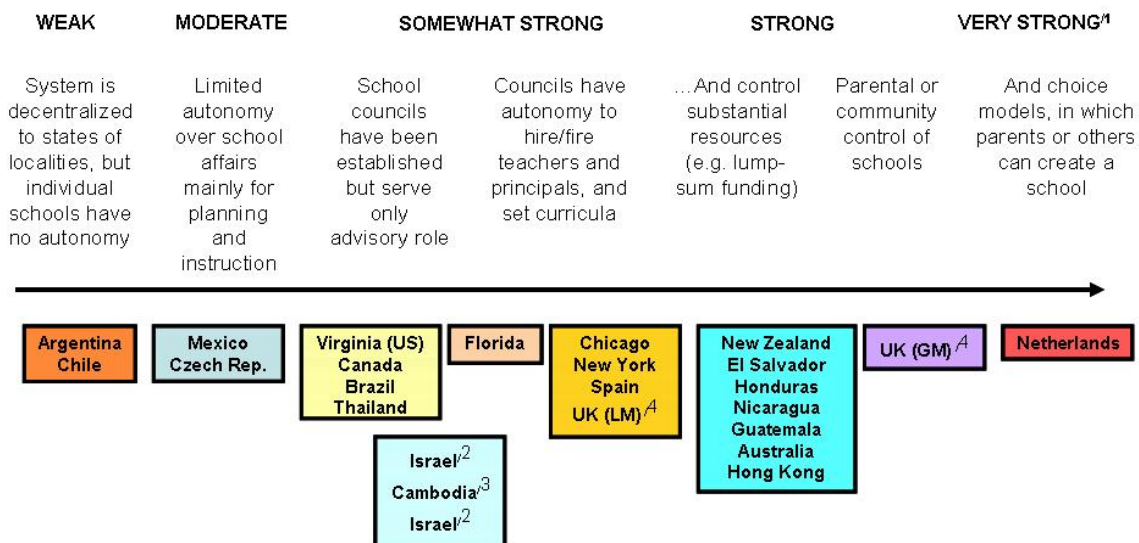
Somewhat strong: Councils have authority to hire and fire teachers and/or principals and set curricula, but more limited autonomy regarding finances and control of resources

Moderate: School councils have been established but serve mainly an advisory role, or have limited autonomy for planning and strategic purposes

Weak: Public school system is decentralized to municipal or regional level, but schools have virtually no autonomy to make any administrative or curricular decisions

Wohlstetter and Odden's (1992) review of the literature identifies three different models of SBM. In the first model, the community has most control over decision-making and the objectives of the reform tend to focus on accountability to parents and choice; in the second model it is teachers who receive most of the authority, and many of these reforms have teacher empowerment as a primary objective; lastly, the third model has the principal as the key decision-maker and is intended to provide increased accountability to central or local authority and improve efficient use of resources. SBM strategies often have elements of some or all three models. Perhaps a useful way of classifying SBM reforms is to see them as part of a continuum of reforms differentiated by the degree of autonomy granted to individual schools over school matters. In this continuum, reforms range from "weak" (those that decentralize little autonomy and decision-making power to principals, teachers and parents), to "strong" (those in which schools are pretty much stand-alone units, responsible for almost all decisions concerning what goes on inside their buildings). Figure 1 depicts such a continuum and classifies the countries with SBM reforms along it.²

FIGURE 1. CLASSIFICATION OF SBM REFORMS IMPLEMENTED IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES



¹ These represent ratings in the continuum of autonomy and authority vested to schools by the various types of SBM reforms.

² Israeli schools have autonomy to control their budget. School locally-controlled budgets represent a small fraction of total public expenditures, because most expenditures are controlled and made centrally. There are no school councils or parent associations with decision-making authority.

³ Cambodia schools in the EQIP program receive cash grants and have participatory decision making, but schools councils are not formally established.

⁴ Schools in the UK are not allowed to set curriculum locally, and must provide the national curriculum.

² The original idea for this continuum was contributed by Harry Patrinos. The countries listed at the various stages are those reviewed for this study. This list, therefore, is not intended to be fully comprehensive.

Next, a brief summary of each country's experience with SBM is provided. This is done so the reader can familiarize herself with the specifics of the reforms so the effects found by the various researchers can be put in context.

2.1 El Salvador

The SBM reform in El Salvador was implemented in 1991 under the name EDUCO (*Educación con Participación de la Comunidad*). Its main objectives are to improve access to pre-schools and primary schools in poor communities, encourage community participation in education, improve the quality of schooling, and improve school management and administration by placing the locus of decision-making close to parents and communities. As is the case with most SBM reforms, improving student achievement was not among the program's original objectives.

EDUCO schools are publicly funded, and EDUCO students receive (in addition to free tuition and textbooks), free uniforms, registration, and basic school supplies. In return, parents of EDUCO students are expected to contribute meals, time, and in some cases labor to improve schools (Edge, 2002). The distinguishing feature of EDUCO schools is the Associations for Community Education (ACE). Each EDUCO school has one ACE with five community-elected members. ACEs receive funds directly from the Ministry of Education (MoE) and are responsible for enacting and implementing MoE and community policies, oversee hiring, firing, and monitoring of teachers (Sawada and Ragatz, 2005).

2.2 Honduras

In 1999, Honduras implemented PROHECO (Proyecto Hondureño de Educación Comunitaria), a community-based participation program. PROHECO's objectives are to improve access to education and encourage community participation in educational decision-making. In the 1990s, access was an important issue in Honduras. Some studies revealed that in 1997, more than 14% of school-age children (most of these living in rural areas) were not enrolled in school (Di Gropello, 2006).

To be eligible, PROHECO schools must be in rural areas, have at least 25 pre-school and primary school-age children, and not be near another school (Di Gropello, 2006). PROHECO schools must have a school council or AECO (*Asociación Educativa Comunitaria*) which is a legal entity charged with overseeing the budget, selecting and paying teachers, monitoring teacher and student attendance and performance, and building and maintaining school facilities. The school council has six community members. School councils receive funds from PROHECO's coordinating unit, which in turns receives the funds from the Ministry of Finance (Di Gropello, 2006).

2.3 Nicaragua

The school autonomy reform in Nicaragua was first implemented in 1991. Its goals are to increase community participation in educational administration, obtain financial resources for schools beyond government funding, and increase efficiency in the use of human and financial resources (Parker, 2005).

Autonomous schools must have a school council composed of the principal, teachers, parents and students. Members are either elected or appointed by local authorities. While it was sought for all council members to be active participants, most were principal-led (Parker, 2005). The size of the council varies with the size of schools (King and Ozler, 1998). Councils can fire and hire the school principal and are involved in maintaining school facilities and academic quality.

Autonomous schools receive their funds directly from the MoE based on the number of students (although there is a sliding scale by which smaller schools get more than larger schools). As part of the reform, autonomous schools could charge obligatory fees to parents, but this was eliminated by legislation introduced in 2002 explicitly prohibiting the right to charge fees. Many schools, however, continue to encourage voluntary donations (Parker, 2005).

2.4 Guatemala

Initially piloted in the early 1990s, PRONADE (*Programa Nacional de Autogestión para el Desarrollo Educativo*) was expanded in 1996 in Guatemala following the Peace Accords. PRONADE has the following main objectives: improve access to pre-school and primary opportunities for out-of-school children, decentralize educational decision-making, improve community participation in education, and maintain indigenous and linguistic diversity (Di Gropello, 2006).

Under PRONADE, several key school administrative functions are decentralized to community school councils, the COEDUCAs (*Comités Educativos*). Among these are paying staff salaries, hiring, firing, monitoring and evaluating staff, setting the school schedule and calendar, building and maintaining school facilities, and providing budget oversight. The school council is composed of fifteen community members (Di Gropello, 2006). PRONADE schools are built in remote rural areas and provide pre-school and primary education. To be eligible for PRONADE, communities must demonstrate ability and interest to manage the new school, not be near another public school and have at least 20 pre-school and primary-age children.

2.5 Mexico

In 2001, Mexico implemented the Quality Schools Program or PEC (*Programa Escuelas de Calidad*). This program seeks to provide more autonomy to schools by giving them five-year grants of up to US\$15,000 to improve educational quality (Skoufias and Shapiro, 2006).

In exchange for PEC grants, schools must prepare an educational improvement plan that outlines intended grant use. Parent associations must be involved in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the plan. In the first four years, about 80% of the grant must be spent on school materials and facilities. In the fifth-year, only part of the money must be spent on such goods, and most of the grant goes to fund teacher training and development. Participation in PEC is voluntary, but the program targets disadvantaged urban schools. As of 2004, over 20,000 schools or 10% of all Mexican primary schools received PEC support (Skoufias and Shapiro, 2006)

Another SBM reform undertaken in Mexico was the Support to School Management program or AGE (*Apoyo a la Gestión Escolar*). This program began in 1996 and provides cash grants (\$500 to \$700 depending on school size) and training to Parent Associations to spend on any educational activity deemed appropriate. In most instances spending is limited to improvements to school facilities. In 2005, more than 45% of primary schools in Mexico had a Parent Association (Gertler, Patrinos and Rubio Codina, 2006).

2.6 Brazil

Beginning in 1982, several states in Brazil experimented with varying forms and degrees of SBM. Three key innovations stand out: schools are given financial autonomy; principals are elected democratically by school officials, parents and students, or are competitively appointed by local governments via examinations (or a combination of both); and councils are established at the school to encourage participatory decision-making and coordinate and evaluate pedagogical, administrative, and financial activities of individual schools. Councils are composed of the principal, representatives of teachers and other staff, and representatives of parents and students (Paes de Barros and Mendonca, 1998). Only four states implemented all three reforms in a coordinated manner: Minas Gerais, Rio Grande do Norte, Espírito Santo and Mato Grosso do Sul (Paes de Barros and Mendonca, 1998)

Another set of SBM reforms began in 1998, and by 2001 had reached over 5,600 schools. These reforms, known as the *Plano de Desenvolvimento da Escola* (PDE) were designed to make schools more responsive to students and their communities. Under PDE, schools engage in a self-evaluation, develop a school plan focusing on two or three “efficiency factors” (one of which has to be effective teaching and learning), and design actions intended to address them. Fundescola provides funds to support PDE schools’ goals and projects (Carnoy *et al.*, 2004).

2.7 Israel

In 1992, in an effort to improve educational quality, the Israeli Ministry of Education commissioned a committee to explore introducing SBM in schools. In 1997, the municipality of Jerusalem was the first one to introduce SBM into 60 of the 74 schools in the city (Nir, 2002). This introduction was done gradually over a period of 4 years.

As part of the SBM reform, schools are expected to develop well defined goals and a clear work plan, implement extensive monitoring and assessment methods. In return, they are able to managed part of their budgets (the part of the budget not controlled centrally), and obtain some authority with respect to personnel matters and establishing a school council (Nir, 2002).

2.8 Hong Kong

In 1991, Hong Kong began implementing a series of SBM reforms mirroring efforts in the UK, Australia, and the United States (Wong, 2003; Dimmock and Walker, 1998). The School Management Initiative (SMI) seeks to improve school effectiveness and establish new roles and relationships for the education department and new roles for school management committees (SMC), sponsors, supervisors, principals, teachers and parents. Moreover, it seeks to provide greater flexibility in school finance, improve accountability and encourage collaborative decision making (Dimmock and Walker, 1998). In 1997 the Hong Kong Education Commission broadened the scope of the reform and gave the SMCs autonomy regarding personnel decision, financial matters, and curriculum design and delivery (Wong, 2003). Schools can voluntarily opt-into the SMI. By 1997, about 30% of all schools in the country had opted into the system (Dimmock and Walker, 1998).

2.9 Other Countries

Various forms of SBM efforts have been implemented in the United States in the past thirty years. Some of the most salient ones have taken place in Chicago, Florida, Virginia and New York. In Chicago during 1988, after years of falling educational outcomes, apparent public dissatisfaction with the school system, and the label of "worst school district in America" the Chicago School Reform Act was enacted (Shipps *et al.*, 1999). The reform's central proposal called for SBM in all schools, shifting authority from the state to Local School Councils (LSC) (Drury and Douglas, 1994). Each council was composed of eleven members: six parents, two community representatives, two teachers, and the principal. In high schools, a student representative was also part of the council. Parents and community representatives are elected every 2 years by a vote at the school of parents and residents (Hess, 1999). Councils had the authority to hire the principal and all full-time staff (including teachers) and establish the curriculum and methods of instruction (within the constraints of

the Illinois State curriculum framework). Contrary to the case of most SBM reforms around the world, in Chicago, student achievement was an explicit objective.³

SBM has been present in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada for over 25 years. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the British government began to push for educational reforms that increasingly devolved more authority and autonomy to parents and teachers. The most important of these reforms was the 1988 Education Reform Act, which gave rise to two categories of schools: Local Managed (LM) and Grant-Maintained (GM) schools. In both of these models, school governing bodies had more authority and autonomy over budget and day-to-day operations. Both categories of schools also had the power to hire and fire all teaching and non-teaching staff.

SBM reforms of various flavors were also implemented during the late 1980s and 1990s in countries like The Netherlands, Spain, the Czech Republic, South Africa, Indonesia, Cambodia, and Thailand.⁴ The Dutch reform has one distinguishing feature from SBM reforms in other countries: the key player was to be the principal. Empowering the principal, and not teachers, parents or the larger community, was one of its main objective. Shared decision making within schools was not seen as a goal of the reforms.

3. Evidence on success and failure of SBM initiatives

The evidence base for the effects of SBM and an assessment of methodological strength are summarized in Table 3. This table focuses on post-1995 evidence. Table 4 shows the number of studies examined by country, as well as the type of publication. The research reports a wide range of results of SBM on student achievement, dropouts, parental involvement and other outcomes ranging from the very positive to the negative or neutral. Upon closer examination, some common themes emerge.

³ To allow for achievement measures, the city established performance standards for each school based on the percentage of students being tested who were performing at or above the national norm on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) or its high school counterpart, the Test of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP).

⁴ Since school-based management is a fairly broad concept, other countries' reforms could plausibly fall under this umbrella. For example, "whole school development" is a package of reforms aimed to improve, among other things, school management, in-service training, monitoring and evaluation (Akyeampong, 2004). This "holistic" approach to school improvement is currently being implemented, with some variations, in countries like Ghana, South Africa, and Sri Lanka. The South African WSD initiative is focused on improving performance. In Sri Lanka, the focus has been more the improvement of textbooks and teacher professional development, and the achievement of some degree of decentralization. In Ghana, the core objective of the WSD project is to provide professional development (in-service) to teachers to help them improve teaching and learning. One World Bank evaluation of the Ghana reforms found that being a beneficiary of WSD improved English and math test scores (Akyeampong, 2004).

TABLE 3. MATRIX FOR SUMMARIZING EVIDENCE BASE OF SBM EFFECTS ON STUDENT OUTCOMES

PROBLEM	COUNTRY	SBM IMPACT	STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE
ACCESS (INCREASED ENROLLMENTS)		<i>OVERALL FINDING: POSITIVE IMPACT</i>	
	EL SALVADOR	POSITIVE: Increased enrollments in rural areas and poor communities	STRONG
	HONDURAS GUATEMALA	POSITIVE: Increased enrollments in rural areas POSITIVE: Increased enrollments in rural areas, increased attendance of Mayan girls	STRONG STRONG
DROPOUT AND REPETITION RATES		<i>Overall finding: Positive impact</i>	
	EL SALVADOR	POSITIVE: Increased continuation rates (reduced dropout) in elementary schools (attributed to more community participation)	STRONG
	MEXICO	POSITIVE: Participation in PEC reduced dropout rates and repetition rates; School participation in parental association program reduced repetition and grade-failure rates	STRONG
	HONDURAS	POSITIVE: Modest effects in reducing dropout rates	SOMEWHAT STRONG
	NICARAGUA	POSITIVE: Increased promotion from having more <i>de facto</i> autonomy in schools	SOMEWHAT STRONG
	BRAZIL	POSITIVE: More autonomy led to lower repetition rates; Participation in PDE improved grade-passing rates, but no effects were found on dropout and attendance rates	SOMEWHAT STRONG
			<i>OVERALL FINDING: MIXED</i>
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	EL SALVADOR	NONE: No differences between EDUCO and comparison schools (however EDUCO students come from more disadvantaged backgrounds)	STRONG
	CHICAGO	POSITIVE: Student achievement increasing in grades 3-8, weaker studies found declining changes in high schools	STRONG
	HONDURAS	NONE TO POSITIVE: Modest positive effects on science test scores, no effect on math or language	SOMEWHAT STRONG
	NICARAGUA	NONE TO POSITIVE: More autonomy over teacher-related issues is associated with higher student achievement in primary (math and language) and secondary (language only), another study found that it increased math achievement in some grades, but not in others	SOMEWHAT STRONG
	BRAZIL	NONE: No statistical differences in Portuguese and Math scores for PDE and non-PDE schools	SOMEWHAT STRONG
	GUATEMALA	NONE TO POSITIVE: One study found decreased achievement for girls, but another found improved Spanish achievement and no difference in mathematics between PRONADE and traditional schools	WEAK

TABLE 4. NUMBER OF STUDIES REVIEWED AND TYPE OF PUBLICATION, BY COUNTRY

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF STUDIES REVIEWED	TYPES OF PUBLICATIONS
AUSTRALIA	7	THREE PUBLISHED JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION, TWO CONFERENCE PAPERS, ONE UNESCO POLICY PAPER
CANADA	2	ONE PROJECT REPORT, ONE JOURNAL ARTICLE (EDUCATION POLICY JOURNAL)
UNITED STATES	10	JOURNAL ARTICLES, PROJECT REPORTS, WORKING PAPERS, CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS
BRAZIL	2	PUBLISHED IN IADB BOOK, PUBLISHED JOURNAL ARTICLE
NEW ZEALAND	3	TWO PROJECT REPORTS, ONE JOURNAL ARTICLE (EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP INTERNATIONAL)
EL SALVADOR	4	ALL PUBLISHED IN JOURNALS (E.G. WORLD BANK ECONOMIC REVIEW) OR BOOK CHAPTERS
NICARAGUA	3	ALL PUBLISHED IN WB BOOKS OR WORKING PAPER SERIES
NETHERLANDS	1	JOURNAL ARTICLE (EDUCATION POLICY)
GUATEMALA	2	ONE PUBLISHED IN WB WORKING PAPER SERIES, ONE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION
HONDURAS	2	PUBLISHED IN WB BOOKS OR WORKING PAPER SERIES
MEXICO	3	UNPUBLISHED WORKING PAPERS, WORLD BANK POLICY RESEARCH PAPER
HONG KONG	5	PUBLISHED IN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND OTHERS
CAMBODIA	1	UNPUBLISHED, WORKING PAPER
THAILAND	1	INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF EDUCATION
INDONESIA	1	JOURNAL ARTICLE
SPAIN	1	COMPARATIVE EDUCATION REVIEW
CZECH REPUBLIC	1	CONFERENCE PAPER
UK	4	BOOKS, ONE PUBLISHED PAPER

First, a clear and well supported effect of SBM reforms, particularly in Central America, has been improved access and coverage in rural areas and poor communities. Second, the empirical evidence for dropout and repetition rates suggests SBM reforms do improve these, although the magnitude of this effect varies across countries. This finding is also well supported by a number of strong or somewhat strong studies mostly dealing with countries in the Americas. Third, evidence on student achievement is mixed and in most cases, studies reporting increases or decreases in this measure are using weaker designs. However, the few studies that use stronger methodological strategies find either improved student achievement in elementary and middle schools (Chicago), or very modest to no differences in test scores (El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua).

Fourth, parental involvement appears to have increased with SBM reform, although the evidence is not overwhelming. Fifth, teacher effort (measured by days worked or parent-teacher meetings) appears to have increased in some cases, but not in others. The evidence is stronger for the cases where effort appears to have increased (El Salvador). The evidence for higher school effectiveness and SBM effects on curricular or teaching methods and innovations pointed to no change or slight improvements, although once again, the strength of the evidence in this point is not particularly great. Lastly, evidence for teacher and principal empowerment was mixed, although most teachers and principals in the reviewed cases would not want to go back to a more centralized model (suggesting satisfaction with SBM). However, school staff morale appeared to be lower and quit rates higher under SBM owing primarily to higher workloads. Again, the evidence for these results is not particularly strong.

Next, we provide a more detailed discussion of the effects of SBM reform on relevant educational outcomes.

3.1 SBM Effects on Access

Evaluations of EDUCO in El Salvador have found a steady increase in student enrollments which can be directly attributed to the program (Di Gropello, 2006). Student enrollments in EDUCO schools went from close to 8,500 students in 1991 (when the program began) to over 320,000 students in 2001. This represents 50% of rural enrollments and 37% of total enrollments in grades 1-9 in El Salvador (Di Gropello, 2006).

The SBM reforms in Honduras also improved the issue of coverage in rural areas. In 2000, the program enrolled slightly close to 40,000 students at the pre-school and primary levels. Three years later, in 2004, more than 87,000 students were enrolled at these levels, representing about 11% of the total enrollment in rural areas (Di Gropello, 2006).

When it began as a pilot program, PRONADE schools were found in 19 communities in Guatemala. By 2004 more than 3,600 communities had

PRONADE schools enrolling almost 400,000 children at the primary level. As of 2002, PRONADE schools represented 21% of primary school enrollment in rural areas, accounting for 14% of total primary enrollments in the country [MINEDUC (2004) cited by Di Gropello, 2006].

3.2 SBM Effects on Student Achievement

In terms of student achievement, Jiménez and Sawada (1998) found that, even after using a two-stage regression procedure that attempts to correct for selection bias (*i.e.* the fact that schools who choose to become autonomous might be different in some unobservable variables that could be correlated with the outcome of interest), there were no statistically discernible effects of attending an EDUCO school on neither math nor language student test scores among third graders. It should be noted that EDUCO schools tend to be located in very poor, rural and isolated communities. The expectation, therefore, would be to see lower test scores among EDUCO students because of their background. The fact that there are no statistically discernible differences between EDUCO and traditional schools could be a sign that EDUCO students are performing better.

In Honduras, Di Gropello and Marshall (2005) did find a modest, but statistically significant effect of PROHECO schools in reducing student dropouts. PROHECO students also appear to have higher test scores in science. Selection bias appears to be underestimating the effects, so these should be taken as a lower bound. There is no statistically discernible PROHECO effect on math or language. Because the data used for these analyses is somewhat questionable, this evidence is not very strongly supported.⁵

In Nicaragua, King and Ozler (1998) studied school autonomy's effects on student test scores in mathematics and Spanish. The authors use a matched comparison design based on selecting a sample of treatment (autonomous schools) and a comparison group of non-autonomous public schools and private schools. Data include a panel of two matched school-household surveys conducted in 1995 and 1997, and student achievement tests from 1996. The sample, however, is not nationally representative and suffers from missing data and other problems. Autonomy was measured as *de jure* (whether a school had signed a contract with the MoE to become an autonomous school) or *de facto* (measuring the percentage of decisions made

⁵ The bulk of the PROHECO evidence, particularly that relating to its effects on teacher effort and student outcomes, is based on somewhat flawed data. As Di Gropello and Marshall (2005) describe, the data originally collected to evaluate PROHECO (in 2003) did not produce an adequate group of comparison schools. The authors thus collected additional data for 2002, but the comparability of PROHECO schools in 2003, with the 2002 schools is also limited. These authors also raised serious concerns about measurement error in some key variables (such as parental involvement) and small samples for some analyses. Although they attempted to do so, the authors were not always able to successfully employ more rigorous techniques such as instrumental-variable estimation or propensity score matching due to data limitations. All of this reduces the strength of the evidence on PROHECO effects.

by the school council rather than the central or local government). *De jure* autonomy was not found to have any statistically significant effects on student achievement. *De facto* autonomy was found to have positive effects on student promotion and on student achievement in math and language in primary and language in secondary.

A subsequent analysis looked at the effects on student achievement of two more refined measures of autonomy. These two variables were one measuring the percentage of decisions taken at the school council concerning pedagogical issues (class size, curriculum, textbooks, etc.) and the percentage of decisions related to teachers (hiring and firing, evaluation, supervision, training and relations with teacher union). The results for the influence of autonomy over pedagogical issues on student achievement were mixed. This is not surprising given that the SBM reform did not have large effects on schools' decision-making on pedagogical matters (King, Ozler and Rawlings, 1999). However, it appears that having more autonomy over teacher-related issues does have a positive and significant effect on student achievement in primary (both subjects) and secondary (language only).

Using more recent—and nationally representative— data from 2002, Parker (2005) finds positive effects of autonomy on 3rd grade mathematics test scores. These effects are negative for 6th grade math scores. Results are not significant for Spanish scores. None of her teacher or school variables seems to be able to explain the positive differences between autonomous and non-autonomous schools (where they exist). These results are derived from a propensity score model that matches observations at the student level.

For the case of Guatemala, Marshall (2004) found that, under some econometric specifications, attending a PRONADE school decreased Spanish and math achievement for girls (estimations were done separately by gender). However, it found that it improve attendance by Mayan-speaking girls. In his study, Marshall (2004a) used sample of slightly over 1,000 1st graders in 1999 in 58 schools in three Guatemalan departments. Additional data were collected for these children in 2002 including family background measures and test scores. This evidence stems from a study not explicitly designed to look at differences between PRONADE and traditional schools. Consequently, the empirical strategy does not control for selection or other kinds of biases that might affect these results. In addition, the data are not nationally representative.

A more recent study conducted by The World Bank (2004) and using tests developed by UNESCO's regional office in Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC) found that controlling for student, teacher and school factors eliminated any negative differences between PRONADE and traditional public schools, and even showed positive differences for Spanish [World Bank (2004), cited in Di Gropello, 2006]. This study however, does not appear to correct for selection or other potential biases.

In Chicago, Hess (1999, 1996) argues that after initial slippage, student achievement is now increasing in Chicago public schools. He cites that 94% of elementary schools had higher percentages of students above the national norms in 1998 than they had at that level in 1990. The gains for the majority of elementary schools had been substantial (between 4-8 percentage points). At the high school level the results are less encouraging, although they suggest important improvements in math (but not in reading). In a study of 14 elementary and high schools in Chicago between 1989 and 1995, Hess (1996) found that 5 had increased student achievement, 3 reported no major changes, and 6 were declining. Three of the declining schools were high schools. These findings must be taken with caution as they are based on comparing mean achievement at two points in time, without any empirical provision taken to ensure that some or all of this increase was in fact due to the reform. In addition, there is some evidence to suggest that merely comparing means of students above national norms is not appropriate due to changing test forms from year to year and significant school-to-school variability in student mobility (Bryk *et al.*, 1998)

To address these concerns, Bryk *et al.* (1998), used data on one particular test form that was used in Chicago during 1993 and 1995, and then repeated in 1994 and 1996 with the same cohorts of students (for example second graders were given the form in 1993, and then the same form in 1994 as third graders). This makes the gains in 1994 and 1996 directly comparable because they are based on the same pairs of test forms and levels. An analysis of test gains reveals that for all elementary grades 3-8, the 1996 learning gains were substantially greater than in 1994 for both reading and mathematics. These gains represent improvements ranging from 10 to 40% over the 1994 levels and they appear to be part of a longer-term upward trend in test scores and not just one shot gains (Bryk *et al.*, 1998).⁶

In Brazil, Paes de Barros and Mendonca (1998) used census, household survey, and evaluation data from the National Basic Education System to empirically investigate the effects of these three SBM innovations on student achievement measured by average performance in mathematics, language and science in grades 1, 3, 5, and 7 (test scores are averaged at the school level, since not all grades are examined in these three subjects). Control variables such as mean family income per capita, average teacher quality, and average educational attainment. The unit of analysis is the state, and the time period for the study was 1981-1993 (some analyses utilized fewer years because of

⁶ It should be noted that contrary to other SBM reforms, the Chicago reform received substantial contributions from foundations and local donors. In 1995, the Annenberg Foundation awarded a five-year grant of 49.2 million dollars to improve public schools, that were matched with an additional 100 million from local donors (Lee *et al.*, 1999). It could be argued that existing research is unable to disentangle the effects of these considerable additional resources from the autonomy reforms. On the other hand, evidence such as Bryk *et al.* (1998) compares gains in 1994 and 1996. While it does conclude that gains were much larger in 1996 (after the establishment of the Annenberg Challenge) it is unlikely that such funds would have had such an immediate impact on achievement.

data restrictions). The empirical strategy was to compare the performance on various outcomes of states and points in time where the innovations had been instituted to the performance of states and points in time where they had not. Their results suggest that the financial autonomy reforms did not lead to higher student performance (Paes de Barros and Mendonca, 1998).

Carnoy *et al.*'s (2004) evaluation of PDE, found that although the program did affect what went on in schools (in terms of planning, participation of parent-teacher associations, suitable working conditions, etc.), it did not appear to have any significant effect on Portuguese and Math test scores. However, within PDE schools, those schools that received more funds did appear to improve test scores more than those receiving fewer funds. Spending on learning materials and on school furniture appears to have the greatest effects on learning, among all spending categories.

This paper uses a rich longitudinal dataset covering 1999-2002 that includes PDE schools and a matched set of non-PDE schools. Their multivariate analysis approach controls for pre-existing differences across schools in PDE exposure, individual and family characteristics, teacher and school characteristics, and parents' selection of schools. This last variable is used to address concerns that sample (program) selection might bias the results (Carnoy *et al.*, 2004).

3.3 SBM Effects on Dropout, Repetition, and Failure Rates

In Mexico, Skoufias and Shapiro (2006) use panel data regression analysis and propensity score matching to evaluate the impact of PEC on student dropout, failure and repetition rates using a nationally representative panel data set covering the 2001-2002 and 2003-2004 school years. To establish a comparison group, they use student outcome data for the years 2000 (the year before the first schools joined PEC) and 2003. Their differences-in-differences approach assumes no differences in time trends in student outcomes. To support this assumption the authors include several controls at the school and municipal level taken from 2000 data, such as teacher-student ratio, school type, and participation in poverty reduction programs. A second strategy uses propensity score modeling to match treatment to comparison schools based on these same data.

Skoufias and Shapiro find that participation in PEC decreases dropout rates by 0.24 points, failure rates by 0.24 points and repetition rates by 0.31 points. To explore the changes that brought about these results in PEC schools, the authors use qualitative data on PEC school effectiveness and parental involvement. They found that parents had increased their participation in school and students' homework. Moreover, PEC schools had experienced increased expectations by parents and students that students would progress to more advanced education levels Skoufias and Shapiro (2006). Unfortunately, the authors do not have qualitative data on non-PEC schools to

investigate whether changes occurring at PEC schools were unique and can be reasonably tied to improvements in outcomes. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that these qualitative changes can be solely attributed to the presence of PEC in the school. One issue with Skoufias and Shapiro's model is whether the differences between the treatment and comparison group, controlled by including or matching using school and municipal controls from 2000, represent all differences between these two groups, including differences in outcome trends over time.

Murnane, Willet and Cárdenas (2006) suggest that it does not. Using longitudinal data from the seven full academic years of PEC (Skoufias and Shapiro use only two years of outcome data) they find that PEC schools had a different outcome trend in the years prior to enrollment in the program than non-PEC schools. To avoid violating this key assumption, Murnane *et al.*, use schools that entered PEC in its second year of operation (the second cohort of PEC schools or PEC2 schools) as the treatment schools. Contrary to the case of schools that entered PEC in its first, year, PEC2 schools do not have significantly different pre-PEC outcome trends from the comparison schools and are thus a more credible counterfactual.

Their results show that participation in PEC did decrease school dropout rates significantly (about 0.11 percentage points each year of program participation). Given that the average dropout rate in their sample was 4.75%, three years of PEC would have reduced an average school's dropout rate by about 6%. The authors did not find PEC had any significant results on repetition rates. Lastly, they found that PEC had its highest impact on states with medium levels on the Human Development Index, and its lowest impact on states with low levels of development. The authors hypothesize that this was because departments of education in these low development states had a lower capacity to support PEC schools than was the case in more developed states (Murnane *et al.*, 2006)

A more recent study by Shapiro and Skoufias (2006) did find PEC reduced failure and repetition by 0.05 and 0.09 percentage points respectively. They also confirmed Murnane *et al.*'s finding that participation in PEC reduced school dropout rates by 0.11 percentage points. Furthermore, they find that the beneficial impact of PEC increases substantially in schools where the teaching staff is more educated (has more schooling) (Shapiro and Skoufias, 2006)

In their study of the impact of the AGE program on intra-year dropouts, grade repetition and grade failure in rural primary schools in Mexico, Gertler, Patrinos and Rubio Codina (2006) found that AGEs had a significant effect in reducing grade failure and repetition. They do not find that AGEs have any significant effects on intra-year dropout rates. Their study was conducted between 1998 and 2001 on a sample of 6,038 rural non-indigenous primary schools, some receiving AGE and some not. A difference-in-difference

regression approach is used to evaluate the intervention's impact. All outcomes are measured at the end of the school year, explicitly assuming that to be effective, AGE needs some time.

The authors use the phasing in of schools into AGE to generate sufficient variation in the treatment variable to achieve identification. Schools receiving AGE prior to 2002 are the treatment group, whereas schools receiving AGE from 2002 onwards serve as a comparison group. To test the validity of this comparison group the authors compare pre-intervention trends in the outcome variables controlling for school and state fixed effects and a dummy variable measuring if the school is a potential AGE school. This analysis does not reveal significant differences in pre-intervention trends for schools receiving AGE in earlier and later years. Although insignificant differences in pre-intervention trends should alleviate concerns about bias resulting from endogenous program placement, school fixed effects are used to address any potential bias arising from time-invariant sources. The authors also test for biases arising from changes of the distribution of students in schools, but do not find evidence for concern (Gertler, Patrinos and Rubio Codina, 2006).

In El Salvador, Jiménez and Sawada (2003) find that after controlling for child, household and school characteristics, third graders were more likely to continue studying in that school two years later, than third graders in traditional schools. Jiménez and Sawada's continuation Probit coefficient for EDUCO schools was 0.36. This suggests that attending an EDUCO schools raises the probability of continuing in school by 64% (translating the z-coefficient into probabilities using the normal distribution) vs. non EDUCO students.

These results attempt to control for selection bias and in addition they use 1996 test scores to control for initial differences in achievement between traditional and EDUCO schools that might affect dropout behavior. The authors also found that supply-side constraints were important in EDUCO schools. The fact that most EDUCO schools do not offer a second cycle (grades 4-6) impacts continuation rates. This is evidenced by the fact that if the variable measuring the number of second cycle sections in the schools is dropped from the models, the EDUCO dummy loses significance. To investigate the EDUCO effect further, the authors added a community participation variable in the estimation. The EDUCO coefficient lost magnitude and significance, and at the same time community participation emerged as a positive and statistically significant variable. The authors thus concluded that a significant portion of the EDUCO effect can be explained by community participation (Jiménez and Sawada, 2003).

In Brazil, Paes de Barros and Mendonca (1998) used census, household survey, and evaluation data from the National Basic Education System to empirically investigate the effects of these three SBM innovations on repetition rates, rate of nonattendance, and average grade-level lag (how far behind a child is in school from the level he should be at his age). Control

variables such as mean family income per capita, average teacher quality, and average educational attainment. The unit of analysis is the state, and the time period for the study was 1981-1993 (some analyses utilized fewer years because of data restrictions). The empirical strategy was to compare the performance on various outcomes of states and points in time where the innovations had been instituted to the performance of states and points in time where they had not.

The authors found that educational performance tends to be better in the states and points in time where principal elections, financial autonomy or establishment of school councils had been adopted. To control for unobserved heterogeneity, the authors included a series of controls to try to capture any relevant omitted variables. This led to a reduction in the magnitude and significance of the aforementioned effects. The only outcome over which the results appeared robust to the introduction of additional controls was repetition rates. Also, the inclusion of additional controls highlighted the importance of financial autonomy, over school councils or principal elections. The authors conclude that their results show generally positive, but modest impact of these innovations on educational performance defined broadly. As to which innovation is most promising, the authors attach more significance to financial autonomy and much less significance to election of principals (Paes de Barros and Mendonca, 1998).

It should be noted that all analyses were done at the state-level. This probably masks important within-state variance in SBM practices and outcomes that could lead to different results. In addition, while the introduction of additional controls and fixed effects (where the panel nature of the data allowed it) should take care of a substantial fraction of the unobserved heterogeneity, questions remain about whether these variables adequately cover the range of unobserved variables particularly time-variant ones.

Also for the Brazilian case, Carnoy *et al.* (2004) found that participation in PDE improved passing rates for Brazilian students in grades 5 to 8 by almost 10%. There were not statistically discernable effects of PDE on student attendance or dropout rates (Carnoy *et al.*, 2004).

3.4 SBM Effects on Parental and Community Involvement

In El Salvador, Jiménez and Sawada (2003) found that EDUCO parent associations visited classrooms more than once a week on average, which was almost 3-4 times more than parent associations in traditional schools. Sawada (2000) found that EDUCO schools had better classroom environments (measured by lower classroom sizes and the availability of a classroom library) leading to higher student test scores in 3rd grade.

In Honduras, parents of PROHECO students appear to meet less frequently with teachers and other school personnel, than those in traditional schools.

Teachers and principals in PROHECO schools also report having less autonomy than those in traditional schools, but this is not surprising given that the higher degree of autonomy enjoyed by parents at PROHECO Schools appears to reduce the amount of autonomy felt by school personnel (Di Gropello and Marshall, 2005).

There is some evidence to support the finding that PRONADE improved community participation in Guatemala and that parental involvement (measured by parent-teacher meetings and director-parent meetings) was higher in PRONADE than in traditional schools (Di Gropello, 2006). Even though COEDUCAs have the power to hire and fire teachers, less than 2% of them reported firing a teacher, a figure not significantly different from traditional schools (although this might be justified if teachers in PRONADE schools are better).

Early evaluations of the effects of SMI strategies in Hong Kong concluded that parental involvement was minimal after the reforms had been implemented (Dimmock and Walker, 1998).

3.5 SBM Effects on Teacher, Principal and Instructional Outcomes

In El Salvador, Jiménez and Sawada (1998) find that students in EDUCO schools are less likely to miss school due to teacher absences. A more recent study by Sawada (2000) measured teacher effort in terms of teacher attendance and hours of teacher-parent meetings. He finds that EDUCO teachers have higher effort levels (only when effort is defined as hours of parent-teacher meetings) than teachers in traditional schools. Instrumental variables are used to reduce the endogeneity between community participation and observed effort. Sawada and Ragatz (2005) tried to improve the methodology employed on Jiménez and Sawada (1999) and Sawada (2000) by using propensity-score matching to identify the EDUCO effect on teacher behavior, administrative processes and ultimately, student test scores. They found that community associations managing EDUCO schools felt they had more influence in virtually every administrative process, than associations in traditional schools. In particular, hiring and firing of teachers appeared to be one of the administrative processes over which the associations had the most influence. The authors also found that teachers spent more time meeting with parents in EDUCO schools, that they spent more time teaching, and were absent fewer days than teachers in traditional schools. The results linking these activities with student test scores, however, were not statistically significant. Nonetheless, their results lend support to the evidence that more autonomy leads to a closer monitoring of teachers resulting in higher teacher effort.

A study on the impact of the SBM reform on teacher effort in Honduras, did not find that teacher effort was significantly higher in PROHECO schools

than in their traditional counterparts. PROHECO teachers did not report spending more time teaching Spanish or Math than teachers in traditional schools (any differences are not statistically significant), nor did they report working more hours per week (Di Gropello and Marshall, 2005). There is no evidence that PROHECO and traditional schools differ in pedagogical methods (Di Gropello, 2006). However, PROHECO schools appear to have more resources, learning materials, and better infrastructure than traditional schools and report fewer closings due to work stoppages (Di Gropello, 2006; Di Gropello and Marshall, 2005)

Increasing school influence over teacher-related decision-making is the area over which the decentralization reform in Nicaragua appears to have had the largest effect (King, Ozler and Rawlings, 1999).

In Guatemala, researchers found teachers in PRONADE schools quit at a much higher rate (three times higher) than teachers in traditional schools. This might be due to better salaries, working conditions and job security in traditional schools (Di Gropello, 2005). In addition, one study found that PRONADE schools were more likely to lack water and sanitary facilities, and that people generally thought PRONADE schools were worse off than traditional schools (Di Gropello, 2005; CIEN, 1999). In terms of teacher effort, one national evaluation found that PRONADE schools reported fewer teacher absences, and more days worked during the school year [MINEDUC/DP Tecnologías (2002), cited in Di Gropello, 2006).

In Israel, Nir (2002) used teacher interview data from a three-year study of teachers in 28 elementary schools in Jerusalem, and found that the SBM reforms had been perceived by teachers as both opportunity and burden. On the one hand teachers expressed increased commitment to student achievement and increased expectations for professional freedom. On the other hand, teachers expressed that their autonomy remained unchanged, and their commitment to the school (measuring teachers' acceptance of the school's goals and mission and a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of their school) and to the social integration of children had actually decreased. This study uses baseline information for the various indicators, *i.e.* information collected in 1998, the year prior to the actual implementation of SBM in these 28 schools, to compare teachers' beliefs and perceptions with successive measures on the different indicators. It also controls for teacher background and other variables that could affect any changes. It does not have a comparison group of teachers in non-SBM schools that could lead to more conclusive findings.

A 1998 study of Israeli schools, found that principals in autonomous schools felt more empowered to make decisions relating to curriculum and evaluation, staff development, school policy and participation, than principals in the centralized schools. Teachers in autonomous schools also reported a higher sense of self-efficacy, commitment, community orientation and

achievement orientation than their counterparts in centralized schools (Gaziel, 1998). This study used data on a random sample of 41 public primary schools in the Tel Aviv district. Nineteen of these schools were operating under a SBM approach, and 22 were operating on the traditional centralized model. The principals of all schools in the sample were asked to complete the Principal's Perceived School Autonomy questionnaire. Teachers chosen at random were asked to complete a teacher survey. The study makes no attempt to control for the potentially self-selected nature of the autonomous schools which might bias the ratings given by their personnel.

In Hong Kong, researchers found that the SMI reforms encouraged building school cultures in which teachers and principals felt professionally empowered and motivated. However, their evaluations also concluded that there was no evidence to say that the SMI reforms had actually permeated into the classroom and were affecting the work of teachers and students (Dimmock and Walker, 1998).

Conclusions

Discussion

After more than a quarter century of SBM reforms around the world, there is a stronger evidence base to attest the effects of SBM than there was in the early 1990s. However, the evidence is still limited to a few, very well documented and researched cases. The vast majority of the works assessing SBM and its effects have weak methodological designs that do not allow for any causal interpretations or attributions of positive effects on student or other outcomes to the reform itself.

Although none of the studies we reviewed met our criteria for very rigorous empirical design, a few cases do stand out. The SBM reforms in El Salvador and Mexico have been well researched and documented. The positive effects they have had on access and dropout rates stem from rigorous studies and are robust. The evidence on student achievement is one of no difference between EDUCO and non-EDUCO schools, but considering that they control for student background and that EDUCO schools are mostly located in rural and marginal areas, it is a sign of progress that EDUCO appears to have erased any differences in achievement due to socio-economic factors. Another case that stands out is Chicago, where evidence for improvements in student achievements has been well documented.⁷ Other less rigorous cases, but with relatively strong methodologies nonetheless, support the finding that SBM improves access (Honduras, Guatemala), reduces dropout rates (Honduras), and has little to no effects on achievement (Honduras, Nicaragua).

Do these SBM reforms share any commonalities? All of the Central American cases are examples of strong SBM reforms, where school councils have great autonomy over school matters such as hiring and firing teachers and/or principals, setting curriculum, and control substantial resources (via lump-sum grants or funding). The Chicago reform was one where school councils had great authority over hiring/firing of school personnel and setting of school policy and curriculum. But schools in Chicago had more limited authority over funding matters. Lastly, the reform in Mexico was quite moderate, granting some limited authority to school councils for school infrastructure improvement and setting the school's vision, goals, etc. This reform, however, did provide additional resources to participating schools.

In sum, it appears that having a school council that includes a wide variety of stakeholders (principal, teachers, parents) and has either limited authority and more resources, or great authority and autonomy (even without extra resources), does have a positive effect on student outcomes, particularly

⁷ It should be noted, however, that Chicago public schools received a considerable injection of resources by Foundations and others, which might be largely behind these positive results.

those regarding to access and dropout rates, and lesser so on student achievement.

Concluding Remarks

While this review tried to be as comprehensive as possible, it is entirely possible that it might have missed some research works, particularly for unpublished or proprietary work that is not widely available on the Internet, or is not indexed by engines such as ERIC.

In addition, the method used to assess methodological rigor focuses on result evaluations that use quantitative methodologies and seek causal findings. A large proportion of the SBM literature is focused on formative evaluation aspects and other outcomes that might help better shape SBM reforms, but are not necessarily evaluating impacts on measurable variables such as student achievement. These studies would not meet the rigor criteria outlined in this paper, even though their contributions could be certainly considered rigorous and are valuable to improve the reach and effectiveness of SBM reforms.

There are clear topics within SBM in need of future research. One of these pertains to its costs. While few papers explicitly discuss the costs involved in implementing SBM in its various forms, most of research alludes to its cost-effective strategies. Salient among these are the involvement of parents and the larger community in educational activities that would otherwise require paid personnel: monitoring of teachers, building and maintaining school facilities, overseeing the budget, etc. However cost-effective these strategies are for governments, it does not mean they are entirely cost-free. Parents and communities must bear the costs of their time and labor. Moreover, SBM often puts more demands on teachers and principals' time for planning, collaborative decision-making, evaluation, etc. Some of the reviewed here chronicle how teachers and principals felt overworked or overstressed by the higher demands of responsibility and accountability. In the New Zealand case, for example, principals reported working 60-hour weeks resulting in a negative impact on teacher and principal satisfaction. Further research should try to measure more precisely the direct and indirect costs of SBM reforms, as well as look at the distributional effects of such spending and the demands placed on the various actors.

Lastly, the lack of causal studies of SBM effects highlights a need for more research that can lend empirical credibility to many of SBM's claims. These include effects not only on student outcomes (which admittedly were not part of many SBM reform's original objectives), but on parental satisfaction, accountability, teacher and principal effort and leadership, curricular innovation, and instructional improvements. The fact that many SBM reforms have now been around for a number of years should motivate researchers to engage in these topics with rigor and objectivity.

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