

# The Perception Board of Management (BOM) on the Appropriate Competencies in Strategic Plan Formulation Processes in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya

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**Abstract**— Strategic plan is an important management tool as it provides a roadmap towards achievement of institutional goals and objective. The main aim of the study was to determine the appropriate BOM competencies in strategic plan formulation in public secondary schools in Elgeyo Marakwet County- Kenya. Mixed research method technique was employed in the study. The participants were 194 secondary school Board of Management (BOM). Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data and which were then analysed using means, Mann-Whitney-U-test and content analysis techniques. The findings showed that the BOM perceived all the identified competencies as important in strategic plan formulation with interpersonal relationship as the single most important competency. The findings of this study is hoped to help education stakeholders on the need to select or appoint BOM with the appropriate competencies in strategic plan formulation in addition to enhancing their capacities through training

**Index Terms**— BOM, Competencies, Strategic Plan, Secondary Schools

## I. INTRODUCTION

Strategic planning is a viable process that leads to school reforms and change the way people work. (Fullan 2004). Fullan, Hill and Crevola (2006) indicate that strategic planning also provides forums for the communication among stakeholders. Eacott (2011) when writing on strategic planning affirms that strategic planning can improve school community relationships, since it is a useful tool for communication across traditional boundaries in the school. Strategic plan therefore, can be said to be an important tool that schools can utilize to ensure that their goals and objective are clearly stated and hence effectively implementation. Strategic plan formulation however remains a big challenge to school managers and administrators. Conley (1993) argued that strategic planning in schools faces challenges because a number of school leaders lack knowledge of the strategic planning processes as well as of how to convert strategic plans into action plans for effective implementation. He further indicates that most stakeholders have limited knowledge of the following; how to carry out planning, how best to conduct the planning process, how best to implement the process, how to come up with the best strategies, how to identify strategies that are best suited to their contexts, and how best to apply strategic planning to improve performance in students' achievement. Mintzberg (1994) argues that the act of creating strategy is an extremely complex process demanding

multifaceted cognitive and social skills that many leaders lack. Indeed, strategic planning focuses on the formulation of strategies whose successful implementation habitually rests upon people who often are not involved in making the plans. Miech (1995), points out that strategic planning originated in the business environment where the focus was on separate groups of people who are experts in strategy development and implementation, in education however, it takes a political dimension. This is because the formulation of strategies in education must appeal to diverse interests' and involve the distribution of power and increased community involvement. Other researches that have been done in different parts of the world shows that school board members lack competencies necessary to perform their duties. One such research by The Provincial Auditors of Education in Saskatchewan province Canada (2015), identified gaps between the skills and knowledge needed to govern and those possessed by the board members. The survey found that more than half of the board members were of the view that experience in a related sector or financial expertise were not adequately represented in the boards, in addition the survey also found that 30% of the members did not understand their responsibilities. Okwukweka and obiageli (2015) study on the problems of implementation of strategic plan in Anambra state Nigeria recommended that education Managers and staff members should have periodic capacity building to enable them grasps the fundamentals and have confidence in planning strategically.

According to Ercegovac, Morana and Bupic (2016), while it is possible to in most cases to generalize indicators of quality educational process and define efficient strategies of learning and teaching, school governance is considered a much complex issue, school governance is related to socio-economic, political and ideological influence of the society and the school system in which it operates. School management decentralization has been the trend in the world under the influence of globalization despite its challenges it has become an increasingly accepted type of governance (Daun, 2007 & McCrone, Sothcoth and George 2011). This trend has led to intensification of the roles and responsibilities of the school boards elsewhere in the world and also in Kenya whereby the management of secondary schools has been decentralized from the central government to the county governments. VanWyk (2007) and Strauss (1999) have pointed out the question of competencies of the school boards as governing bodies. Experiences in the USA revealed that

## The Perception Board of Management (BOM) on the Appropriate Competencies in Strategic Plan Formulation Processes in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya

school boards in most state owned schools that are elected or appointed by the government and do not prescribe any prerequisite qualification except for some minimum in a few US states (Kolb and Strauss 1999). This is also the case in UK. According to Maitland (2009) the Board of management in schools are required to possess certain qualification including at least a college degree to be eligible for election as a member. In Northern Ireland, a school governor must be aged eighteen years and above with statutory competence requirement. The nominees to the board of management have to be persons who are interested in education and committed to the work of the school. They are invited to apply formally if they have specific skills or competence. Musozi (2014) notes that effective school boards must contribute to the management through their unique talents while collaborating and working as a team in order to achieve the school set goals. Van (1998) notes that, inadequate training of board of management is due to scarce resources, which makes them unlikely to engage or participate in effective decision making and make informed judgment. In Rwanda, Rwanda education Board (REB) have a half a month session for training of school boards annually which has contributed immensely to the monitoring and evaluation of the desired practices in school management (Agetesi 2013). According to him the areas that members are trained in includes accountability in school finances, proper school planning, rescheduling of pedagogical activities and educational data collection and interpretation among others.

From these studies, among the major challenges that have been brought out clearly, is the lack of the required competencies among school leaders and managers. This makes them not to participate effectively in decision making and also leads to poor quality decisions. In Kenya strategic planning is a relatively new concept in school management process. Mbugua and Rarieya (2014) affirm that, not all schools in Kenya have embraced strategic planning fully, despite a ministerial directive. They cite cases of some schools hiring consultants to make strategic plans for them and of others borrowing and adopting strategic plans from other schools, irrespective of their variation. In another study by Njagi, Muathe and Muchemi (2013) concluded that among the factors influencing formulation of strategic plan in Embu North District was the lack of the necessary skills among employees. Another study by Kiprop, Bomett and Jelimo (2015) in Nakuru sub County found that, leaders lacked relevant skills, leadership qualities and commitment to strategic planning. It is important therefore for BOM to have the necessary competencies, skills and knowledge in order to perform their duties effectively as school managers and leaders. Without such competencies among the school managers and leaders the schools are likely to have poor quality plans hence difficult to implement or if implemented may not add value to school performance. To enable BOM perform their duties effectively the members need to maintain a sufficient level of knowledge and competencies. Whereas the basic education Act provides for the minimum educational qualification of the members to be selected to the board, it does not spell out the competencies they should have. More important is that, The Basic Education Act No. 14 of 2013 in Kenya has devolved the management of Basic Education Institutions (BEIs) to the County levels to enable more participation by stakeholders and easier access to educational services. Indeed, Section 54(7) (k) of The Basic

Education Act No. 14 of 2013, provides for the County Director of Education (CDE) in consultation with the County Government, to advise the County Education Board (CEB) on the selection and appointment of the Boards of Management (BOMs), Management Committees (MCs) and Parents Associations (PAs) subject to the authority of the Cabinet Secretary. For this reason more parents are now included in secondary school boards and the implication is that those parents selected to the Board are likely to be lacking the necessary skills and knowledge needed for strategic plan formulation and implementation in particular and school management in general.

The available data from CQUASO office Elgeyo Marakwet County shows that majority of the schools especially the young schools are operating without strategic plans. In addition, some of those with strategic plan are not adequately prepared or expired. The CQUASO officer in charge noted that, these challenges on strategic plans has contributed to poor management hence the failure of many schools their set goals and objectives.

The successful formulation of a strategic plan depends largely on the School Board of Management participation and effectiveness in the performance of their duties. Strategic planning is a school management activity that is used to set priorities, focus energy and resources, strengthen operations, ensure that employees and other stakeholders are working towards a common goal and adjusts the school direction to the ever changing demands of the environment. Secondary schools in the county have not been able to align their resources, processes and personnel in such away as to enable achievement of desired outcome. These were clearly brought out by CQUASO officer in charge of Elgeyo Marakwet County who indicated that, strategic plans in secondary schools in the county were either lacking or inadequately prepared thus leading to lack of proper prioritization of schools activities hence failure of schools to achieve their set goals and objectives. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine BOM perception on the appropriate strategic plan formulation competencies in public secondary schools in Elgeyo Marakwet county- Kenya.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed mixed method approach in gathering of information from the respondent. The study employed concurrent mixed method data collection strategy whereby a sample of principals and BOM chairpersons provided both qualitative and quantitative data which made it easy to compare the information. According to Creswell & Plano (2007) concurrent mixed method validate one form of data with the other form, transform the data for comparison and address different types of questions. Mixed method enhances the credibility of findings of this study because of the above stated reasons.

### A Study design

This study utilized the research design to determine BOM competencies in strategic plan formulation. This research design was best suited for this study because it is concerned with both the characteristics of the individuals and the whole sample.

### B Sampling procedures and sample size of the Study

The target populations of the study were 1314 (18x73) BOM

drawn from the 73 public secondary schools in Elgeyo-Marakwet. The BOM included the principal who is the secretary to BOM and the 17 BOM members in each public secondary school as stipulated in The Basic Education Act 2013 making a total of 18 in each school. The sampling procedure of this study was done as shown in table 1

**Table 1: Schools Sample size**

Sub Counties	School Type	Target Schools	Sampled Schools	Percentage
Keiyo North	County Sch.	6	2	33%
	Sub County Sch.	12	4	
Keiyo south	County Sch.	9	3	33%
	Sub County Sch.	15	5	
Marakwet West	County Sch.	6	2	33%
	Sub County Sch.	13	4	
Marakwet East	County Sch.	5	2	33%
	Sub County Sch.	7	2	
<b>Total</b>		<b>73</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>33%</b>

Table 1 above shows the sampling procedure that was followed by the researcher to obtain the study sample. This study utilized stratified random sampling procedure in selecting the schools for the study in Elgeyo-Marakwet County. The procedure involved categorizing the elements (Secondary schools) of study population into four groups in line with the current existing sub counties in the county namely, Keiyo South, Keiyo North, Marakwet West and Marakwet East. The respective numbers of county and sub county public secondary schools are indicated in the target population column as shown in the table. This was then followed by proportional independent random sample of over 30% from each category of school in each sub county as shown in school sample size column. The sample of 33% was arrived at based on recommendations of researchers like Jacob and Razariah (1972) which indicated that a sample size of between 10% and 50% is appropriate for descriptive research.

The Basic Education Act 2013 defines the composition of the BOM in secondary public secondary school as shown in table 3.2. For the purpose of fair representation the sampling of the 17 BOM members excluding the principal who is the considered secretary of the BOM and chairperson who is the elected among the members from each school was done as shown in table 2.

**Table 2: Respondent Sample Size**

BOM CATEGORY	POP. SIZE OF BOM	OF SAMPLE SIZE	SAMPLING METHOD
Representative of parents	144 (6x24)	48 (2X24)	Random
Representative of sponsor	72 (3x24)	24 (1X24)	Random
Co-opted members	72 (3x24)	24 (1X24)	Purposive
BOM Chair	24 ((1)x24)	24 (1X24)	Purposive
Principal	24 ((1)x24)	24 (1X24)	Purposive
Others	144 (5x24)	48 (2x24)	Random
<b>Total</b>	<b>432 (18x24)</b>	<b>216 (9X24)</b>	

Both purposive and random sampling techniques was used to select respondents from the BOM members as follows; the principal, and chairperson BOM (Table 2), were sampled purposely because of their leadership roles in their respective schools hence they are likely to be more informed on strategic planning. Random sampling was used to select the remaining respondents based on their population representation in the BOM in accordance with the basic Education Act of 2013. This representation included, parents 6, sponsor 3,

community, and others 6 (teachers 1, special interest 1, special needs groups 1, county board representative 1 and students representation 1) as shown in Table 2.

**C Data collection instruments**

Questionnaires were delivered to the respective schools by either the researcher or the assistance who explains the reasons for research to the administration and the research participants before administrating them. Interviews were administered by the researcher after informing the participants in advance so that they could create time for the interview. The interviews were open-ended, giving respondents more freedom to recall events, and latitude in developing their responses. Out of the 216 questionnaires 194 were filled and returned representing 90 % rate of return.

**D Validity**

This study used multiple case studies to triangulate the data between cases. In addition, the evidence collected from questionnaires followed the same protocol of interview questions. The researcher also ensured that any discrepancies in the study were clarified by seeking clarification from interviewee.

**E Reliability**

Cronbach technique was used to test the reliability or internal consistency of questionnaire. In this study Cronbach coefficient alpha was computed to measure consistency of questionnaires among the items measured on reliability statistics. The reliability statistics found an alpha coefficient of 0.753 an indication of a fairly high internal consistency hence the questionnaires can be said to be reliable.

**F Data analysis**

In order to establish the relationship between the independent and the dependent variable the researcher used the measure of relations and associations, that is, Mann-Whitney U test. The descriptive statistics were analysed using mean and standard deviation. Qualitative information obtained through interview on the other hand was analyzed by use of themes and theoretical narrative.

**III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

*Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents*

The study set out to explore BOM participation in strategic plan formulation and implementation in public secondary schools in Elgeiyo Marakwet County. Descriptive survey was done using questionnaires and interview of the sampled BOM members. Questionnaires were sent to 216 BOM members in 24 schools, 4 principals and 4 BOM chairpersons were also interviewed across the county. Out of the 216 questionnaires 194 were returned, which is a response rate of around 90%. The key findings from these research revealed that a majority of the BOM members (68%) were male, with a majority of them (40%) aged between 41-50 years. Concerning educational qualification 65% had bachelor's degree and above, in addition majority (60%) having pursued education as a profession. Majority (52.5%) of the BOM also had a work experience of over 12 years. The findings of the study further revealed that more than half of the schools included in the study were County schools (63%) while the sub county school constituted 37%.

## The Perception Board of Management (BOM) on the Appropriate Competencies in Strategic Plan Formulation Processes in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya

A. tion of BOM on the appropriate competencies in strategic plan formulation in public Secondary schools in Elgeyo Marakwet County.

In order to answer the question on the appropriate competencies in strategic plan formulation in different categories of public secondary schools the BOM were asked to respond to seven questions which were assigned numeric values on five likert scale responses as follows:- 1=Strongly Agree 2= Agree 3=undecided 4=Disagree 5=Strongly Disagree. The BOM were to indicate their level of agreement on the seven identified competencies required in strategic plan formulation in public secondary schools. The findings were summarized by calculating the mean score of each category of school and the overall mean as shown in table 3.

Table 3: Appropriate BOM Competencies in Strategic Plan Formulation in public Secondary Schools.

SNO	BOM COMPETENCIES	SUB	COUNTY	TOTAL	RMK
		COUNTY	SCHOOL	AVER.	
		SCHOOL	SCHOOL		
		Mean	Mean	Mean	
A1.	Interpersonal relationship.	1.12	1.10	1.11	SA
A2.	Leadership skills.	1.21	1.25	1.23	SA
A3.	Right attitude and values.	1.31	1.25	1.28	SA
A4.	Knowledge and skills.	1.38	1.32	1.35	SA
A5.	Financial expertise.	1.44	1.46	1.45	SA
A6.	Self believe/Confidence.	1.68	1.62	1.65	A
A7.	Good communication Skills.	1.72	1.68	1.70	A

Table 3 shows that BOM members either ‘Strongly Agreed’ or ‘Agreed’ with all the identified competencies across the different categories of schools in strategic plan formulation as all the items had mean scores of below the 2.5 cut-off point of disagreement on five-point likert scale. The BOM members in the two categories of schools on average “Strongly Agreed” with five of the seven competencies and “Agreed” with two competencies. The BOM members ‘Strongly Agreed’ that the interpersonal relationship competency was the single most important competency when formulating strategic plan with overall mean of 1.11 among the three categories of schools. This was closely followed by leadership skills (1.23) then Attitude and Values (1.28), Knowledge and Skills (1.35), Financial expertise (1.45), Self confidence (1.65) and lastly Communication Skills (1.70). According to BOM members in the two categories of schools they perceive all the seven competencies as very important in strategic planning formulation however not with the same degree of agreement as indicated in the table 3. Only two competencies of financial expertise and self-confidence had a mean of above 1.5 ie “Agreed”. This implies that all the above competencies on average contribute strongly in the formulation of strategic plan in secondary schools.

When the researcher interviewed some of the BOM chairpersons and Principals, it was established that some members of the BOM lacked the competencies, skills and knowledge on the preparation of strategic plan which affected

their contribution or engagement with stakeholders as one of the BOM chair indicated in her statement below;

*For the BOM to participate effectively in strategic plan formulation they need to a certain level of education and competencies. These competencies includes ability to communicate and convince, being able to work with others .....these can be done by inducting the BOM regularly on strategic plan formulation and other school management issues.*

This was supported by all the principals interviewed as indicated by the statement of one of them that:

*BOM members could be skilled and knowledgeable in their areas of specialization as professionals but this does not necessarily translate to the ability to formulate strategic plan in secondary.....it is important therefore for the BOM to be trained on strategic plan preparation and implementations to enable them acquire the necessary skills and competencies.*

The interview of the BOM chairpersons and principals confirmed the inadequate skills, knowledge and competencies of some of the BOM members and the need for their induction and training as indicated by their statement. It imperative therefore for the BOM to have the necessary knowledge and competencies in school strategic plan formulation. This will enable them to come up with school strategic plan that is comprehensive, inclusive and implementable.

Secondary schools management decentralization has been the trend worldwide despite the challenges associated with the process (Daun 2007, MaCrone, Sothcott and George, 2011). This has been the trend also in Kenya as more parents have been included in the management of their respective schools (Basic Education Act 2013). Ercegogofac and Bupic (2016) considers learning, teaching and school management a complex process a complex issue as school governance is related to socio-economic, political and ideological influence of the society .It is for these reasons that has led to intensification of the role of the school governance in the world and also in Kenya.

The findings of this study as indicated in the table 3 consider the interpersonal relation as the main competency skill required BOM in secondary school management. These findings are closely related to the findings by Keiding (2002) in Denmark that indicates that a manager must possess interpersonal relation that make the manager and management more attractive and concludes that, behavioural competencies are important skills in a manager must possess. These finding indicates that, secondary schools BOM members should be persons with diplomatic skills or good interpersonal relation so as to be able to relate well with fellow members, staff and other stakeholders during strategic plan formulation process. In addition, the need for good negotiation skills is required in reaching at amicable agreement on issues of strategic planning process easily. This will make the school to be more attractive to the students, parents, staff and other stakeholders that includes financial sponsors.

Leadership skills of BOM members were the second most important competency skill in strategic plan formulation in secondary schools in Elgeyo Marakwet County. These

findings is closely related to the findings of other researchers that includes Berry, Smylie, and Fuller, 2008 who notes that, the decision making process and the existence of positive climate that is created by the principal is associated with effectiveness. In addition, Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2004) indicates that, a general consensus in school leadership studies is that successful schools have good leaders. Davies (2005) also agrees with these sentiments that, strategic planning in schools still possess challenges and therefore leader's role in creating a strategic mindset and culture in the school is critical to its success. A study by Kiprop, Bomet and Jelimo (2015) in Nakuru found that leaders lacked leadership qualities which are important in strategic plan formulation and implementation. These emphasize the need to have people with the right leadership skills, knowledge and qualities in secondary schools. It is important therefore for those who are responsible for either promotion of the principals and/or election of BOM chairpersons to ensure that merit is adhered to in order to get the right caliber of leaders. Good leadership creates conducive working environment in our secondary schools and enable all stakeholders to focus their energies on the achievement of the school set objective therefore enhancing school outcome.

The third most important competency skill was the BOM attitudes and values in the strategic plan formulation and implementation. Research by Hilderbradt (2005a) shows that, managers who do not possess the positive attitudes will not be able to achieve sufficient motivation among employees leading to reduced satisfaction and productivity. As managers of the schools the BOM members should have the right attitude and values for them to influence other stakeholders and rally them towards the school goals hence improved outcome of the school. The lack of the right values and attitudes by school leadership and in particular the BOM will demotivate the worker and other stakeholders during strategic plan formulation process.

The other important competency that was ranked fourth in strategic planning formulation as indicated by BOM responses was the need to have knowledge and skills that relates to strategic plan formulation process. These findings are substantially in agreement with the findings in Canada by Provincial Auditors in Saskatchewan (2016) who identified gaps between the skills and knowledge needed by members to govern and those possessed by school board members. Ercegovic , Morana ,and Bubic (2016) research on governance in South East Asia also indicated the need for enhancing school Board members competencies which are imperative in the professional and pedagogical field and in decision making process. In Anabra State Nigeria, Okwukweka and Obiegeli (2015) recommended that education managers and staff members should have periodic capacity building to enable them develop the fundamentals and have confidence in planning strategically. Additionally a study by Kiprop , Bomet and Jelimo (2015) in Nakuru showed that BOM lacked relevant skills, leadership qualities and commitment to strategic planning. This demands that BOM members should be inducted and trained in strategic plan formulation process so as to improve their capacity and become more efficient and effective in managing the schools.

Capacity building will boost their basic knowledge and skills in secondary school management.

Financial management was another competency skill identified by BOM as important in strategic plan formulation process. This competency skill was ranked fifth with a mean of 1.45 (Strongly Agree). It appears therefore that, the BOM felt that there is need for members to be drawn from diverse professions including those with financial background. Auditors report from Saskatchewan (2016) Canada indicated that members felt that persons with financial background were not adequately represented in their school board of governors. Another research by Wagithunu and Wanjala (2014) concluded that for a principal to work with greater precision they need to continuously boast their own development by acquiring relevant financial skills and abilities required to effectively manage resources in schools. Financial knowledge in school management is an important aspect of resources management in secondary schools that require close attention. Whereas it important to train every member of the BOM on financial aspects of school management there is also need to select some members to the BOM with financial background so as to assist in the more complex aspects of budgeting in strategic plan formulation.

Self-confidence is another competency skill that the BOM members indicated as being important in strategic plan formulation and implementation. This particular competence is enhanced when members have the skills and knowledge on secondary school governance. Improving the capacity of members through regular training will therefore make them more confident in contributing to decision making in strategic plan formulation process in secondary school.

Lastly BOM members also considered communication skills as an important competency skill in strategic plan formulation and implementation. Good communication skills makes it easier to talk to people, convince them and appear friendly. This is one of the required competency skill in strategic plan formulation process as BOM members are required to talk to different groups of school stakeholders and interested parties and convince them on how the school should be governed. This skill can be acquired through regular training of BOM members and giving them opportunity to share what they have with other stakeholders during meetings

In summary all the competency skills identified are important in strategic plan formulation and implementation process though with varying degree. For BOM members to perform their work effectively, they should be given opportunity to develop their capacities by acquiring relevant competency skills and abilities in strategic plan formulation process.

*C BOM strategic plan competencies are evenly distributed between county and sub county schools in Elgeyo Marakwet County.*

According to Basic Education Act 2013 the qualifications for persons to be appointed or co-opted into the BOM are; a minimum academic qualification of a Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) or its equivalent; and in exceptional circumstances the CEBs may appoint holders of KCPE. Based on this, it's important to establish the



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