

NASET Special Educator e-Journal

November 2024

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Buzz from the Hub

State of Early Childhood Education in Big Ten States

The Big Ten Early Learning Alliance (BTELA) has just published an inaugural brief on the state of early childhood education in Big 10 states. It emphasizes the importance of early education, highlights disparities in funding and access, and notes the impacts of these on children's development. The report also suggests policy changes to improve outcomes, such as increased investment and equitable resource distribution.

<https://btela.osu.edu/our-work/state-of-early-childhood-education-in-big-ten-states/>

Equity in Data: Where to Start!

Are you looking to address disparities in early intervention and early childhood special education systems and promote more equitable practices and outcomes? Knowing where to start can be challenging, but taking one step forward and starting is critical. The **DaSy Center** developed a guide, *DaSy Data Inquiry Cycle*, to support Part C and Part B 619 program staff in addressing equity considerations at each stage of the data inquiry cycle.

<https://dasycenter.org/data-inquiry-cycle/>

A Summary of the Research on the Effects of K–12 Test Accommodations: 2022

Research on test accommodations provides valuable information that informs policy and practice. The National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) recently published *A Summary of the Research on the Effects of K-12 Test Accommodations: 2022*. This report presents research literature published in 2022 on testing accommodations for U.S. elementary and secondary students in kindergarten through 12th grade.

<https://nceo.umn.edu/docs/OnlinePubs/NCEOReport444.pdf>

Inclusive Occupations podcast

Episode: The Inclusive Education Roadmap- Part 1- Dr. Diane Ryndak

In this first part of the two-part series on the Inclusive Education Roadmap (IER) by the TIES Center, Dr. Diane Ryndak gives us a general overview of the work done for sustainable systemic change in inclusive education at the state, district, and school. After getting together a diverse Equitable Inclusive Leadership Team (EILT), the second step of the Inclusive Education Roadmap is called RISE (Reflecting on Inclusive Systems of Support). The school Leadership Team is led to deeply reflect and engage in critical discussions about their system's current use of inclusive educational practices for all students, including students with significant cognitive disabilities.

<https://www.inclusiveoccupations.com/podcast/episode/1d9b4aca/the-inclusive-education-roadmap-part-1-dr-diane-ryndak>

Groundbreaking Study: Anti-trans State Laws Increased Suicide Attempts By 72%

In a groundbreaking study published in *Nature Human Behavior*, researchers found that anti-trans bans lead to a 72% increase in suicide attempts among transgender individuals, compared to states without such legislation. The study is the first study of its kind and could have far-reaching international implications as more countries face pressure to implement similar restrictions on transgender people.

<https://www.erininthemorning.com/p/groundbreaking-study-anti-trans-state>

Youth Engagement Now (YEN)

Explore resources developed by youth with disabilities across the country to access tools to successfully engage and involve youth partners in projects to support impactful change. The site features tools focused on foundational principles, leadership development, and effective collaboration. Key areas include disability training, advocacy, community building, and event planning. It also offers a podcast, YEN Talks, for further insights.

<https://yen.transitionta.org/>

Resources from the National Research Center for Parents with Disabilities

Serving Parents with Disabilities: The National Research Center for Parents with Disabilities has a range of resources for parents with disabilities and those who support them covering a variety of topics such as child welfare law and its effects on parents with disabilities, firsthand narratives from disabled parents about how they raise their children, and advice for professionals working with specific populations of parents with disabilities.

<https://heller.brandeis.edu/parents-with-disabilities/>

Best Practices for Adhering to Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) Requirements

The Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services (CMCS) released important guidance regarding the coverage requirements for eligible children and youth who are enrolled in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). The guidance, Best Practices for Adhering to Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) Requirements, is in the form of a State Health Official letter. This guidance is designed to help states strengthen their implementation of EPSDT requirements to improve health outcomes.

<https://www.medicaid.gov/federal-policy-guidance/downloads/sho24005.pdf>

A Practical Guide for State Teams to Increase Inclusion in Early Childhood Programs

This comprehensive resource, *A Practical Guide for State Teams to Increase Inclusion in Early Childhood Programs*, is designed to help state leaders and advocates use data to promote more inclusive policies for young children in early care and education settings. The guide emphasizes the importance of inclusion from both human rights and equity perspectives, advocating for all children, especially those with disabilities, to have access to high-quality, inclusive early education.

https://nieer.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/nieer_research_report_template_inclusionguide_august2024_ad_1_1.pdf

StopBullying.gov

When adults respond quickly and consistently to bullying behavior they send the message that it is not acceptable. Research shows this can stop bullying behavior over time. StopBullying.gov provides information from various government agencies on what bullying is, what cyberbullying is, who is at risk, and how you can prevent and respond to bullying. Check out their tip sheet, Bullying and Children and Youth with Disabilities and Special Health Needs, specifically for how to support youth with disabilities and special health needs.

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/sites/default/files/2017-09/bullyingtipsheet.pdf>

Want to Learn More About Technology & Youth Mental Health?

The Child Mind Institute's Technology and Youth Mental Health webinar series brings together researchers, advocates, and tech thinkers to explore crucial questions, such as: What is the relationship between social media and mental health? How can we advance research on this relationship using real world data? Click here to watch the webinars and interviews in the series <https://childmind.org/science/public-health-epidemiology/technology-youth-mental-health-series/>

My Life is Worth Living

My Life is Worth Living includes five powerful stories told over 20 episodes. In each episode, relatable teen characters wrestle with challenges that are all too familiar for many viewers and discover strategies to cope when it feels like their own thoughts are against them. Over the course of each character's journey, they realize that life is worth living. Watch the videos here. <https://mylifeisworthliving.org/>

MCH (Maternal and Child Health) Bridges: The official podcast of the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP)

Episode #15: Youth Perspectives on Mental Health: Supporting the Next Generation

Three members of The Adolescent Champion Teen Advisory Council (TAC TAC), Melanie Avila, Fanta Guindo, and Yeina Han, share what adolescent and young adult mental health looks like in their communities, what they have experienced, and what needs to change. This episode talks about important concepts like positive youth development, youth-friendly services, and culturally competent care. It also identifies strategies for addressing barriers to youth seeking and accessing mental health services. Listen to this podcast episode here.

<https://mchbridges.buzzsprout.com/1837581/episodes/12824655-episode-15-youth-perspectives-on-mental-health-supporting-the-next-generation>

Parents Under Pressure: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Mental Health & Well-Being of Parents

The Surgeon General released an Advisory regarding the mental health of parents/caregivers. This Advisory recognizes the critical role of parents and caregivers in our society and the importance of both reducing their stress and protecting their mental health and well-being. It explores the unique stressors that parents and caregivers face; the impact of these stressors on the mental health and well-being of parents, caregivers, and children; and the policies, programs, and cultural shifts we need to make to allow parents and caregivers to flourish and thrive. Read the Advisory [here](https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-mental-health-and-bullying-resources/).

<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-mental-health-and-bullying-resources/>

Help Wanted: Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education Workforce Needs Findings from a National Survey

The ED-funded Early Childhood Personnel Center collaborated with the National Institute for Early Education Research and recently released report findings from a national survey of the early intervention and early childhood special education workforce. The goal was to obtain a national picture of the EI/ECSE workforce's education, credentials, pre- and in-service training, and knowledge about EI and ECSE. This report summarizes the main findings from the survey. [Read More](#)

https://nieer.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/may_2024_early_intervention_and_early_childhood_special_education_workforce_needs_findings_from_a_national_survey.pdf

IEPs vs Service Plans: Everything You Need to Know!

Are you considering sending your child with special needs to a private school? More and more families are considering this as an option. However, many differences exist when it comes to sending your child with special needs to private schools. While public schools are required to offer special education services, private schools aren't. Public schools can provide learners with special needs supports and services to best meet the students' educational needs in their IEPs, whereas private schools may offer learners Service Plans. But what is the difference between the two? [Read More](#)

<https://www.thetechadvocate.org/ieps-vs-service-plans-everything-you-need-to-know/>

Youth Employment: A Foundation for Mental Health and Well-Being

In May, the department launched a new webpage (www.dol.gov/youthmentalhealth) devoted to young people's mental health needs. Whether you're a young person, part of the workforce system, an employer, or a policymaker, everyone has a role supporting young people's well-being by helping more young people access the mental health resources they need and get into good jobs that they can build a healthy life around and thrive. The Department of Labor encourages everyone to explore the content and share with the department what they are doing in their community on this important topic by submitting their stories through their new webpage. Compiling these stories and sharing them helps spread the word about youth mental health.

Contribute today (<https://www.dol.gov/general/mental-health-at-work/youth#wufoo-mc4aghb05xz2v0>), and your story may be shared on a department platform.

Involving Teens and Young Adults in Selecting Assistive Technology

This 4-page resource helps families involve teens and young adults in learning about and selecting assistive technology (AT). An important goal for older students is to understand the areas in which technology can support them in their educational and employment goals. The tip sheet encourages students to advocate for themselves, and to take an active role in selecting assistive technology to address their needs. Read More

<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/involving-youth-in-selecting-assistive-tech/>

Six Global Lessons on How Family, School, and Community Engagement Can Transform Education

Stronger family, school, and community partnerships help ensure that relational trust is at the foundation of schools, and that all the actors can work together toward a shared vision of education in their communities. This shared vision of education is critical to education systems transformation. This report is the result of the participation of hundreds of students, families, school educators, and researchers who dedicated their time and energy to investigating the critical role that families and communities play in ensuring students and schools can flourish. Read More

https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Final-Six-Global-Lessons_EN_24June2024_web.pdf

Frequently Asked Questions: Social Security Administration, Supplemental Security Income, and Social Security Disability Insurance – Can I work if I receive social security benefits?

This FAQ provides people with disabilities and their families an overview on social security benefits and answers common questions about these benefits and employment.

<https://leadcenter.org/resources/financial-toolkit-frequently-asked-questions/>

Summer Learning Tips to Go! Text Messaging Service

The Summer Slide is real! While we are all looking forward to the long days relaxing and making the best memories with our children, we must remember to sprinkle in some fun learning throughout our summer adventures. We found the perfect resource for families to do just that and avoid the summer learning loss! Sign up for summer learning tips sent right to your phone, in English or Spanish, from Start with a Book.

<https://www.startwithabook.org/reading-tips-text-messages>

Cartoons Available with American Sign Language

The ED-funded Bridge Multimedia now has some of children's favorite

Public Broadcasting Service cartoons available in American Sign Language, thanks to ED's Office of Special Education Programs funding. Check out full episodes of "Alma's Way," "Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood," and more.

<https://pbskids.org/videos/american-sign-language-full-episodes>

Unstuck: The Special Education Podcast

Discussions between two professionals related to current trends and topics affecting the world of special education. They pull from a combined 40 years in the field to share stories, insight and potential solutions.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/unstuck-the-special-education-podcast/id1604000975>

Special Education Inner Circle

The Special Education Inner Circle podcast is hosted by Catherine Whitcher, M.Ed., founder of the Master IEP Coach® Mentorship + Network. Get your notebook ready as Catherine brings you real-world strategies for everyone at the IEP table. With her family's experience in the disability community and her journey from Special Education classroom teacher to IEP expert, Catherine knows what it takes to prepare students and families for the future. Get ready to be inspired and learn actionable steps you can take immediately to change your special education experience.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/special-education-inner-circle/id1484686234>

Commemorating the 25th Anniversary of Olmstead

ICYMI: On June 20th The U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Community Living and Office for Civil Rights celebrated the 25th anniversary of the landmark Olmstead v. L.C. Supreme Court decision, which ruled that unjustified segregation of people with disabilities is a form of unlawful discrimination under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

<https://www.youtube.com/live/EYsDx5ogzLc?feature=shared>

Special Education Legal Alert

By Perry A. Zirkel

October 2024

This month's update identifies two recent court decisions that respectively illustrate the scope under the IDEA of "regular high school diplomas" and "transportation services." For previous monthly updates and related publications, see perryzirkel.com

On August 7, 2024, the New Jersey Supreme Court issued an officially published decision in *Board of Education of Sparta v. M.N.*, addressing whether a state-issued diploma based on passing the General Education Development (GED) test is a "regular high school diploma" under the IDEA. The child in this case transferred, with an IEP, to the school district at the start of 10th grade. Midway during that school year, he received a warning that he was in danger of failing several classes. In March, his parents withdrew him from the district. In April, he took and passed the GED based on the "Statewide standard score." As a result, soon thereafter he received a "state-issued high school diploma." Within that same month, he reenrolled in the district. However, in May, the district informed his parents that due to his state-issued diploma, he was no longer eligible under the IDEA. Subsequently, his parents filed for a due process hearing. The hearing officer ruled that the state-issued diploma constituted a regular high school diploma that was fully aligned with state standards, thus ending his entitlement to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) under the IDEA. The parents appealed to the head of the state education agency, who concurred with the hearing officer's decision. The first level of the state's appellate judiciary affirmed. The state supreme court granted the parents' request to review this ruling. The IDEA regulations define a "regular high school diploma" as "the standard high school diploma awarded to the preponderance of the students in the State that is fully aligned with State standards," not one aligned with alternate academic achievement standards or "a general equivalency diploma, a certificate of completion, certificate of attendance, or similar lesser credential."

The parents argued that since the preponderance of New Jersey's high school students do not receive the state-issued diploma, it does not qualify as a "regular high school diploma."

The state supreme court agreed based on ample evidence that the vast majority of New Jersey high school students graduated with a "state endorsed diploma," which is the state's distinct terminology for a locally issued diploma upon meeting successful completion of the state-prescribed high school graduation requirements.

Alternatively, the parents argued that the state-issued diplomas amounted to a general equivalency diploma under a different name.

Even if the parents' first argument had not prevailed, the state supreme court found this alternative argument persuasive based on the exclusion of a general equivalency diplomas in not only the IDEA but also the expressly aligned ESSA.

The school district counter-argued that the state education head had previously issued a decision that equated state-issued and state-endorsed diplomas.	Confirming the present distinction, the state supreme court observed that the legislature amended the applicable state law to no longer permit state-issued diplomas to serve as an alternate route for the state-endorsed high school diploma.
• The bottom line for this student was his retention of his right to FAPE until achieving a regular high school diploma or age 21. Readers in other states need to check their relevant state laws and be reminded of the IDEA requirement for prior written notice for issuance of a regular high school diploma.	

- On September 3, 2024, the federal appellate court for the D.C. Circuit issued an officially published decision in *Pierre-Noel Bridges Public Charter School*, addressing the extent of the related service of transportation. The child in this case is nonverbal 8-year-old with multiple disabilities, including spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy. Being medically fragile, he requires 1:1 nursing services to assist with his needs, which include a tracheostomy tube to breathe, a gastronomy tube to eat and to take medication, and a wheelchair to move. His IEP includes transportation on a school bus with a dedicated nurse to monitor his medical equipment. His parents requested, and the school district declined, provision for a nurse and an aide to move him between the front door of his wheelchair-inaccessible second-floor apartment and the school bus. When he was younger, his home-care nurses and father carried him up and down the stairs, but he is now too heavy for them to do so safely. The parents filed for a due process hearing, and the hearing officer ruled that the transportation obligation extended to the outermost door of the building. The parents appealed, and the federal district court affirmed this part of the hearing officer’s decision. The court concluded that moving the child to and from his apartment door was neither a transportation nor supportive service under the IDEA. The parents filed an appeal with the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals. The parents’ first argument was based on the related services meaning of “transportation.”

In response to the “transportation” basis, the district counter-argued that that this term is vehicle-centric; it ends, to the extent needed, with getting the child on and off the bus. First, the district pointed to the IDEA legislation, which does not separately define this term.	Rejecting this argument, the court relied on (a) dictionary definitions, which do not limit transportation to a vehicle; (b) the IDEA’s statutory definition of a related <i>service</i> , which extends to being “required to assist [the] child ... to benefit from special education”; and (c) the legislation’s least restrictive environment obligation, which presumes a related way to access that environment.
Second, for its vehicle-centric counterargument, the district relied on the IDEA regulations, which define “transportation” to include travel “to and from schools” and “in and around buildings.”	Similarly rejecting this basis, the appellate court reasoned that the regulations cannot narrow the scope of the statute and, in any event, both quoted parts are “naturally” not limited to vehicles and, to the extent needed, immediately adjacent (e.g., curbside) assistance.
The parents alternatively argued that the disputed movement was a supportive service under the IDEA.	The appellate court declined to address this argument, finding it unnecessary in light of its ruling in favor of the parent for its transportation service argument.
The remaining question was whether this particular child met the overall related service limit of requiring it to benefit from special education.	The appellate court left for another day specifically what a student would need for proof of the requisite need, because in this case the district conceded that the requested service is “required” for this child within the meaning of the statute. ¹
This ruling reversed the appealed part of the lower court’s decision reported in the July 2023 legal alert, and it warrants careful independent review and interpretation at the local level based on any applicable case law in the jurisdiction and the specific factual contours of the case.	

Accepting and Understanding the Needs of Muslim Immigrant Families in Special Education

By Dr. Sadia Warsi

Introduction

Special education for culturally diverse students, particularly those from immigrant Muslim families, presents a complex set of challenges and opportunities within the American educational system. The involvement of parents from these communities is crucial for the success of their children; yet, numerous barriers often hinder their full participation. These barriers include language differences, lack of familiarity with the American educational system, and cultural disparities in understanding and approaching disabilities and education.

The rapidly growing population of immigrant Muslim students in the United States underscores the importance of addressing these challenges. Schools and educators must make concerted efforts to bridge the communication gap and create a welcoming, inclusive environment for these families. This may involve providing language interpreters, cultural liaisons, and flexible meeting schedules to accommodate parents' needs.

Moreover, it is essential to recognize that the concept of special education and the approach to disabilities can vary significantly across cultures. What may be considered a disability or special need in one culture might be viewed differently in another. Therefore, educators and administrators must strive to understand and respect these cultural perspectives while ensuring that all students receive the support and services they need to thrive academically and socially.

To build a more inclusive educational environment, it is vital for professionals to adopt effective strategies when working with South Asian Muslim families. Understanding cultural values, religious contexts, and communication styles, and employing specific engagement strategies can greatly enhance the educational experience for these children and their families.

In essence, crafting strategies that address these unique needs is not merely beneficial—it is essential for fostering an educational atmosphere that promotes equity and success for all students. As we delve deeper into special education's intersection with cultural diversity, we will explore various strategies geared toward supporting South Asian Muslim families navigating this complex landscape.

Cultural Perspectives on Disability and Education

South Asian families with children in special education face unique challenges due to cultural differences that are often not addressed in traditional special education programs. Research indicates that European-based principles of disability-related concepts do not align well with the

¹ The court clarified that the school district could perform this disputed part of transportation via appropriate means other than physical carrying, such as specialized lifts or ramps.

South Asian worldview of disability, which places a strong emphasis on the "development" of knowledge and skills rather than the "transfer" of them.

Understanding the cultural context of South Asian families is essential in designing effective special education programs for their children. This cultural component influences their interaction patterns, functional priorities, and ideological style. By conducting research on South Asian families in special education, it becomes possible to incorporate their perspectives and experiences into the design of culturally responsive and effective special education programs.

For Muslim families, the intersection of cultural and religious identity can play a significant role in how they perceive and approach disability and education. In Islamic beliefs, there is a strong emphasis on inclusion, compassion, and support for individuals with disabilities. The concept of 'sabr' or patience is highly valued in Islam, and Muslim parents may draw on their faith to advocate for their child's inclusion and support in educational settings.

Labeling and Identification in Special Education

The labeling of children, particularly in the context of education and special needs, is an issue that concerns many immigrant Muslim parents. Research consistently shows that terms that specify a particular problem rather than imply a global, developmental impairment are seen as less stigmatizing. This is especially relevant for immigrant Muslim parents who may have different cultural and religious perspectives on disability and normalcy.

In the context of special education, the issue of labeling is reflected in current research and presents a challenge for special educators. Educators may seek to avoid labeling a child prematurely, reflecting the state's emphasis on "levels of service" rather than "category of disability." However, this can lead to a situation where category of disability codes are still used on official documents, while educators focus their comments on educational goals, class placement, and related services at annual conferences, often not mentioning classifications.

For immigrant Muslim parents, the issue of labeling is compounded by cultural and religious factors. The stigma associated with disability in some Muslim communities may lead parents to resist labeling their child with a developmental or learning disability. This resistance can create tension between parents and educators, potentially impacting the child's access to necessary services and supports.

Navigating the issue of labeling requires culturally competent and inclusive approaches to special education and disability services that take into account the unique needs and perspectives of immigrant Muslim families. Educators and professionals working with these families should strive to create a supportive and understanding environment that respects cultural and religious beliefs while providing appropriate support for children with developmental and learning disabilities.

Effective Strategies for Professionals:

1. **Culturally Responsive Identification Processes:** Schools should develop culturally sensitive criteria for the identification of disabilities, allowing for broader definitions of normalcy that align with diverse cultural expectations.

2. **Clear Communication About Labels:** Educators need to clearly explain the purpose, benefits, and implications of labeling for services, helping parents understand the educational advantages while addressing concerns of stigma.

3. **Inclusive Decision-Making:** Ensuring that parents are part of the decision-making process regarding assessments and labels can alleviate fears and foster trust between schools and immigrant Muslim families.

4. **Addressing Fear of Labels:** Educators should develop strategies to mitigate fears associated with labeling, such as success stories of students who have benefited from special education services despite initial labeling concerns.

5. **Islamic Perspectives Integration:** Incorporating viewpoints from South Asian and Muslim cultures about disabilities into the discussion of labeling can help create a shared understanding of diverse needs.

Testing and Assessment

Standardized testing, a crucial aspect of our educational system, has been criticized for its cultural bias. This bias can have serious consequences for culturally gifted children who may not perform well on these tests, leading to their abilities going unrecognized and unutilized. Standardized tests are designed with the intention of providing an objective measure of a student's academic abilities. However, these tests often contain elements that are culturally biased, meaning they favor the experiences and knowledge of certain cultural groups over others.

As a result, many culturally gifted children are never identified as such due to the reliance on these culturally biased standardized tests. These tests may not accurately capture the intellectual abilities of these students, leading to their talents being overlooked and their potential going untapped. It's a disservice to these students and a loss for society as a whole, as we miss out on the contributions and innovations that these gifted individuals could have offered.

To address the issue of cultural bias in testing, it is important for educators and policymakers to consider alternative methods of assessing students' abilities. This could include incorporating multiple measures of assessment, such as teacher recommendations, portfolio assessments, and performance tasks, which can provide a more comprehensive and equitable view of a student's abilities. Additionally, providing professional development for educators on culturally responsive teaching practices can help ensure that all students are provided with an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

By addressing cultural bias in testing, we can ensure that all students, regardless of their cultural background, have the opportunity to have their gifted abilities recognized and nurtured. This approach not only benefits individual students but also contributes to a more diverse and inclusive educational environment that values and cultivates talent from all cultural backgrounds.

Effective Strategies for Professionals:

1. **Alternative Assessment Methods:** Schools should employ a variety of assessment strategies that go beyond standardized testing, such as naturalistic assessments or performance-based tasks, to accommodate different cultural backgrounds.
2. **Anti-Bias Awareness Training:** Educators must receive training on recognizing and mitigating cultural biases in standardized assessments, thus ensuring fair evaluations for students from diverse backgrounds.
3. **Muslim Parent Involvement in Assessment:** Creating opportunities for parents to participate in the assessment process can help ensure that assessments take into account cultural considerations and family perspectives.
4. **Culturally Responsive Workshops:** Hosting workshops that inform families about assessment processes, including the types of assessments and their implications, can enhance their understanding and involvement.
5. **Use of Observational and Informal Assessments:** Employing observational assessments in the child's natural environment allows professionals to gather authentic data about student abilities and challenges without the potential stressors of formal testing.

Legal Framework and Parental Rights

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), previously known as the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (PL-94-142), guarantees the right to a free and appropriate public education for children with disabilities in the United States. This law also mandates that students with disabilities receive personalized education plans and specialized services to meet their unique needs. However, the complexity of the law and the language used can be overwhelming for many individuals, particularly for parents of minority children.

In the past, there has been an assumption that minority parents were well-versed in PL-94-142. Unfortunately, this was not always the case. Many parents, particularly those from Hispanic and other minority backgrounds, were unaware of the services being offered to their children through special education programs. This lack of understanding often led to dissatisfaction and a feeling of being left out of the decision-making process.

One of the key issues that needs to be addressed is the language barrier that often exists between parents and professionals. Many minority parents may not speak English as their first language, and this can create a significant obstacle in understanding the law and the services available to their children. It is crucial for professionals to provide information in a language and format that is accessible to all parents. This may involve providing translated materials, offering interpreters during meetings, and using clear and simple language to explain complex legal concepts.

In addition, it is important to recognize that understanding the law is not only the responsibility of parents, but also of professionals working within the education system. Teachers, administrators, and other school staff must have a thorough understanding of IDEA and how it impacts the education of students with disabilities. By being well-informed about the law, professionals can better support and advocate for the needs of their students and their families, ultimately creating a more inclusive and equitable education system for all students, regardless of their abilities or cultural backgrounds.

Effective Strategies for Professionals:

1. **Multilingual Information Resources:** Schools should provide all legal documents and information regarding special education rights in multiple languages, ensuring comprehension across diverse linguistic backgrounds.
2. **Muslim Parent Training on Legal Rights:** Offering workshops focused on educating parents about their rights under IDEA and the special education process can empower families.
3. **Dedicated Legal Liaisons:** Designating staff members who specialize in special education law to assist non-native English speakers can help families understand legal terminology and processes.
4. **Accessible Communication:** Professionals should adopt simple language and clear visuals when explaining legal rights to parents, making it easier for them to understand crucial information about their children's education.
5. **Regular Updates and Check-Ins:** Creating a system of regular communication regarding their child's education and rights keeps parents informed and engaged, ensuring that they feel connected to the process.

Communication and Information Exchange

Exchanging information is a crucial aspect of our society that allows individuals to gain knowledge, make informed decisions, and participate in various aspects of their lives. However, studies have shown that there are disparities in information exchange, particularly among minority parents. Earlier studies have revealed that despite the provisions in the law, many minority parents lack the skills of gathering information through affiliation with professional organizations. This lack of access to information can significantly impact the ability of minority parents to advocate for their children and navigate systems that are meant to support them.

More recent studies have also shed light on the kinds of problems minority parents have in terms of getting information. African-American parents, for example, reported significantly more often that they were not told why a service could not be provided, than did Hispanic and white parents. This lack of transparency in communication can lead to frustration and feelings of powerlessness for parents who are trying to navigate complex systems on behalf of their children.

Additionally, Hispanic parents were much less likely than white and African-American parents to feel that they had been told what could be done for their child. This lack of information can have serious consequences for children who may not be receiving the services and support they need to thrive. Without understanding the options available to them, parents may struggle to make informed decisions about their child's education, healthcare, and overall well-being.

It is important to recognize that the ability to exchange information is not solely the responsibility of minority parents. It is also the responsibility of professionals and organizations to ensure that information is accessible, understandable, and culturally competent. This means taking proactive steps to provide information in multiple languages, using plain language to explain complex concepts, and actively engaging with minority communities to address their

specific information needs. By fostering an environment of open communication and mutual respect, professionals can work to empower minority parents and ensure that they have the information and support they need to advocate for their children.

Effective Strategies for Professionals:

1. **Translation Services:** Schools should employ qualified bilingual staff or professional interpreters to facilitate communication during meetings, ensuring all parents can express their concerns and needs.
2. **Muslim Parent Engagement Initiatives:** Schools can create informal settings such as coffee chats or community forums that encourage communication between educators and families, fostering a sense of trust.
3. **Visual Communication Tools:** Utilizing visual aids and technology, such as videos or apps that provide easy-to-understand information, can help facilitate better communication.
4. **Regular Feedback Channels:** Establishing consistent feedback channels allows parents to share their experiences and suggestions regarding communication efforts, thus improving information exchange.
5. **Islamic and Cultural Competency Training:** Providing Islamic and cultural competency training for all educational staff can help ensure that they are aware of and sensitive to the cultural communication styles of the families they serve.

Parental Involvement and Empowerment

Parental involvement is a critical component in ensuring the success and well-being of children, particularly those with diverse backgrounds and needs. This is especially true in the context of special education, where careful consideration and coordination of services are crucial for the educational and developmental progress of students. However, research has shown that there are disparities in the level of engagement and involvement of parents in the planning process, particularly for minority children.

One of the potential reasons for the disparities in parental involvement could be the result of systemic barriers and challenges that minority parents face. Research has shown that minority parents often encounter obstacles such as language barriers, limited knowledge about special education services, and lack of access to advocacy and support networks. These barriers can make it difficult for parents to fully engage in the planning process and advocate for the specific needs of their child.

Addressing the disparities in parental involvement requires a multifaceted approach. Schools and educational institutions must strive to create inclusive and culturally responsive environments that actively involve and empower parents from diverse backgrounds. This can be achieved through providing support and resources to help parents navigate the complexities of the special education system, as well as offering culturally sensitive and linguistically accessible communication. Furthermore, educators and administrators must actively work towards building strong partnerships with parents, valuing and integrating their perspectives and contributions into the planning process.

Effective Strategies for Professionals:

1. **Empowered Advocacy Training:** Offer workshops specifically aimed at teaching Muslim parents' advocacy skills, fostering empowered voices in their children's education.
2. **Flexibility in Meetings:** Adopting flexible meeting scheduling to accommodate parents' work and religious obligations can encourage greater participation in IEP meetings.
3. **Islamically and Culturally Relevant Materials:** Providing culturally relevant documentation, including materials in families' native languages, can help parents feel more comfortable and informed.
4. **Peer Mentoring Programs:** Schools can establish mentorship programs that connect experienced parents with those new to special education, helping them navigate challenges together.
5. **Promoting Community Resources:** Schools should actively inform parents about local community resources, support groups, and services that can empower them in advocating for their children.

Support Systems and Resources

Support groups play a vital role for parents of children with special needs, providing emotional support, practical guidance, and a platform for advocacy. These groups offer a space for individuals to come together, share their experiences, and receive support and guidance from others who are facing similar circumstances. In the context of special education, support groups can be particularly beneficial for parents who are navigating the complex and often overwhelming system of services and supports for their children with special needs.

One of the most valuable aspects of support groups for parents of children with special needs is the opportunity to connect with others who understand the unique challenges and experiences that come with raising a child with disabilities. These groups provide a safe and supportive environment where parents can share their feelings, frustrations, and triumphs with others who can relate on a personal level. This sense of understanding and validation can be incredibly empowering and comforting for parents who often feel isolated and misunderstood in their everyday lives.

In addition to providing emotional support, support groups for parents of children with special needs also offer practical guidance and resources that can help navigate the complex world of special education and disability services. With the help of experienced professionals, these support groups can provide parents with valuable information about their rights, the services available to them, and strategies for advocating for their child's needs within the education system.

Furthermore, support groups can also serve as a platform for parents to become advocates for systemic change within the special education system. By coming together and sharing their collective experiences and frustrations, parents can form a powerful force for advocating for policy changes, increased funding, and improved services for children with special needs. This sense of collective action and empowerment can be incredibly motivating and inspiring for parents who want to create a better future for their children and others like them.

Effective Strategies for Professionals:

1. **Local Muslim Support Groups:** Schools should facilitate the formation of support groups specifically aimed at South Asian Muslim parents, helping them to share experiences and receive emotional support from peers.
2. **Muslim Cultural Liaisons:** Employing Muslim cultural liaisons who understand the local communities can improve outreach and trust, offering parents a bridge to educational resources.
3. **Collaborative Resource Development:** Collaborate with community organizations to develop resource guides that are culturally sensitive and specifically designed for South Asian Muslim families.
4. **Parent Events and Workshops:** Hosting regular workshops and community events that focus on relevant topics such as mental health, educational rights, and special education can create impactful networks for families.

Cultural Influences on Family Dynamics and Professional Interactions

Cultural influences play a significant role in shaping the interactions and dynamics between individuals, particularly within family and professional settings. When examining the South Asian and Southeast Asian American communities, it becomes apparent that these cultural influences have a profound impact on the way in which individuals interact with their family members and professionals.

Family relationships are a cornerstone of South Asian and Southeast Asian cultures, and the dynamics within these relationships are heavily influenced by cultural norms and values. In these cultures, the concept of familial collectivism is prevalent, meaning that the needs and goals of the family unit take precedence over those of the individual. This dynamic heavily influences the interactions between family members, as decisions are often made with the well-being of the family in mind. Additionally, the concepts of filial piety and respect for elders play a significant role in shaping family relationships, as there is a strong emphasis on deferring to and caring for elders within the family structure.

Social interaction and communication styles within these communities are also heavily influenced by cultural norms. In South Asian and Southeast Asian cultures, there is generally a more indirect communication style, and an emphasis on maintaining harmony in interactions. Individuals may use non-verbal cues and subtleties in their communication, which can be different from the more direct and assertive communication styles commonly found in Western cultures. Understanding and respecting these communication styles is crucial in building effective relationships with individuals from these communities.

Family expectations also heavily influence the interactions and dynamics within these communities. From a young age, children are often expected to meet certain academic and career expectations set by their families. This can have an impact on the way individuals approach their education and career, as well as the way they navigate professional relationships and opportunities. Understanding these cultural influences is essential in order to effectively engage

with individuals from these communities and to navigate the interactions and dynamics within family and professional settings.

Effective Strategies for Professionals:

1. **Respect for Hierarchical Structures:** Professionals should be aware and respectful of the hierarchical structures in South Asian families and involve key family members in discussions regarding children's education.
2. **Nuanced Communication Strategies:** Educators should adapt to using more nuanced communication styles to resonate with cultural norms, promoting more harmonious interactions.
3. **Elders' Role Encouragement:** Encourage the participation of family elders in educational discussions, recognizing their influence and respect within the family structure.
4. **Cultural Sensitivity Training:** Provide training that helps educators understand the implications of collectivism, familial and interdependence in South Asian family dynamics.
5. **Community Inclusive Events:** Hold events that not only focus on educating families about the special education process but also honor their cultural traditions and values, fostering trust and connection.

Recommendations for Improving Special Education Services

To better serve culturally diverse students and families in special education, several key recommendations emerge from the research and analysis presented. First and foremost, there is a critical need to develop culturally responsive practices in schools. This involves training educators to understand and respect diverse cultural perspectives on disability, education, and family dynamics. It also means adapting teaching methods, communication strategies, and assessment tools to be more inclusive and effective for students from various cultural backgrounds.

Enhancing professional development for educators is another crucial step. This should include comprehensive training on cultural competence, strategies for effective communication with diverse families, and methods for adapting special education practices to meet the needs of culturally diverse students. Educators should also be trained on the legal framework of special education and how to effectively communicate these rights and responsibilities to parents from all cultural backgrounds.

Fostering collaborative partnerships between schools and families is essential for the success of culturally diverse students in special education. This involves creating welcoming school environments, providing multiple opportunities for parent involvement, and actively seeking input from families in the educational decision-making process. Schools should strive to build trust with diverse communities and demonstrate a genuine commitment to understanding and respecting their cultural values and perspectives.

Lastly, there is a need for systemic changes to better serve culturally diverse students and families in special education. This may include revising policies and procedures to be more culturally inclusive, increasing diversity in the special education workforce, and allocating resources for translation services, cultural liaison positions, and family support programs. By implementing these recommendations, schools can create more equitable and effective special education services that truly meet the needs of all students and families, regardless of their cultural background.

Effective Strategies for Professionals:

1. **Culturally and Islamically Responsive Curriculum Development:** Revise curricula to integrate culturally relevant teaching materials that reflect the backgrounds and experiences of South Asian Muslim students.
2. **On-going Training for Educators:** Implement systematic professional development on diversity, equity, and multicultural education for all staff to cultivate a culture of inclusivity.
3. **Muslim Parental Advisory Councils:** Establish a parental advisory council specifically for culturally diverse families to ensure that their needs and concerns are taken into account during policy-making.
4. **Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Encourage collaboration between special education, ESL, and general education teachers to provide well-rounded support that meets diverse student needs.
5. **Feedback Opportunities for Continuous Improvement:** Schools should establish mechanisms for continuous feedback and improvement, making adjustments based on the needs of culturally diverse students and families.

Final Thoughts

Creating effective and sustainable special education programs for culturally diverse students requires a deep understanding of the experiences and needs of these families. This paper has highlighted the complex interplay of cultural, linguistic, and systemic factors that impact the experiences of minority families in the special education system.

It is clear that there is a pressing need to address the disparities in parental involvement, communication, and service delivery that exist for minority families. This involves not only changing professional behaviors and attitudes but also implementing systemic changes to create more inclusive and culturally responsive special education services.

Moving forward, ongoing research and development of inclusive practices are necessary to better serve all students and families in the special education system. This includes continuing to explore the unique needs and perspectives of different cultural groups, developing more effective strategies for parent engagement and empowerment, and creating assessment and intervention methods that are culturally fair and responsive.

Ultimately, the goal is to create a special education system that truly serves all students, regardless of their cultural background. By actively involving parents in program development,

fostering cultural competence among educators, and implementing systemic changes, we can work toward a more equitable education.

In response to both the challenges and opportunities presented, there is a shared responsibility to ensure that all families, particularly those from South Asian Muslim communities, are empowered and supported within the special education framework.

Creating effective and sustainable special education programs requires a deep understanding of the experiences and needs of culturally diverse families. This involves actively involving parents in program development, changing professional behaviors to be more inclusive, and adopting culturally sensitive approaches. The challenges faced by immigrant Muslim parents, South Asian families, and other minority groups in navigating the special education system highlight the need for more culturally responsive practices.

The disparities in information exchange, parental involvement, and access to resources among minority parents underscore the importance of developing more inclusive and accessible special education services. By addressing language barriers, providing culturally competent communication, and empowering parents through education and support, we can create a more equitable special education system that truly serves all students and families. Ongoing research and development of inclusive practices are necessary to better serve all students and families in the special education system. This includes exploring alternative assessment methods, developing more effective ways to involve parents in the educational process, and creating support systems that address the unique needs of diverse communities. By continuing to learn from the experiences of culturally diverse families and adapting our educational practices accordingly, we can work towards a more inclusive, effective, and equitable special education system for all.

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Fostering Belonging in Academia: The Importance of Affinity Groups for Muslim and Minority Faculty in Special Education

By Dr. Sadia Warsi

Importance of this Topic

As the academic landscape continues to diversify, the importance of inclusivity and representation becomes increasingly critical—especially for Muslim and minority faculty in special education. These educators face unique challenges that can impede both their professional development and personal well-being. A proven strategy for addressing these issues is the establishment of affinity groups, which can cultivate a sense of belonging, promote social activism, and enhance student engagement. This article explores the various benefits of affinity groups and provides concrete activities that special education teachers can implement to foster belonging and support among their peers.

1. Establishing Community

Affinity groups serve as essential gathering spaces where faculty members can connect, share experiences, and build networks of support. Special education teachers who participate in these groups can gain insights into the diverse challenges faced by their colleagues and learn the importance of fostering a sense of belonging in their classrooms. By creating an inclusive environment that values each member's unique background, affinity groups lay the groundwork for collaborative efforts that extend beyond casual interactions.

Moreover, the communal bonds formed within affinity groups often lead to the creation of mentorship opportunities. For new Muslim and minority faculty members, having access to experienced colleagues can be invaluable. These established teachers can offer guidance, share resourceful strategies, and provide support in navigating the intricate dynamics of academia. Creating safe spaces where all faculty members feel valued amplifies the effectiveness of affinity groups in forging meaningful connections.

Affinity groups can also serve as a platform for faculty members to engage in collective problem-solving. By sharing both triumphs and challenges, members can brainstorm innovative solutions to common issues, fostering creativity and collaboration. This reciprocal exchange of ideas not only strengthens individual members but can also lead to broader improvements in the academic landscape, especially within the special education field, where support structures are vital.

Ultimately, by establishing a community through affinity groups, special education teachers and their colleagues can foster a sense of belonging that empowers and uplifts each member. In a

world where feelings of isolation and alienation can plague underrepresented faculty, these groups become a lifeline, encouraging open dialogue, collaboration, and support.

Suggested Activities for Faculty to Connect, Share Experiences and Build Supportive Networks

- a. Host regular meetups or informal gatherings to discuss experiences and challenges.
- b. Create a group chat or online forum where members can communicate and share resources.
- c. Organize community-building retreats focused on team-building exercises.

2. Promoting Mental Health and Well-Being

The emotional well-being of Muslim and minority faculty is paramount, and being part of a supportive network can significantly mitigate feelings of isolation, anxiety, and stress often experienced in predominantly homogenous academic settings. For special education teachers, understanding the mental health impacts of marginalization is crucial. Affinity groups serve as support systems that help normalize conversations about mental health, allowing faculty members to express their struggles without fear of judgment.

These groups offer emotional support that transcends professional obligations. Faculty members can share their experiences and challenges candidly, fostering an environment where vulnerability is met with understanding and compassion. This open exchange not only increases individual resilience but also promotes collective mental health, transforming isolated experiences into shared narratives that empower members to advocate for themselves and each other.

Moreover, the sense of community cultivated by affinity groups provides coping mechanisms that faculty members can rely on during challenging times. From resource sharing to discussing self-care strategies, members can learn vital skills for managing stress and overcoming obstacles. As special education teachers work with diverse student populations, they can also use insights gained from affinity groups to recognize and support mental health concerns among their students.

By prioritizing mental health and well-being, affinity groups can lead to a more robust academic environment, ensuring that faculty members not only survive but thrive in their roles. This holistic approach can also improve student engagement and success as teachers who feel supported and understood are more likely to create inclusive and nurturing classroom spaces.

Suggested Activities for Promoting Mental Health and Well-Being:

- a. Offer mindfulness sessions or wellness workshops focused on coping strategies.
- b. Arrange for guest speakers from mental health fields to discuss wellness.
- c. Set up peer support groups that meet monthly to check in on each other's well-being.

3. Enhancing Professional Development

Professional development is critical for any faculty member, and affinity groups provide tailored opportunities that specifically address the needs of Muslim and minority faculty. Special education teachers can play an instrumental role by participating in or facilitating workshops and seminars focused on culturally responsive teaching practices and understanding equity challenges in the classroom. By engaging in these specific developmental arenas, faculty members become more competent and confident in their teaching.

Affinity groups can also create mentorship and networking opportunities that are aligned with the unique career trajectories of minority faculty. For instance, aligning less formal aspects of professional development, such as peer reviews or job search strategies, with group meetings can facilitate a productive dialogue around career advancement. Due to the isolation often faced by minority faculty, these group settings create rich discussions, helping members navigate the complex landscape of academic life together.

Furthermore, affinity groups can host guest speakers and panels featuring leaders in various fields, providing members with access to diverse perspectives and experiences. Through these engagements, special education teachers can learn about innovative approaches and research that they can implement in their classrooms. This not only enhances their teaching practice but also enriches the student experience by incorporating diverse methodologies and viewpoints.

Ultimately, by participating in affinity groups that focus on professional development, Muslim and minority faculty can build their skills and expand their networks. This group-centered approach helps transform the academic community into a more diverse and inclusive space, where everyone can contribute to and benefit from shared learning experiences.

Suggested Activities Enhancing Professional Development:

- a. Conduct workshops on effective teaching strategies for diverse learners.
- b. Facilitate mentorship pairings with seasoned faculty members.
- c. Organize panel discussions featuring successful minority faculty members sharing their experiences.

4. Advocacy for Institutional Change

Another essential aspect of affinity groups is their capability to serve as a collective voice advocating for institutional change. Special education teachers, as part of these groups, can contribute to discussions about equity and inclusion policies that affect not only faculty but also students. By sharing their insights and experiences, they can help shape a culture that prioritizes diversity and empowers marginalized voices within academia.

Affinity groups provide a structured platform for members to collectively address systemic inequities that persist in academic institutions. Regular meetings and discussions allow for the identification of specific areas that require change, such as hiring practices, promotion policies, and resource allocation. By engaging in these conversations, special education teachers can work collaboratively with their colleagues to influence institutional practices through advocacy and activism, leading to tangible changes.

Moreover, affinity groups can take on a more public-facing role by organizing awareness campaigns or workshops that educate the broader academic community about the unique

challenges faced by Muslim and minority faculty. Through these initiatives, special education teachers can help foster greater understanding and sensitivity among their colleagues, ultimately contributing to a healthier academic environment. Engaging in advocacy efforts can also align with broader social justice movements, further empowering faculty members to effect positive change in their institutions.

Through the collective power of affinity groups, members are more equipped to navigate the complex landscape of academia. By harnessing their shared experiences and advocating for systemic change, Muslim and minority faculty, alongside special education teachers, can create a more inclusive environment that benefits everyone at their institution.

Suggested Activities for Advocacy for Institutional Change

- a. Draft position papers on needed institutional changes that can be shared with administration.
- b. Organize town hall meetings to discuss concerns and present solutions to leadership.
- c. Work together on advocacy campaigns to promote university-wide initiatives.

5. Focus on Representation

Creating affinity groups enables Muslim and minority faculty to actively work towards increasing representation within their institutions. For special education teachers, understanding the implications of representation is essential. Diverse faculty members bring unique perspectives and experiences that can enrich the educational experience for all students, ultimately driving institutional change and improving student outcomes.

Increasing representation in leadership roles can significantly influence institutional decision-making processes. Faculty who hold leadership positions can advocate for policies that promote equity and inclusion, thus paving the way for subsequent generations of minority faculty. Affinity groups can provide the necessary support and resources to empower their members to pursue such roles, creating pathways for increased representation and visibility.

Furthermore, affinity groups can engage in initiatives aimed at attracting diverse talent to academia. Special education teachers can play a vital role in outreach efforts, working collaboratively with affinity group members to promote the importance of representation and inclusivity in higher education. By sharing strategies and resources aimed at recruitment and retention, these groups can help cultivate a diverse and dynamic academic community.

The collective focus on representation through affinity groups serves not only to uplift minority faculty members but also enriches the entire academic environment. By advocating for systemic changes that prioritize diversity, Muslim and minority faculty can create more inclusive spaces that resonate through their teaching, research, and engagement with students.

Suggested Activities for Focus on Representation:

- a. Support each other in applying for leadership positions through mock interviews and resume workshops.
- b. Host informational sessions about leadership opportunities within the institution.

- c. Create a mentorship program focused on developing leadership skills.

6. Strengthening Research Collaboration

Affinity groups foster interdisciplinary collaboration by bringing together individuals with shared interests and diverse expertise. One significant activity is organizing brainstorming sessions where members can identify overlapping research themes and explore innovative ideas. Such sessions encourage creativity and help participants articulate their research visions, ultimately leading to groundbreaking initiatives that may not have emerged in isolation. By facilitating discussions among different fields, these groups can expand the horizons of research and foster an environment conducive to cross-disciplinary partnerships.

Another crucial aspect of strengthening research collaboration is the assignment of teams to work on joint research proposals. By pooling resources and expertise, faculty can create comprehensive proposals that reflect a collective vision, increasing their competitiveness for grants and funding. These collaborative efforts often yield higher-quality research outcomes and help in building lasting professional relationships that can be beneficial for years to come. This coordinated approach underscores the value of collective intellectual endeavors and establishes a supportive community committed to shared academic goals.

Co-authorship opportunities for papers and journal articles represent a tangible outcome of enhanced collaboration within affinity groups. By encouraging members to engage in joint publications, these groups propel diverse voices into the scholarly conversation while broadening individual research portfolios. Such initiatives not only enhance the visibility of minority faculty but also contribute to enriching the academic literature with varied perspectives and insights drawn from different cultural and disciplinary backgrounds.

Suggested Activities for Strengthening Research Collaboration:

- a. Organize brainstorming sessions to explore common research interests.
- b. Assign teams to work on joint research proposals.
- c. Set up co-authorship opportunities for papers and journal articles.

7. Enhancing Student Engagement

Affinity groups play a pivotal role in enhancing student engagement by fostering mentorship opportunities for students from similar backgrounds. Establishing a formal mentorship program that links minority faculty with students can provide guidance and support critical for academic success. This structured relationship not only helps students navigate their academic paths but also inspires them through role models who have faced similar challenges. As mentors share their experiences and insights, students can gain confidence, skills, and the motivation needed to excel in their studies.

Organizing events such as panel discussions where students share their academic journeys can further deepen engagement. Such forums allow students to articulate their challenges and triumphs, creating an atmosphere of empathy and understanding. By showcasing diverse narratives, students can see reflections of their own experiences, fostering a sense of belonging in

the academic community. This exposure not only promotes peer support but also encourages students to actively participate in university life, enhancing their overall college experience.

Initiating outreach programs that connect faculty and students with community organizations serves to deepen engagement further. By collaborating with local entities, students can apply their academic knowledge in real-world settings, creating a bridge between theory and practice. These partnerships also facilitate networking opportunities and expose students to professional pathways that they might not have considered otherwise. As students engage with their communities, they develop a better understanding of social issues and the potential for their academic pursuits to effect change.

Suggested Activities for Enhancing Student Engagement:

- a. Create a formal mentorship program linking minority faculty with students.
- b. Organize events, such as panels with students sharing their academic journeys.
- c. Initiate outreach programs connecting faculty and students with community organizations.

8. Building Cultural Competence

Affinity groups are instrumental in building cultural competence within academic institutions, promoting awareness and sensitivity among faculty and students alike. Hosting cultural competency training sessions equips participants with essential skills to navigate and appreciate diverse backgrounds. These workshops encourage open dialogue about cultural differences and the impact these differences have on learning and teaching practices. By fostering a culture of understanding, academic institutions can create inclusive environments that respect and value diversity.

Leading discussions on integrating diverse cultural perspectives into teaching strategies is another important activity within these groups. By encouraging faculty to incorporate varied cultural viewpoints into their curriculums, affinity groups help enrich the educational experience for all students. Such incorporation not only expands students' understanding of global perspectives but also validates the identities of underrepresented groups within the academic setting. This practice cultivates an environment where all students feel seen, heard, and respected as part of the learning community.

Creating resource materials that highlight diverse cultures and identities is essential for sustaining cultural competence among faculty and students. These resources can take the form of reading lists, guides for culturally responsive teaching, or online repositories of information that celebrate multicultural contributions across various fields. By providing accessible materials, affinity groups empower members to continually educate themselves and others about diversity, promoting a culture of ongoing learning and respect.

Suggested Activities for Building Cultural Competence:

- a. Host cultural competency training sessions focused on understanding diverse backgrounds.
- b. Lead discussions on incorporating diverse cultural perspectives in teaching strategies.

- c. Create resource materials highlighting diverse cultures and identities.

9. Encouraging Social Activism

Affinity groups act as powerful platforms for mobilizing faculty to advocate for social equity and justice within academic institutions and beyond. Organizing community events and rallies that focus on pressing social justice issues helps raise awareness and encourages faculty engagement in activism. These collective initiatives enable members to amplify their voices and stand in solidarity with marginalized communities while promoting awareness about systemic injustices. Such outreach not only fosters a sense of community among faculty but also creates opportunities for meaningful engagement with social issues that resonate within society.

Providing opportunities for faculty to participate in local activism further solidifies the group's commitment to social justice. By collaborating with community organizations, faculty can lend their expertise to initiatives aimed at addressing local needs. This engagement not only enriches faculty members' understanding of the societal context in which they work but also encourages them to serve as advocates for change. Furthermore, faculty involvement in activism often inspires students to become engaged citizens, creating a ripple effect in the promotion of social equity and justice.

Encouraging participation in university committees that focus on social issues enables faculty to influence institutional policies and practices. Affinity groups can facilitate discussions on current challenges and provide a united front when addressing equity concerns within the academic structure. By collaborating with administration and other stakeholders, these groups can work towards creating an inclusive environment that prioritizes justice and equity. Together, they can advocate for the implementation of policies that reflect shared values, ensuring that underrepresented voices are heard and considered.

Suggested Activities for Encouraging Social Activism:

Affinity groups can mobilize faculty to advocate for social equity and justice.

- a. Organize community events or rallies promoting social justice issues.
- b. Provide opportunities for faculty to engage in local activism.
- c. Encourage participation in university committees focused on social issues.

10. Addressing Systemic Barriers

Affinity groups provide invaluable platforms for confronting and overcoming systemic barriers faced by minority faculty in academic institutions. Conducting workshops focused on navigating academic policies and addressing inequities allows members to gain insight into the complexities of institutional structures. These workshops offer practical strategies for overcoming obstacles, such as bias in hiring or promotion processes, and equip faculty with the tools necessary to advocate for themselves and their peers. By creating a supportive network, affinity groups can empower minority faculty to navigate systemic challenges collaboratively.

Facilitating discussions on career advancement and retention issues specific to minority faculty is another critical activity that affinity groups can undertake. By sharing experiences and challenges, faculty can collectively identify trends and patterns in their professional journeys, shedding light on systemic inequities. These discussions can lead to concrete recommendations for addressing identified barriers, such as mentoring programs or targeted professional development opportunities. By working together, members can foster a culture of support and advocacy that promotes career growth for all faculty, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds.

Developing a shared document that outlines systemic barriers and potential solutions is essential for creating a roadmap towards equity. This document can serve as a foundational resource for advocacy efforts, allowing members to present a cohesive narrative of challenges faced by minority faculty to higher administration. By articulating specific barriers and offering actionable solutions, affinity groups can drive institutional change and policy reform, ultimately improving the academic climate for all faculty. This collective approach highlights the necessity of solidarity and shared responsibility in addressing systemic issues.

Suggested Activities for Addressing Systemic Barriers:

- a. Conduct workshops on navigating academic policies and addressing inequities.
- b. Facilitate discussions on career advancement and retention issues specific to minority faculty.
- c. Develop a shared document outlining systemic barriers and potential solutions.

11. Creating Safe Spaces

Affinity groups provide essential safe spaces for individuals to share concerns and experiences related to their identities and professional journeys. Establishing ground rules for open and non-judgmental dialogue during meetings creates an environment where trust and respect flourish. Members can engage in candid discussions about their challenges without fear of discrimination or retaliation. This atmosphere of openness not only fosters deeper connections among members but also encourages individuals to express their authentic selves, knowing that their contributions are valued and heard.

Regularly rotating facilitators during discussions promotes varied perspectives and leadership within affinity groups. By allowing different members to guide conversations, the group can benefit from diverse leadership styles and insights. This practice also empowers members to take ownership of their narratives and fosters a culture of shared responsibility. As individuals take turns facilitating discussions, they develop their leadership skills, further enhancing the group's collaborative environment and ensuring that all voices contribute to the conversation.

Establishing anonymous feedback mechanisms ensures that members can voice their concerns and suggest improvements without fear of identification. These mechanisms can take the form of online surveys or suggestion boxes, promoting transparency and accountability within the group. By actively seeking and incorporating feedback, affinity groups can continually refine their practices and address concerns that may arise. This commitment to continuous improvement reinforces the group's dedication to providing a safe space where all members can flourish.

Suggested Activities for Creating Safe Spaces:

- a. Set ground rules for open, non-judgmental dialogue during meetings.
- b. Regularly rotate facilitators to promote varied perspectives and leadership.
- c. Establish anonymous feedback mechanisms for continued improvement.

12. Facilitation of Peer Mentoring

Affinity groups facilitate informal mentoring among members, allowing individuals to share knowledge and strategies that address specific challenges faced by new faculty members. Developing a peer-mentorship system creates an avenue for experienced members to guide newcomers, offering insights into navigating the academic landscape. This support system not only alleviates the sense of isolation that new faculty often experience but also promotes professional camaraderie. By fostering relationships built on trust and shared experiences, affinity groups enhance the overall well-being of their members.

Organizing skill-sharing workshops serves as another important activity for enhancing peer mentorship within affinity groups. These workshops allow faculty members to showcase their expertise and share practical skills related to teaching, research, or service. Such collaborative learning experiences benefit both mentors and mentees, as they promote knowledge exchange and mutual growth. This dynamic not only enhances individual competencies but also builds a sense of community, as members learn from one another and celebrate each other's accomplishments.

Creating a “buddy system” for new hires can further ease their transition into academia. By pairing newcomers with established faculty members, these groups can provide tailored support that meets individual needs. This system fosters immediate connections within the academic community, helping new faculty feel more grounded in their environment. Additionally, it encourages ongoing conversations about challenges faced within the institution, allowing for shared solutions to emerge organically.

Suggested Activities for Facilitation of Peer Mentoring:

- a. Develop a peer-mentorship system focused on specific challenges faced by new faculty members.
- b. Organize skill-sharing workshops where faculty share their expertise.
- c. Create a “buddy system” for new hires to ease their transition.

Final Thoughts

Affinity groups serve as a crucial avenue for fostering a sense of belonging among Muslim and minority faculty in special education. By focusing on community building, professional development, and advocacy for change, faculty can enhance not only their own experiences but also those of their students. The activities outlined above provide actionable steps for special education teachers to cultivate inclusive and supportive environments, ultimately leading to a more equitable academic landscape.

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Stakeholders' Involvement and the Performance Level of Secondary Schools in Area II-A of Leyte Division

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Abstract

This study delved into the level of stakeholders' participation in the school operation and management in the public secondary schools of Area II-A, Leyte Division. Also, this investigated the performance level of the schools and the relationship between the level of participation of the stakeholders and the performance of the schools. This utilized the descriptive correlational design. The instrument was a researcher-made questionnaire that used inputs from a SBM tool or template for assessment. The questionnaire is composed of two parts. (Part 1) elicited data about the level of involvement of the stakeholders in the school management and operation in terms of a) leadership and governance; b) curriculum and learning; c) accountability and continuous improvement; and d) management of resources, where respondents shared their level of agreement regarding the involvement of the community as (1) strongly disagree; (2) disagree; (3) neutral; (4) agree and (5) strongly agree. (Part 2) obtained responses and level of agreement on the schools' performance based on their OPCR, KRA, 4 in a 5-point Likert Scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD), with a value of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The respondents of this study were the 130 teachers from the 13 schools in Area II-A in the division of Leyte who were chosen through purposive random technique. The data were treated and analyzed via mean and standard deviation. The stakeholders' engagement was assessed through the verbal descriptions derived from the mean ranges calculated by $(5-1=4)$ then the difference is divided by four (4) as the greatest value of the scale $(4 \div 5 = 0.8)$. Number one (1) which is the least value of the scale was added. The significant relationship between the level of community engagement and school performance was identified via Pearson r . Results showed that the stakeholders are highly involved in the different facets of school-based management and operation. The overall performance of the schools is outstanding. The results revealed a significant positive relationship between the level of stakeholders' involvement in the school operation and management and the performance of the secondary schools. It is recommended that more initiatives be adopted to boost the participation of the stakeholders for the attainment of the schools' mission, vision, and goals.

Key words: stakeholders' involvement, school-based management, school performance

INTRODUCTION

Community involvement in educational programs enhances academic needs, social and civic capabilities, and student learning outcomes, promoting an expanded learning environment beyond the classroom.

The school community include the different groups of stakeholders who are expected to create a support system for the schools to meet its goals. Epstein (2018) states that the school-community partnership entails educators, parents, and community members and other stakeholders who work together to share knowledge and information, guide the students, solve problems, and recognize successes.

Stakeholders play a crucial role in school management and operation. This requires active engagement and collaboration to ensure efficient administration and achieve the vision and mission of providing equal access to quality education for all youth. They also enhance learner performance and educational quality by directly or indirectly helping schools achieve their goals (Bruns, et al., 2011; Darrel, et al., 2020).

The Philippine Department of Education prioritizes stakeholder empowerment through the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) and Key Reform Thrust (KRT 1), enabling them to actively participate in school-based management (SBM) to improve students' learning outcomes and achieve the Education for All (EFA) thrust goals (Department of Education, 2012).

Apparently, the context of SBM accentuates the invaluable role of the community and stakeholders for the furtherance of school's vision, mission, and goals. De Torres (2021) suggested that the school and community linkage is crucial for achieving school goals parental involvement in school programs and reforms can help reduce mistrust and gaps between people and schools. This is achieved through transparency, mutual respect, and shared vision.

The continued endeavors of the DepEd to implement initiatives directed towards providing every Filipino learner with quality, equitable, culturally-based, and complete basic education, which includes providing quality learning resources, suitable technology for modern teaching, and assistance in improving and maintaining necessary facilities in public schools and learning centers require the support of the stakeholders (Department of Education, 2020). Hence, policies are imposed to maximize the participation of the community and stakeholders in school operation and management.

In consonance to the mandate, schools in Leyte Division are implementing initiatives to enhance community engagement and partnerships. Public secondary schools in area II-A are involving parents and stakeholders in activities to cater to students' learning needs. For instance, *Brigada Eskwela* provides financial, healthcare, and labor assistance from various organizations, private entities, and local agencies. Schools maintain continuity of linkage with

the community through meetings to disseminate school programs and projects. Participation in civic activities strengthens connections with local government and community. DepEd programs also draw participation from parents and the community.

Although the linkage between the schools and community is apparent, the researcher believes that it is essential to assess the level of stakeholders' involvement in school management and operation to ascertain its impact and relevance to the performance of the schools. This is in consonance to the assertion of De Torres (2021) that examining the impact of partnership practices on service discharge and performance is necessary for developing new plans to strengthen stakeholders' participation in school programs. Hence, this study was conducted, which mainly aimed to assess the level of the stakeholders' involvement in the school operation and management based on SBM principles so as to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the level of school performance and the level of community participation in the discharge of services and duties by the school bodies. The results of the study are basis in planning for programs and projects instrumental in providing the learning needs of the students with the strengthened support of the stakeholders.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

The context of this study is anchored on the concept of the Stakeholder Theory, which emerged in the 1980s to address the dynamism and complexity of organizational environments. It emphasizes the importance of considering all stakeholders in strategic management, aiming to create value for customers, suppliers, owners, employees, and local communities. This theory is particularly relevant in the educational context, where the role of parents, teachers, and the community is crucial in strategic planning for quality education (Freeman, et al., 2020). The study highlights the importance of these stakeholders in bridging operational gaps.

The research acknowledged the open system theory, which emphasizes the collaboration of organizations for common goals, to help businesses thrive in diverse environments by understanding the impact of their environment on decision-making, conflict resolution, and resource distribution.

Public schools, in particular, benefit from this open system, as stakeholders' involvement is essential in planning and implementing programs (Lee, 2020). This study recognizes the importance of the participation of stakeholders in the implementation of school programs and projects. Thus, this also aims to improve and intensify the linkage between schools and the community.

Another theory considered in this study is the Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence outlines six types of involvement in school, family, and community partnerships as cited by Lacanilao (2020). The theory suggests that the success of the students is achieved through a combination of internal and external influences. It identifies six types of involvement: parenting, communication, volunteering, home learning, decision-making, and community collaboration. These interactions form a support system for school mission planning and implementation. The external environment also enhances academic success.

The context of this study assesses the relevance of the school-community partnerships in the school management and operation that affect the learning outcomes and the overall school performance.

1.2. Conceptual Framework

The research paradigm clarifies the goal and flow of the study. This provides the concepts that the study investigates and an understanding of the variables and relationships that serve as the foundation of the study.

Figure 1 highlights the independent and dependent variables considered in conducting this investigation. The stakeholders' involvement in the school management and operation based on SBM principles, namely leadership and governance, curriculum and learning, accountability and continuous improvement, and management of resources are the independent variables from which the level of stakeholders' participation was identified to determine whether it has a significant relationship with the level of performance of secondary schools in the area II-A of Leyte Division, which is the dependent variable.

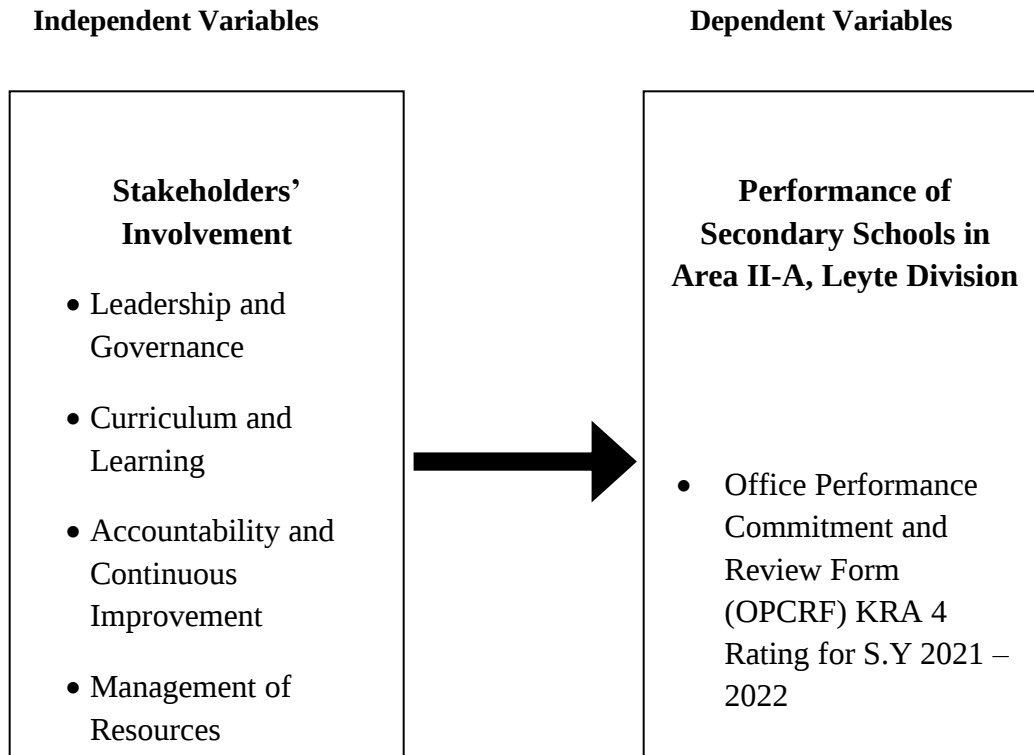


Figure 1. Research Paradigm

1.3. Statement of the Problem

The study basically aimed to identify the level of stakeholders' involvement in the school operation and management and the level of performance of the public secondary schools in Area II-A, Leyte Division.

Specifically, this sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the level of stakeholders' involvement in the school operation and management as perceived by the teachers in terms of the following?
 - 1.1. *Leadership and Governance*
 - 1.2. *Curriculum and Learning*
 - 1.3. *Accountability and Continuous Improvement*
 - 1.4. *Management of Resources*
2. What is the performance level of the public secondary schools in Area II-A of Leyte Division for school year 2021- 2022 based on OPRCF, KRA 4?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the level of stakeholders' involvement in the school operation and management and the performance level of the public secondary schools in Area II-A, Leyte Division for school year 2021-2022

1.4. Null Hypothesis

H₀₁ There is no significant relationship between the level of stakeholders' involvement in the school operation and management and the performance level of the public secondary schools in Area II-A, Leyte Division for school year 2021-2022.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The results of this investigation serve as basis in planning and redesigning the programs and activities that are instrumental to the increase in the level of participation of the stakeholders in the school operation and management. This specifically emphasized the significance of community linkage in the educational sector, recommending practices that foster support and strengthen school-community partnerships, thereby promoting community participation.

From the results of this study, the community and stakeholders are aided in understanding their responsibilities and the system of school-community linkage, thereby reducing doubts about the efforts of schools to gain their cooperation.

Teachers who are responsible for linking with community organizations can benefit from this investigation, as they can use intervention planning to obtain support from stakeholders. This study also evaluated parental involvement in school programs and projects, emphasizing its importance in achieving educational goals. As one of the primary components of school community, parents' support is very essential. Hence, this investigation helps parents understand their roles in attaining the goals of the schools and in shaping their children's future.

Schools adopt interventions to increase stakeholder participation in management and operation to address the learning needs of the learners and provide quality education. This investigation helps

stakeholders understand their roles and responsibilities in building a support system to enhance the achievement levels of the students.

This study provides a foundation for future research and enables them to address the gaps not tackled in previous studies and will serve as a reference for similar research.

1.6. Scope and Limitation

This study examined the level of stakeholders' involvement in the school operation and management based on SBM principles and the performance level of the public secondary schools in the Area II-A of Leyte Division. This focused on the performance of the schools for school year 2021-2022. The aim is to determine if the stakeholders' involvement impacts school performance and design an intervention plan to enhance school-community partnerships. The researcher emphasized the importance of stakeholders' cooperation for the attainment of the school goals.

This study only elicited the data on the lens of the teachers' perceptions and observations. Hence there is a possibility that the feedback and assessment of school heads, parents and other stakeholders may vary from the result of this study, which consequently calls for further research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents the various perspectives and results of studies that served as the foundation for this research endeavor, aiming to clarify the gap addressed and provide concepts that are assimilated with the context of the investigation.

Stakeholders' Involvement in School Management

Stakeholders are essential to the management and administration of schools. They collaborate with the school to improve the teaching and learning environment. Engaging multiple stakeholders in school management leads to improved learner performance, quality education, and efficient school management, with a diverse governing body positively impacting these outcomes (Bruns, et al., 2011; & Santibanez 2006).

Darrel et al. (2020) & Bruns et al. (2011) put forth that stakeholders are the essential members of the working committee that play a crucial role in ensuring their active participation in school activities to contribute to the school's learning environment and in the achievement of its learning outcomes.

Behtoui (2019) accentuated the potential of community and stakeholders' engagement practices in public schools to improve academic performance, particularly for underprivileged students, by providing access to education resources through funded programs, institutional mediation, and extracurricular activities organized by teachers and school adults.

Also, the inclusion of external stakeholders aims to tackle the persistent issues within the school system, including high dropout and failure rates, inadequate parental and community involvement, and limited school infrastructure (Mchunu, 2019). It is substantial to promote

involvement, decision-making, and idea sharing among stakeholders in order to foster a sense of accountability and ownership for school reform.

Generally, stakeholders have a vital role in the school management and operation that influences across different dimensions.

1.5. Leadership and Governance

Leadership and governance are a dimension in SBM implementation, which entails a leadership network that ensures the education system is relevant and responsive to diverse communities' contexts, providing vision and direction. Relative to this, the Department of Education emphasizes the importance of innovative strategies in ensuring that all members of the school community are heard and able to contribute (Department of Education, 2012).

Leadership and governance are primarily handled by school principals. They are tasked with managing the varying interests of various stakeholders to achieve the school's goals and objectives. They must make decisions that meet the expectations of these stakeholders, as argued by Darrel et al. (2020) and De Torres (2021). However, not all decisions made by principals align with stakeholder expectations, as some may go against some, while protecting others. Secondary school principals can use their experience to strike a balance, as all stakeholders are needed in achieving school goals and objectives. Ignoring the stakeholders in the educational system can lead to the inability of schools to effectively handle the pressure in the system.

The study of Bryk (2010); Mapp & Kuttner (2013) revealed that leadership styles of principals can impact school performance, with no single style being optimal. Democratic and situational leadership improve performance, while autocratic and laissez-faire styles degrade it. Shared leadership with stakeholders like teachers, parents, businesspeople, and community members improves student performance without reducing school leaders' influence and educational quality. This indirect impact on student achievement is due to trusting and collaborative climates.

Additionally, Werdiningsih (2020) suggested that schools must establish effective communication channels with the community to promptly address students' needs and concerns. Public relations management can enhance the role of school committees to enhance communication between schools and student guardians and support program implementation to achieve educational goals.

On the other hand, Sanders (2016) & Bryk (2010) ascertained that sharing leadership practices between principals and teachers enhances working relationships, improves learner performance, and improves education quality. Principals influence learning by establishing a culture that supports professional growth and taking specific measures to support teachers' personal development through direct observations and interactions. In this aspect, the support of other stakeholders through feedbacking based on the learning outcomes evinced by their children's performance matters.

1.6. Curriculum and Learning

The curriculum and learning facet of SBM implementation speaks about school management where learning systems are collaboratively developed and continuously improved and anchored on the community and learners' contexts and aspirations.

To ensure an improvement in the learners' performance and the provision of quality education, which includes adjustments, localization, and contextualization of the curriculum, principals are encouraged to implement a community-school strategy of shared leadership, create a social hub for teachers, parents, administrators, and community members, and promote open communication and collaboration (Warren, 2005; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Effective communication between principals and school governing bodies is fundamental for aligning their work with school and student goals, allowing teachers to focus on student engagement and development, and enhancing learner performance and educational quality.

Santibanez (2006) asserts that a school governing board comprising various stakeholders enhances student achievement and educational quality. Relative to ensuring an optimum development among the learners, Hofosha (2012) went on to state that in order to improve learner performance and the quality of education, shared decision-making is important for efficient planning and management.

Also, Marti et al., (2018) discussed that schools and communities are interconnected, with schools educating their children and the community supporting their vision and mission. Parental engagement is linked to improved attendance, behavior, and academic achievement, making it imperative for schools to establish effective communication strategies to foster strong relationships and promote student success.

1.7. Accountability and Continuous Improvement

This aspect of SBM implementation pertains to establishing a collaboratively developed accountability system that is transparent, inclusive, and responsive to monitor performance, address gaps, and provide a platform for feedback and remedies.

Aung et al. (2019) asserted that parents, school committee members, and local authorities are the most involved groups in children's learning and school development.

In relation to the learners' need for support, parents are the main stakeholders who can directly assist the teachers and school in ensuring improvement. Thus, sharing an accountability with them is necessary. Maluleke (2014) advocates for coordination and cooperation between schools and families, promoting effective communication and collaboration. Parents should be fully engaged in their children's education, as they know their children better. However, Munje and Mncube (2018) found that educators' perceptions of parent non-involvement do not account for contextual realities that limit their involvement. While parental participation in education can have social and emotional benefits, certain contextual challenges can hinder long-term parental engagement.

Bry (2010) & Charamba (2016) support the idea that a partnership between families, communities, and schools is substantial for learners' performance and school success. Parental involvement in their children's learning leads to improved performance and quality of education. Schools with strong ties benefit from such partnerships, and parental sense accountability and participation enhances community and school relationships through mutual understanding.

Warren (2005) further explained that a successful school community program involves managing academic and social support services while maintaining relationships with various institutions. Strong school-community ties enable the development and implementation of effective plans to establish a system that forges continuous improvement in school functionality and effectiveness.

1.8. Management of Resources

The management and resources facet in SBM ensures that resources are collectively and judiciously mobilized and managed with transparency, effectiveness, and efficiency. Stakeholders are involved in the decision-making, planning, mobilization, adjustment and inventory of resources (Department of Education, 2012).

School governing bodies (SGBs) are crucial in fostering community partnerships in schools. They connect families to teachers, resources, and services, and students and teachers to community opportunities. SGBs coordinate partner efforts with learning goals, involving residents and parents in school operations. The effectiveness of collaborating with community services influences the effectiveness of supplemental resources in supporting student learning.

Parents, as educational stakeholders, contribute resources to schools to support learners' success and foster community pride, potentially impacting the school's overall success (Waters, 2011).

1.9. School Performance

School performance is a crucial aspect of education that directly impacts the effectiveness and quality of the educational system. It refers to students' ability to function well in the classroom and achieve their learning goals. School performance can be measured using various labels and indicators, such as successful or failed students (Colombo and Rosales 2022; & Janczukowicz, 2018).

Community engagement positively impacts school achievement through extensive community engagement activities resulting in increased institutional-level public high school performance (Khan et al. 2020).

To achieve quality education and improved learners' performance in secondary schools, a coordinated effort among all stakeholders in the education sector is necessary, as education innovation cannot be achieved if stakeholders operate independently. Collaborative partnerships with non-profits and government agencies can enhance schools' academic capacity, address learning challenges, and define problems. These partnerships involve problem definition, action planning, and implementation, bringing local knowledge and strengthening community power.

Collaborative leadership can also positively impact learners' learning growth, enhancing their overall learning experience (Warren, 2005).

On the other hand, Amalia et al. (2022) purported that effective performance management in schools is substantial for aligning individual and organizational objectives. Monitoring and evaluating student performance is essential for identifying improvement areas and providing necessary support. Medina et al. (2019) suggest a holistic approach involving all stakeholders, including educators, school authorities, parents, and the community, to address administrative gaps. This holistic approach ensures that schools are equipped to meet their goals effectively.

The literature review highlights the need for improved stakeholder participation in public secondary school administration. Despite the importance of broad stakeholder engagement in improving educational outcomes, integrating stakeholders into all aspects of school operations remains challenging. More organized methods are needed to include stakeholders in curriculum development, accountability procedures, resource management, leadership, and governance. This study addresses this aspect in order to provide insights essential in improving academic achievement through a more cooperative and effective approach.

Research Methodology

3.1. Design

The study utilized a descriptive-correlational design, which is a non-experimental method to examine the relationship between variables in a single group, sometimes at multiple levels. This design aims to describe the interconnection among variables without inferring causal relationships, revealing the strength and direction of the relationship without modifying or controlling them (Sharma, 2019). Through the descriptive correlational approach, this study examined the relationships between the level of stakeholders' involvement in the SBM implementation and the performance level of the public secondary schools in Area II-A of Leyte Division based on the data gathered, analyzed and interpreted. This highlights the influence of the extent of participation of the stakeholders on the implementation of schools' programs and projects aimed at improving the learners' achievement level that determines the overall effectiveness of the management and operation system of the institutions.

3.2. Setting

This study was conducted in Area-II A of Leyte Division that involved 13 public secondary schools in the municipality of Capoocan, Carigara, Barugo, Jaro, and Tunga, namely Libertad National High School, Don Mariano Salvacion Memorial National High School, Pinamopoan National High School, Asuncion S. Melgar National High School, Carigara National High School, Jugaban National High School, Carigara School of Fisheries, Barugo National High School, Calingcaguing National High School, Celestino De Guzman National High School, Sta. Rosa National High School, Gregorio Catenza National High School, and Granja Kalinawan National High School.

The survey was carried out within the area because of proximity reasons. The secondary schools in these municipalities operate under the supervision and control of the Department of Education that share common goal in fostering quality education and encounter similar challenges in obtaining the optimum involvement of the stakeholders in the implementation of PAPs. This study is significant as community involvement is crucial for school management. It aims to determine how stakeholders' participation affects the schools' achievement level and contribute to strengthening school-community linkages, thereby improve learners' progress. The findings were expected to contribute to achieving the goals, mission and vision of the schools.

3.3. Respondents and Sampling Procedure

This study involved 130 teachers in the public secondary schools in Area II-A, Leyte Division. Because teachers function as key agents in building school and community partnerships, utilizing their expertise and experience in fostering connections with their school's local community. Ten teachers, whose teaching experience ranges from 3 years and above, from each of the 13 schools were surveyed. These respondents were chosen using purposive random method by the researcher with the assistance of the school heads as they are expected to have wide experience in dealing with stakeholders. They were asked to provide information regarding the level of involvement of the stakeholders in the facets of SBM and the performance level of their schools. The distribution of the research respondents is presented in the following table.

Table 1
Distribution of Respondents

Name of School	Number of Teacher-Respondents
Libertad National High School	10
Don Mariano Salvacion National High School	10
Pinamopoan National High School	10
Asuncion S. Melgar National High School	10
Carigara national High School	10
Jugaban National High School	10
Carigara School of Fisheries	10
Barugo National High School	10
Calingcaguig National High School	10
Celestino De Guzman National High School	10
Sta. Rosa National High School	10
Gregorio Catenza National High School	10
Granja Kalinawan National High School	10
Total Number of Respondents	130

3.4. Instrument

This study utilized a researcher-made questionnaire wherein the indicators in each dimension in school management are taken from the SBM tool or template for assessment.

The first part (Part 1) of the questionnaire asked for data about the level of involvement of the stakeholders in the school management and operation in terms of: a) leadership and governance; b) curriculum and learning; c) accountability and continuous improvement; and d) management

of resources. This elicited response from the respondents according to their level of agreement regarding the involvement of the community as (1) *strongly disagree*; (2) *disagree*; (3) *neutral*; (4) *agree* and (5) *strongly agree*. The second part (Part 2) obtained responses and level of agreement on the schools' performance based on their OPCRf, KRA 4.

3.5. Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher obtained permission from various offices before conducting a study. Approval and permission to conduct the study was obtained from the concerned offices. Then during the data gathering stage, the questionnaire was distributed to the purposively selected respondents and retrieved after the allotted time. The data was tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted. The responses of the respondents were kept confidential until disclosure of the information is needed and agreed upon by concerned individuals. The results were used for intervention planning to strengthen the linkage between schools and stakeholders.

3.6. Validity and Reliability

To ensure that the research instrument was valid, five research experts, including master teachers in the secondary schools within Barugo, Leyte were asked to evaluate and modify the questionnaire, which was then used in a dry run with 30 teacher-respondents to ensure relevance and consistency of the results that align with the purpose of the study.

3.7. Categorization and Scoring of Variables

Hickle (2022) defines variables as characteristics or attributes of an individual, group, educational system, or environment that are relevant to a research study. Understanding variables is crucial as they are the basic units of information studied and interpreted in research studies. Eads (2022) asserts that a strong understanding of variables leads to more accurate statistical analyses and results, achieving the desired study outcome.

The proceeding table shows scoring guidelines in assessing each variable in the survey. To objectively assess the level of involvement of the stakeholders, the 5-point scale *mean* ranges with specific verbal interpretations derived from the adjectival equivalent was used. To determine the minimum and maximum length of the scale, the range is calculated by $(5-1=4)$ then the difference is divided by four (5) as the greatest value of the scale ($4 \div 5 = 0.8$). Number one (1) which is the least value of the scale was added. The length of the scale is presented in the proceeding page.

Table 2

Scoring Guidelines

Part 1 Extent of Involvement of the Stakeholders in School Operation and Management

Scale	Mean Range	Description Rating	Interpretation
5	4.21 – 5.00	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
4	3.41 – 4.20	Agree	Moderately Involved
3	2.61 – 3.40	Neutral	Involved
2	1.81 – 2.60	Disagree	Fairly Involved
1	1.0 – 1.80	Strongly Disagree	Rarely Involved

Table 3

Part 2 School Performance based on OPCRF, KRA 4 (Parents Involvement and Community Partnership)

Scale	Mean Range	Description Rating	Interpretation
5	4.21 – 5.00	Always	Outstanding
4	3.41 – 4.20	Often	Very Satisfactory
3	2.61 – 3.40	Sometimes	Satisfactory
2	1.81 – 2.60	Rarely	Unsatisfactory
1	1.0 – 1.80	Never	Poor

3.8. Statistical Treatment

This used the mean and standard deviations in identifying the level of stakeholders' involvement in the different dimensions of SBM implementation and the level of performance of public secondary schools. The frequency and percentage were also used to analyze the data that identified the school performance level. To determine the relationship between the level of school-community engagement and the level of school performance, the *Pearson r* correlation coefficient was used.

The results, interpretation and analysis of the data are used as basis for developing an intervention plan that increases the level of engagement of the stakeholders in the activities to boost the school and community network and improve the students' achievement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides interpretation and analysis of the data that were statistically treated and are presented based on the sequence of the problems.

4.1. Problem 1.a. What is the extent of stakeholders' involvement in school operation and management as perceived by the teachers in terms of Leadership and Governance?

Table 4

Extent of stakeholders' involvement in Leadership and Governance

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. Stakeholders and community are involved in revisiting and adjusting the vision, mission and goals of the school to respond to the emerging needs of the school community.	4.76	0.43	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
2. Stakeholders actively participate through dialogues in formulating relevant policies and guidelines in updating and adjusting community initiatives.	4.65	0.55	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
3. Community stakeholders participate in school activities as needed in accordance to their roles and responsibilities agreed upon.	4.74	0.58	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
4. Stakeholders are involved in formulating the school improvement plan (SIP).	4.79	0.41	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
5. Stakeholders are informed about the progress of education development programs through feedback system.	4.62	0.72	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
6. Stakeholders perform their assigned task to contribute to the attainment of school vision, mission, and goals.	4.64	0.62	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
7. Stakeholders are given with opportunities for leadership competencies enhancement	4.60	0.70	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
8. Stakeholders are involved in the decision-making to respond to emerging opportunities and challenges.	4.68	0.62	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
Overall	4.69	0.58	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved

4.21-5.00- Strongly Agree/ Highly Involved; 3.41-4.20- Agree/ Moderately Involved; 2.61-3.40- Involved; 1.81-2.60-Disagree/Fairly Involved; 1.0-1.80- Strongly Disagree/Rarely Involved

The table shows the level of the stakeholders' involvement in the implementation of school-based management relative to leadership and governance. The overall mean is 4.69, which is described as "Strongly Agree" and interpreted as "Highly Involved". This indicates that the teacher-respondents strongly agree on the tangible high involvement of the stakeholders, which is supported by the low standard deviation of 0.58, suggesting that the responses among teachers are consistent.

Indicator 4, which is about the participation of the stakeholders in the SIP formulation has the highest mean of 4.79 and strongly agreed by the teachers, interpreted as "highly involved", is the facet where there is an optimum participation from the stakeholders. This is also supported by the lower standard deviation, suggesting that the responses of the respondents are highly consistent.

On the other hand, though the mean of 4.60 for indicator 7 is the lowest, which is about the provision of opportunities for stakeholders for their leadership competencies enhancement, it still suggests a high level of involvement from the stakeholders and that the schools capacity building among the community members as one of its top priorities.

The high involvement level across other indicators, with means ranging from 4.62- 4.78 depicts a strong positive perception on the involvement of the stakeholders in the different aspects of leadership and governance as part of the school operation and management.

Although the indicator 5, which is about feedback system has a slightly higher standard deviation, indicating that there is a variability in the responses of the respondents, all the other relatively low SDs suggest that there is consistency in the assessment of the teachers on the extent of stakeholders' involvement.

The data reflects a strong linkage between the schools and the stakeholders that is contributory to the attainment of the goals embedded in leadership and governance. Considering the viewpoints of the authors cited in this study, the high stakeholders' participation in SIP development indicates the importance of participatory decision-making in educational settings. This aligns with the focus of the Department of Education (2012) on creative approaches involving all community sections. The collaborative leadership during the SIP formulation process leads to more effective implementation strategies

Indicator 7 has the lowest mean score but shows significant involvement in leadership skill development, reflecting a focus on capacity building for long-term school governance. This is in consonance to the assertion of De Torres (2021) and Darrel et al. (2020) that principals must manage stakeholder expectations and support leader growth to prepare the community for effective school management.

Moreover, indicator 5 reveals varying opinions on the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms. This aligns with the viewpoint of Werdiningsih (2020) emphasizing the significance of efficient communication. Despite the generally positive perception of feedback systems, the high variability suggests areas for improvement to ensure equal information and involvement for all stakeholders involved.

Problem 1.b. What is the extent of stakeholders' involvement in school operation and management as perceived by the teachers in terms of Curriculum and Learning?

Table 5

Extent of Stakeholders Involvement in terms of Curriculum and Learning

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. Stakeholders participate in curriculum contextualization and localization to make it relevant to the community life and appropriate to the needs and interest of the learners.	4.58	0.71	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
2. Stakeholders are involved in the collaborative monitoring of the learning system using the appropriate tools that ensure holistic growth and development of the learners and the community.	4.64	0.56	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
3. School assessment processes and results are shared with the stakeholders.	4.68	0.58	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
4. The community and stakeholders participate in developing and mentoring learners' awareness and practice of good citizenship.	4.66	0.63	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
5. Stakeholders are aware of the learner-centered, rights-based, and inclusive principles of education.	4.69	0.57	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
6. Stakeholders practice learner-centered principles in education in providing support to school.	4.68	0.53	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
Overall	4.66	0.60	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved

4.21-5.00- Strongly Agree/ Highly Involved; 3.41-4.20- Agree/ Moderately Involved; 2.61-3.40- Involved; 1.81-2.60-Disagree/Fairly Involved; 1.0-1.80- Strongly Disagree/Rarely Involved

The data depicts a high involvement of stakeholders in the aspect of curriculum and learning. The overall mean, which is 4.66 indicates a strong agreement among the teachers on the positive partnership between the schools and the community.

The highest mean score of 4.69 and a standard deviation of 0.57 for indicator 5 displays that stakeholders demonstrate a high level of understanding of learner-centered, rights-based, and inclusive education principles.

On the other hand, the lowest mean of 4.64 and standard deviation of 0.56 for indicator 2 still reflects a high involvement of the stakeholders as strongly and consistently agreed by the respondents. This reflects that the stakeholders actively participate in the collaborative monitoring of the learning system to ensure learners' growth and development.

The mean score of 4.68 and a standard deviation of 0.58 for indicator 3 show that schools successfully communicate evaluation procedures and findings to stakeholders and that transparency is observed. Furthermore, as shown by a mean score of 4.66 and a standard deviation of 0.63, stakeholders actively support and mentor students in good citizenship principles and practices.

Lastly, the mean score for indicator 6 which is 4.68 reveals a strong agreement among respondents on the support of the stakeholders in fostering learner-centered principle in education.

The data shows high stakeholder involvement in curriculum and learning domain, aligning with Warren's (2005) community-school approach that promotes open communication, teamwork, and shared leadership, enhancing community relations in education. The results are also aligned with the perspective of Santibanez (2006), suggesting that a school governing board with multiple stakeholders improves student performance and quality of education through shared assessment processes.

Problem1.c. What is the extent of stakeholders' involvement in school management as perceived by the teachers in terms of Accountability and Continuous Improvement

Table 6

Extent of Stakeholders Involvement in terms of Accountability and Continuous Improvement

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. The stakeholders are engaged in clarifying and defining their specific roles and responsibilities.	4.83	0.38	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
2. Community stakeholders contribute to the development of an accountability system that covers both school-based and community-wide management of education. .	4.78	0.42	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
3. The school involves the stakeholders in initiating initiated periodic performance assessments.	4.91	0.29	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
4. Community stakeholders are invited to participate in setting up an accountability system for school-based management processes, structures and mechanisms.	4.82	0.38	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
5. Stakeholders are engaged in the development and operation of an appropriate accountability assessment system	4.85	0.36	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
6. Stakeholders continuously and collaboratively review and enhance accountability systems' processes, mechanisms and tools	4.79	0.41	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
Overall	4.83	0.37	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved

4.21-5.00- Strongly Agree/ Highly Involved; 3.41-4.20- Agree/ Moderately Involved; 2.61-3.40- Involved; 1.81-2.60-Disagree/Fairly Involved; 1.0-1.80- Strongly Disagree/Rarely Involved

The data consistently reveal a high involvement of stakeholders in the context of accountability and continuous improvement. The overall mean, which is 4.83 and the low standard deviation manifest that the stakeholders assume responsibility and accountability in the schools' management processes and operations, directed towards providing and meeting the needs of the learners.

The highest mean of 4.91 and low standard deviation of 0.29 for indicator 3 show the optimum involvement of the stakeholders in evaluating and enhancing the schools' performance.

On the other hand, the lowest mean, which is 4.78 and a standard deviation of 0.42 for indicator 2 still indicate a high involvement of the stakeholders and is strongly agreed by the teacher-respondents. However, this also calls for possible area of improvement to foster further engagement of the stakeholders to contribute to accountability system development.

The high mean scores reflected by the data support the perspective of Aung et al. (2019), emphasizing the necessity of collaborations among families, communities, and educational institutions for efficient school management, improved student performance, and academic achievement. This highlights the importance of active participation from parents, school committee members, and local government in children's education.

The lowest mean score of 4.78 suggests that stakeholder involvement in the accountability system construction could be improved, despite considerable involvement. This is in accordance to the viewpoint of Munje and Mncube (2018), highlighting the need to remove obstacles to promote regular and engaged participation.

Problem1.d. What is the extent of stakeholders' involvement in school management as perceived by the teachers in terms of Management of Resources?

Table 7
Extent of Stakeholders Involvement in terms of Management of Resources

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. Stakeholders are aware that a regular resource inventory is available and is used as the basis for resource allocation and mobilization	4.77	0.42	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
2. Resource inventories are systemically developed and stakeholders are engaged in a collaborative process to make decisions on resource allocation and mobilization.	4.72	0.45	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
3. Stakeholders regularly engaged in the planning and resource programming and actively participate in the implementation of the education plan.	4.68	0.61	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
4. Stakeholders are engaged and share expertise in the collaborative development of resource management system	4.74	0.52	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
5. Stakeholders collaboratively participate in the development and implementation of monitoring, evaluation, and reporting processes on resource management	4.70	0.59	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
6. Stakeholders support a system of partnership for improving resource management.	4.66	0.59	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved
Overall	4.71	0.53	Strongly Agree	Highly Involved

4.21-5.00- Strongly Agree/ Highly Involved; 3.41-4.20- Agree/ Moderately Involved; 2.61-3.40- Involved; 1.81-2.60-Disagree/Fairly Involved; 1.0-1.80- Strongly Disagree/Rarely Involved

The table shows the assessment of the respondents on the level of stakeholders' involvement in the management of resources. The overall mean of 4.71 depict a strong agreement among the respondents on the high involvement of the stakeholders across indicators in the aspect of management of resources. This suggests a strong linkage between the schools and the community.

The highest mean for indicator 1, which is 4.77 indicates that stakeholders are aware of the regular resource inventory, which serves as the basis for resource allocation and mobilization, indicating their active engagement in its use. With the low standard deviation, it is shown that there is a consistent agreement among the respondents on the positive engagement of the stakeholders in the management of schools' resources.

On the other hand, the indicator "Stakeholders support a partnership system for improving resource management" though has the lowest mean score of 4.66 still indicate a significant degree of involvement.

As all the mean scores range between 4.21 - 5.00, these indicate highly significant stakeholders' involvement in resource management domains like planning, implementation, monitoring, assessment, inventory, decision-making, and partnership assistance, indicating strong cooperation among stakeholders.

These results are consistent with the framework of school-based management (SBM), which emphasizes stakeholder participation and transparent, effective resource mobilization (Department of Education, 2012). Additionally, these underscore the significant role that School Governing Bodies (SGBs) play in fostering linkage between the community and schools to make resources accessible, and coordinating community initiatives with academic objectives (Waters, 2011).

4.2. Problem 2. What is the school performance level based on OPCRF, KRA 4?

Table 7

Level of School Performance based on OPCRF, KRA 4 (Parents' Involvement and Community Partnership)

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. Our school has established linkages with the stakeholders.	4.51	0.75	Always	Outstanding
2. Our school collaborates with the stakeholders in decision-making, curriculum adjustments, and resource mobilization, through dialogues, conferences or assemblies.	4.45	0.76	Always	Outstanding
3. Our school involves the stakeholders in designing programs and projects and formulation of school improvement plan to meet the needs of the learners and school community.	4.43	0.83	Always	Outstanding
4. The stakeholders are well-informed about the school operational system, development plans, and the progress and results of the resource management process as well as the school accomplishments.	4.42	0.80	Always	Outstanding
5. Our school recognizes the participation and accomplishment of the stakeholders	4.32	0.90	Always	Outstanding
6. Our school provide the stakeholders opportunities to practice and develop leadership potentials, exercise their roles, and perform their duties and responsibilities.	4.39	0.81	Always	Outstanding
7. Our school promptly submits records of Quarterly PTA/GPTCA Meetings	4.37	0.83	Always	Outstanding
8. Our school keeps and submits records of grants, donations, etc.	4.38	0.85	Always	Outstanding
9. Our school promptly submits financial and liquidation report and consistently observe transparency.	4.40	0.77	Always	Outstanding
10. Our school involves stakeholders in the planning and implementation of implementation of school programs and projects.	4.01	0.85	Often	Very Satisfactory
11. Our school acquires instructional materials and generate resources through the support of stakeholders.	4.23	0.93	Always	Outstanding
12. Our school involves stakeholders in addressing issues and concerns to ensure an open and conducive learning environment.	4.48	0.75	Always	Outstanding
Overall	4.36	0.82	Always	Outstanding

Note: 4.21-5.00- Always/ Outstanding; 3.41-4.20- Often/ Very Satisfactory; 2.61-3.40- Sometimes / Satisfactory; 1.81-2.60-Rarely/Unsatisfactory; 1.0-1.80- Never/Poor

The table presents the level of performance of the schools across indicators as specified in the OPCRF, KRA 4. The overall mean of 4.36 reflects an outstanding performance of the institutions involved in this study. This also indicates that there is a consistent high level of parental involvement and positive school-community relationship that aided the schools to meet their goals.

The indicator, which is "Our school has established linkages with stakeholders," has the highest mean score of 4.51 reflects that the schools outstandingly maintain strong linkage with stakeholders, thereby promote a support system needed in meeting the educational goals.

Conversely, the school's "Involvement of stakeholders in the planning and implementation of school programs and projects" aspect has the lowest mean score of 4.01. This resonates a

potential improvement despite being rated as "Very Satisfactory" which is indicative of regular involvement of stakeholders in program design and implementation.

The schools' performance in community and parental involvement is generally high, ranging from 4.01-4.51, with most indicators falling in the "Always" and "Outstanding" categories. This reveals a strong commitment to stakeholder engagement, transparency, and teamwork. However, some indicators may receive slightly lower ratings. The success and effectiveness of the schools can be attributed to its successful establishment of partnerships with stakeholders, which contributes to its overall success.

The data underscore the importance of strong stakeholder relationships in achieving educational objectives. These align with the views of Khan et al. (2020) and Warren (2005), who argue that cooperative relationships among stakeholders in the education sector improve school performance by addressing learning obstacles, utilizing community resources, and creating a safe environment. The emphasis on collaborative action for effective education innovation aligns with the importance of coordinated efforts across stakeholders.

4.3. Problem 3. Is there a significant relationship between the level of stakeholders' involvement and the school performance level based on OPCR, KRA 4?

Table 8

Relationship Between the Level of Stakeholders Involvement and School Performance

		Leadership and Governance	Curriculum and Learning	Accountability and Continuous Improvement	Management of Resources
School Performance	r	0.393	0.352	0.36	0.33
	P	<.001*	<.001*	<.001*	<.001*
		S	S	S	S

Legend: r= Pearson r correlation; P = probability value; S-Significant, NS-Not Significant, * = Significant at 0 .05 level

The data illustrates the significant relationship between several facets of school success and the degree of stakeholder involvement, as assessed along four dimensions, namely curriculum and learning, leadership and governance, accountability and continuous improvement, and resource management. The correlation coefficient (r) shows the significant relationship between each facet of school performance and stakeholders' involvement in the school operation and management based on SBM.

The table reflects that there is a significant medium positive relationship between the school performance and the stakeholders' participation in leadership and governance as indicated by

correlation coefficient of .393 at p value of $<.001$, which means this is significant at 0.05 level. This suggests that the increase in the level of stakeholders' involvement causes an improvement in the leadership and governance of the schools.

The relationship between stakeholders' involvement and the school performance relative to curriculum and learning is moderately positive, as indicated by the correlation coefficient (r) of 0.352. At the 0.05 level, this association is statistically significant, as indicated by the p-value of $<.001$. This implies that the schools' curriculum and learning outcomes will probably improve as stakeholders get more involved.

The moderately positive relationship between stakeholders' involvement and the school performance in line with accountability and continuous improvement is indicated by the correlation coefficient (r) of 0.360. At the 0.05 level, the association is statistically significant, as shown by the p-value of $<.001$. This implies that improved accountability and continuous improvement procedures within the school generally correspond with increased stakeholders' involvement.

The relatively significant positive relationship between the involvement of stakeholders and the school performance in management of resources is shown by the correlation coefficient (r) of 0.330, indicated by the p-value of, $<.001$ and statistically significant at 0.05 level. This suggests that more effective resource management in the schools is correlated with higher levels of stakeholders' involvement.

Generally, the study reveals a strong correlation between stakeholders' involvement and the level of school performance in the aspects of accountability, curriculum, leadership, governance, and resource management, thus rejecting the null hypothesis of this study. It underscores the importance of including stakeholders in decision-making processes to enhance overall performance in educational institutions.

The results support the viewpoints of Bruns et al. (2011), Santibanez (2006), Darrel et al. (2020), Behtoui (2019), and Mchunu (2019) that stakeholders play a crucial role in decision-making processes within educational institutions. Their involvement is closely linked to aspects of school performance. The stakeholders are essential for creating a supportive environment for teaching and learning, improving student performance and facilitating effective school administration. Their support and cooperation with the schools are instrumental in addressing issues like high dropout rates, poor infrastructure, etc. Their presence is substantial in encouraging ownership and accountability for school reform initiatives.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the data that were statistically treated, analysis and interpretation, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The level of stakeholders' involvement in the school operation and management in line with SBM principles is high. This implies a positive assessment and perception on the participation of the stakeholders in the implementation of school programs and projects.
2. The performance of the secondary schools in terms of establishing linkage with the stakeholders and community is outstanding. This indicate that the institutions have established strong relationships with stakeholders that fosters a welcoming learning environment. These collaborations, facilitated by partnerships with parents, companies, community organizations, and local authorities, have been proven to improve student achievement and school performance.
3. There is a strong relationship between stakeholders' involvement and school success, with higher involvement positively correlated with better leadership, governance, accountability, and resource management. This underscores the importance of stakeholders' participation in decision-making and comprehensive school reform programs, promoting better instructional settings and overcoming the challenges in the school operation and management.
4. Although there is a considerably high involvement of the stakeholders in school operation and an outstanding performance of the schools, there are areas in SBM implementation that need potential improvement to increase the level of school-community participation in the specific dimensions.
5. The stakeholders' involvement is essential in achieving the educational goals through providing support system to the schools in order to meet the needs of the learners, thereby provide quality education

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are formulated:

1. Enhance stakeholder engagement in schools by increasing their participation in projects and activities, empowering them through regular communication, cooperative decision-making forums, and training programs, thereby enhancing their involvement.
2. Support community collaborations to build connections with stakeholders, boost cooperation with local government agencies, companies, parents, and community groups, enhancing student success and overall school performance.
3. Prioritize stakeholders' involvement in resource management, leadership, governance, and accountability to ensure positive outcomes in school management and operation.
4. Address areas for improvement in SBM implementation, evaluate stakeholder engagement procedures, and develop tailored plans through surveys and input to improve school-community participation,
5. Use stakeholders' support system to meet the students' needs and achieve educational goals. Utilize available resources and impose a cooperative strategy to improve education and encourage student achievement. Active participation in establishing a favorable learning environment and resolving educational obstacles is also recommended.

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About the Author

Venus Amaba is a distinguished educator who holds a degree, Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education from Holy Cross College of Carigara and a Master of Arts in Educational Management from Asian Development Foundation College. She began her teaching career in early childhood education, where her skills in designing effective lesson plans and fostering parent-teacher communication skills were maximized. She later taught English as a second language at Celestino De Guzman Memorial National High School under the Department of Education (DepEd), where she demonstrated her ability in classroom management, communication, time management, and differentiated instruction.

Amaba's positions as the coordinator for school monitoring, evaluation, and adjustment (SMEA) and the school improvement and annual planning from 2015 to 2024 have demonstrated her leadership and organizing skills. Her commitment to helping students hone their journalism abilities as a School Paper Adviser, her versatility as a university instructor and a private tutor further demonstrates her adaptability and diverse approaches in teaching. Furthermore, Amaba's contributions to research—such as her investigation into the role of stakeholders in school performance—emphasize her conviction regarding the significance of community-school partnerships and highlights her passion for innovation. Her enthusiasm for research made her way to the division level as one of the research presenters. Her creative teaching strategies and varied experiences have had a significantly profound effect on students, teachers, and the academic community where she belongs that earned her an award as a Most Outstanding Teacher. She has motivated other educators to strive for excellence and create a supportive atmosphere where each student may succeed.

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