

Board Composition and Educational Performance in Catholic Founded Grant Aided Secondary Schools in Uganda

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Received: October 22, 2025

Accepted: November 19, 2025

Published: November 25, 2025

doi:10.65343/erd.v1i2.53

URL: <https://doi.org/10.65343/erd.v1i2.53>

Abstract

This study examined the composition of the board and the educational performance of Catholic founded Grant Aided Secondary schools (GASS) in Gulu and Tororo Archdioceses in Uganda. Using a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, data were collected through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and documentary review of institutional records, UNEB UCE results (2019–2023), and MoES enrolment reports. A sample of 67 schools was selected using simple random and purposive sampling. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and regression, while qualitative data underwent content analysis. Findings revealed that BoG independence, relevant expertise, and active engagement were positively associated with improved academic performance, enrolment, and completion rates. However, challenges such as limited training, resource constraints, and occasional role conflicts were noted. The study concludes that strengthening BoG capacity, ensuring strategic independence, and promoting stakeholder collaboration can significantly enhance governance effectiveness and educational outcomes. Broader research across diverse contexts is recommended to validate and expand these insights for national policy and practice.

Keywords: board composition, educational performance, grant aided secondary schools

1. Introduction

Governance is indispensable in ensuring educational performance in any school. This research intended to find out how board composition impacts on the educational performance of Catholic Founded GASS in Uganda. A Board that is composed of competent members with good professional backgrounds is critical for any school or educational institution. Therefore, a strong governance and management system eventually bring about educational performance (Mabula & Mkulu, 2022; Ombati, 2019; Sang & Sang, 2011).

The BoG has mandate to oversee school performance, plan infrastructure and learning materials, and mobilize resources like grants, donations, bursaries, and approve budgets (Bakundana, 2017; Wangtho, 2007). The board also fosters school-community relations, coordinates with parents, ensures financial accountability, and provides guidance, a conducive learning atmosphere, and a good working environment. These roles aim to enhance educational performance. However, improving efficiency and accountability by minimizing unnecessary protocols is essential (Wataba & Abiodun, 2018). Adeyemo (2021) notes that such measures will ensure educational quality and progress.

1.1 Historical Background

The concept of Boards of Governors (BoGs) dates back over 700 years to the Brotherhood of Mercy (Misericordia) in Florence, Italy, comprising clergy, nobility, elites, and the working class (Houle, 1997). In the United States, BoGs originated in 1647 with the Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, evolving into formal school committees by 1826, tasked with policy formulation and oversight. Urbanization later prompted a shift from direct democracy to structured governance for efficiency (Alexander & Alexander, 2001; Houle, 1997).

Globally, BoG structures vary but share the aim of ensuring accountability, stakeholder representation, and school improvement. In the UK, governing bodies include representatives from parents, staff, communities, and foundations, serving four-year terms (Gillard, 2017; Governors' Handbook, 2014). India's 1860 Societies Registration Act mandated BoGs to oversee administration, staffing, and academic activities (Thanikachalam, 2014). South Africa's 1996 Schools Act, Nigeria's 1967 reforms, and Kenya's post-independence Ominde Report (1964) similarly institutionalized school boards with resource management and leadership oversight roles (Carrim, 2001; Adesina & Gunasaju, 1984; MOEST, 2005).

1.2 Contextual Background

Historically, Uganda's schools were owned by religious bodies and private groups, with the government providing funding and oversight. However, religious segregation hindered national unity efforts. In 1940, the British-formed Thomas Education Committee recommended BoGs for secondary schools (Kiamba, 2021; Ssekamwa, 2001). The arrangement of Post-primary Institutions under Boards of Governors (BoG) has been ratified by law and policy since the Education Act (1964) which has been revised in the new Education Act 2008 that legally requires BoGs to be established for strategic oversight, accountability and to protect the interests of both government and the foundation body (Republic of Uganda, 2008). Composition requirements is generally the fact that the school should have members from; The founding body (i.e. the catholic church for catholic founded schools), Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), Teachers, Parents, old students and Local government officials (MoES 2013). This setup is rooted in the premise of stakeholder theory that multiple representation enhances decision-making and legitimacy (Freeman, 1984; Hillman & Dalziel, 2003).

The founding religious authority retains significant control over the makeup of the board in secondary schools founded by Catholic organizations and supported by the government in order to preserve the institution's morals, ethos, and adherence to Catholic educational philosophy (Otaala, 1992; Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997). This influence has historically made sure that key leadership roles, like those of Chairperson or Secretary, are usually held by people who share the founding values and possess the necessary knowledge of school governance.

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1.3 Theoretical Perspective

1.3.1 Agency Theory

Agency Theory explains governance as a relationship between principals (owners) and agents (managers). Within schools, Boards of Governors (BoGs) serve as autonomous regulators, ensuring administrators remain accountable and aligned with institutional goals (Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Pitkin, 2012; Jizi et al., 2014). Oversight and incentive mechanisms reduce managerial opportunism and enhance value creation (Hills & Jones, 1992). The theory underpins governance structures that separate strategic oversight (BoGs) from operational execution (headteachers), thereby promoting transparency and limiting self-interest conflicts (Eisenhardt, 2020; Simons et al., 2023). Critics, however, argue that it exaggerates board independence and oversimplifies governance in complex educational environments (Brudney, 1985; Perrow, 1986). Despite such limitations, Agency Theory remains central to formal accountability frameworks guiding BoGs in school governance.

1.3.2 Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder Theory emphasizes aligning institutional goals with the interests of diverse actors like the parents, students, teachers, and communities (Freeman et al., 2004; Blair, 1995). For BoGs, it expands responsibility by fostering inclusive decision-making, trust, and legitimacy through active stakeholder engagement (Parmar et al., 2010; Harrison et al., 2019). In educational settings, the theory underscores participatory governance, where multiple voices shape policy and practice. Yet, managing divergent stakeholder demands is complex, particularly in schools with overlapping interests and expectations (Nyongesa & Otiende, 2016). Boards must balance these competing claims to remain both responsive and effective.

1.3.3 Stewardship Theory

Stewardship Theory assumes managers act in the organization's best interest, motivated by trust, loyalty, and long-term commitment (Davis et al., 1997). In schools, this perspective views BoGs and headteachers as collaborators pursuing shared objectives such as academic achievement and financial sustainability. By promoting decentralized leadership, stewardship fosters cooperation and a shared vision, qualities particularly suited to non-profit and educational contexts (Segal & Lehrer, 2023; Aluko & Kazeem, 2025). Unlike Agency Theory, it portrays managers as reliable stewards rather than self-serving agents. Nevertheless, risks of authority misuse and poor judgment persist, meaning stewardship requires mutual accountability and structured oversight to function effectively.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Board Composition and School Performance

The impact of board composition has broadened in scope in recent years. Initially focused on the balance between executive and non-executive directors, attention has expanded to internal committees such as audit, nominating, and remuneration committees (Fratini & Tettamanzi, 2015). Recent studies now examine how diversity in gender, race/ethnicity, skills, and experience influences corporate social responsibility, risk management, and organizational performance (Gul, Sirinidhi, & Ng, 2018; Huse, Calabro, & Torchia, 2019; Post & Rubow, 2020). Muriithi (2005) found that a well-balanced mix of internal and external directors enhances effectiveness and corporate success, with multiple directorships bringing broader perspectives.

In education, research shows that diverse school boards by skills, experience, gender, and ethnicity bring wider perspectives to decision-making, enabling innovation and effective responses to challenges (Alsbrook & Neely, 2022; Gooden et al., 2021). Financial expertise also improves budget oversight and resource allocation (Nowell & Lau, 2018). However, diversity alone does not guarantee performance; effective communication, collaboration, and shared commitment are crucial (Young & Kim, 2020). Board effectiveness also depends on clear roles, strong leadership, active participation, and commitment to professional development and stakeholder engagement (Carver, 2019; Roberts & Carver, 2023; Stosich, 2017).

Kamaara et al. (2013) found that a balanced mix of inside and outside directors promotes independence from management, protecting stakeholder interests. While Bhagat & Black (2000) reported positive effects of external directors, Weir & Laing (2001) found a negative link, and Hayes et al. (2004) saw no significant association. Board selection processes vary internationally some are elected (Belgium, England, USA), others appointed (Netherlands) (Hooze & Honingh, 2014).

In Uganda, certain members (teachers, parents, students) are elected and presented to the Minister of Education, while foundation bodies nominate the rest. This hybrid system can enhance performance if competent members are appointed but may harm outcomes if unqualified individuals are selected.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A case study design was adopted to explore the Board of Governors' (BoG) outlook and educational performance in Catholic-founded government-aided secondary schools (GASS). A convergent parallel mixed-methods approach was used to address the limitations of single-method designs and offer deeper insights (Creswell, 2012; Caruth, 2013). Qualitative methods enabled detailed participant experiences, while quantitative methods supported data generalization and hypothesis testing.

3.2 Research Instruments

3.2.1 Questionnaire

Questionnaires were distributed to Directors of Studies and Headteachers. This method was chosen for its ease of analysis, cost-effectiveness, time efficiency, confidentiality, and ability to gather data from large samples (Creswell, 2014; Elepu, Acanga, & Mwesigwa, 2023; Guthrie, 2010). A closed-ended, self-administered questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) was used to collect quantitative data.

3.2.2 Interview

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with BoG chairpersons and one other committee head. These semi-structured interviews sought deeper insights into the BoG's influence on school performance and covered topics such as board composition, independence, and role duality (Amin, 2005; Elepu et al., 2023). Follow-up questions ensured clarity and depth.

3.2.3 Documentary Review

Documentary review was used to gather secondary data on BoG outlook and school performance by examining GASS documents like management reports, board minutes, policy files, and other relevant records (Creswell, 2014). The review focused on board qualifications, appointments, inductions, roles, relationships, and delegation of authority (Guthrie, 2010).

Additionally, UNEB UCE results (2019–2023) were analyzed for academic performance, while MoES enrolment reports were used to assess student enrolment and completion rates.

The collected data was cleaned and analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically the mean and standard deviation. Pearson's correlation and regression analysis were applied to examine the relationship between board independence and educational performance. Qualitative data was analyzed through content analysis.

3.3 Sample Size, Selection, and Sampling Techniques

The study sample consisted of 67 schools, established using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table to guarantee statistical adequacy. Schools were chosen through simple random sampling to ensure fair and proportional representation of the broader school population in the two dioceses (Fleetwood, 2022).

Purposive selection was employed for BoG chairpersons and one committee head, given their roles as external managers tasked with advisory and strategic oversight (Sekeran, 2003). Headteachers were included because of their central role in day-to-day school management, directly influencing educational outcomes. Directors of Studies were also purposively involved, as they manage student enrolment and academic programs. For qualitative data, participants were identified based on expertise and practical experience in the subject matter.

3.3.1 Simple Random Sampling

This method was used to give every school an equal chance of selection, thus balancing both known and unknown variables while improving representativeness of the population (Creswell, 2012; Shagofah et al., 2022; Stockemer, 2019). Since Catholic-founded GASS in Gulu and Tororo Archdioceses share a relatively homogeneous context, randomization ensured fair selection. It was specifically applied to headteachers and deputy headteachers to minimize bias (Amin, 2005).

3.3.2 Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling focused on individuals with unique knowledge and relevant experience regarding BoG functioning and school performance (Guarte & Barrios, 2006; Neetij & Bikash, 2016). This approach was used for BoG chairpersons, committee heads, and Directors of Studies, whose positions provided privileged insights into the issues under investigation (Creswell, 2014).

3.4 Reliability of Quantitative Data

The questionnaire was pilot-tested in schools outside the study area to establish internal consistency and dependability, while also identifying possible challenges in responses. Expert review, item wording checks, and incorporation of feedback ensured content accuracy (Nardi, 2003). A Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.7 or higher was set as the threshold for reliability.

3.5 Validity of Quantitative Data

Content validity was prioritized to ensure that items appropriately reflected the study constructs (Creswell, 2005). The Content Validity Index (CVI) was computed as:

$$CVI = \frac{\text{Number of approved questions}}{\text{Total number of questions}}$$

Where n represents items rated as relevant by supervisors and N the total number of items. A CVI score of 0.7 and above was considered satisfactory (Zamanzadeh et al., 2015).

3.6 Validity and Reliability of Qualitative Data

Trustworthiness was enhanced through credibility, transferability, confirmability, dependability, and triangulation (Maxwell, 2010).

Credibility

Prolonged engagement during interviews allowed inconsistencies and negative cases to surface, which were clarified and documented (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2010). Participant validation further enhanced accuracy of findings.

Confirmability

To reduce researcher bias, interviews used open-ended questions and active listening, supported by transparent reporting, audit trails, peer reviews, and debriefing sessions (Coleman, 2021; Shenton, 2004).

Dependability

Reliability was maintained through systematic documentation of procedures, use of multiple data sources, and member checking. This included clarifying issues during interviews and sharing summaries with participants for validation (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Coleman, 2021).

Triangulation

Reliability was strengthened by cross-verifying findings through document analysis and interviews. Thematic and content analysis helped establish convergence patterns, enhancing the depth of interpretation (Scott, 2007; Torrance, 2012; Rolfe, 2006).

Transferability

Thick descriptions of context ensured that results could be applied to similar environments. Data from interviews, document reviews, and peer debriefing improved transferability by adding relevance and clarity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Coleman, 2021).

3.7 Limitations

The study was confined to Catholic-founded GASS in Gulu and Tororo Archdioceses, which restricts the generalizability of results to other regions and school categories. Observations may not reflect institutions with different contexts or governance models. Broader research would be necessary to capture national diversity.

Additionally, the sample of 65 schools limits representation and may not cover the full range of school dynamics. Larger and more diverse samples are recommended for future investigations.

Potential biases in data collection were mitigated through randomization, critical review of responses, assurance of respondent anonymity, and triangulation of multiple data sources, thereby strengthening accuracy and credibility.

4. Presentation of Findings

4.1 Board Composition

4.1.1 Descriptive Analysis

This section examines head teachers' perceptions regarding board composition in 65 Catholic grant-aided secondary schools. The analysis focuses on three critical aspects of board composition: member competency, stakeholder representation, and gender diversity. Using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), head teachers evaluated these key elements of board structure and representation.

The findings (Table 6) indicate varying levels of satisfaction with different aspects of board composition, yielding an overall moderate average rating of 2.09. The analysis reveals that stakeholder representation as prescribed by the 2008 Act received the highest rating (2.58), with an equal proportion (43.1%) of respondents both agreeing and strongly agreeing with this aspect. This means that board composition diversity with stakeholder representation.

Gender diversity on the board emerged as the second-highest rated aspect (1.89), with 50.8% of respondents agreeing and 27.7% strongly agreeing with the presence of gender diversity. Board member competency and skills received the lowest rating (1.78), despite 60% of respondents agreeing with this statement.

Notably, there were relatively low levels of uncertainty across all three dimensions, with very few or no respondents selecting "Not Sure." This suggests that head teachers have clear perceptions about board composition matters. The standard deviations, particularly high for stakeholder representation (1.509), indicate considerable variation in perceptions among respondents, while opinions about gender diversity and member competency showed more consistency (standard deviations of 1.017 and 1.053, respectively).

This analysis provides important insights into how school leaders perceive the composition of their governing boards, highlighting areas of both strength and concern in current board structures within Catholic grant-aided secondary schools.

Table 1. Head Teacher Perceptions on Board of Governance Composition in 65 Catholic Aided School

													Performance		Ranking
													Decision		
													Perception		

hypotheses across all aspects suggests systematic underlying factors influencing how school leaders perceive and evaluate their board's composition, providing valuable insights for policymakers and educational administrators.

Table 2. Univariate Analysis of Perception of Headteachers on the Composition of Board Members

Hypothesis Test Summary			
Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1 The categories of The Board is composed of competent and skilled members occur with equal probabilities.	One-Sample Chi-Square Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
2 The categories of The board is representative of all the stakeholders as designated in the 2008 Act occur with equal probabilities.	One-Sample Chi-Square Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
3 The categories of There is gender diversity on the Board occur with equal probabilities.	One-Sample Chi-Square Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .050.			

Source: Survey August-November 2024

4.1.2.2 Multivariate Analysis

A Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was conducted to examine the underlying structure of head teachers' perceptions regarding board composition. The analysis revealed a single dominant component, suggesting a unified construct in how school leaders perceive various aspects of board composition.

The analysis shows strong positive loadings across all three dimensions of board composition, with gender diversity demonstrating the strongest correlation (0.780), followed by board member competency and skills (0.739), and stakeholder representation (0.710). These uniformly high loadings (all above 0.7) indicate that these three aspects of board composition are strongly interrelated in head teachers' perceptions.

This single component solution suggests that head teachers view board composition as an integrated construct where gender diversity, member competency, and stakeholder representation are closely linked elements rather than independent dimensions. The strong positive correlations indicate that when head teachers evaluate one aspect of board composition positively, they tend to rate the other aspects positively as well, suggesting a holistic perception of board composition quality.

The emergence of a single component with such strong loadings has important implications for understanding board governance. It suggests that initiatives to improve board composition should take a comprehensive approach, recognizing that these three aspects—competency, representation, and diversity are interconnected in practice and perception. This finding provides valuable guidance for policymakers and administrators in developing integrated approaches to enhancing board composition in Catholic grant-aided secondary schools.

Table 3. Multivariate Analysis of Perception of Headteachers on the Composition of Board Members

Component Matrix^a	
	Component 1
The Board is composed of competent and skilled members	.739
The board is representative of all the stakeholders as designated in the 2008 Act	.710
There is gender diversity on the Board	.780
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.	
a. 1 components extracted.	

Source: Survey August-November 2024

4.1.2.3 Synthesis and Implications

The findings suggest that board composition improvements require a comprehensive approach, recognizing the

interconnection between competency, representation, and diversity. This integrated perspective offers valuable guidance for policymakers and administrators in enhancing board composition in Catholic founded grant-aided secondary schools.

4.2 Qualitative Data

Qualitative Data Analysis Report

This section presents the report from the qualitative data.

4.2.1 Board Composition

This theme explored how the school board of governors were composed and several subthemes emerged including, biodiversity, challenges to composition and member composition

4.2.1.1 Experience and Skills

"I studied Diploma in education, Bachelor of education, Postgraduate diploma in Entrepreneurship, MBA, finally Master of education in education management." KII-B0G-Gulu-Male-7

"I think they are fair, for the two have experience from their former works as head teacher and tutor." KII-B0G-Gulu-Male-7

The category of the people who compose the BOG for it cuts across various sectors, it is a well composed BOG and well informed, making it to bring difference ideas and this makes the board members to contribute to the BOG and act independently and objectively. KII-BoG-Arua-Male-9

"Yes, they have the expertise because in the resent board for example we have the person who is chairing the disciplinary committee is someone who had background of law so he helps in handling issues like when a student is indefinitely suspended there is room for appeal in order to check the decision made by rewards and sanction committee to suspend the student which is sometimes turned down, and this gives chance of the learner to come back and continue with study a changed person". KII-BoG-Arua-Male-9

Yes, my extensive experience in education and leadership roles has significantly enhanced my effectiveness on the board. My background in education helps me understand the academic challenges and opportunities, while my various "leadership positions have equipped me with skills in governance, decision-making, and stakeholder management that are directly applicable to board responsibilities." KII-BoG-Tororo-Female-2

I hold a bachelors of art in Social Philosophy, A Masters in theology (MUK) and Post Graduate Diploma in Higher education. I have served as Board Chair for multiple schools, Parish Priest, Director of the Pontifical Mission Society, member of the education commission, and consultant to the bishop. Each role has developed different aspects of my leadership capabilities, from pastoral care to institutional governance and strategic planning. KII-BoG-Tororo-Male-6

I have been a teacher since 1980. I am a graduate from Makerere University with a Diploma in Education and a Master's in Education. I served as Acting Deputy Head Teacher and retired in 2015. Currently, I am a board member. KII-BoG-Tororo-Male-5

I have a PhD in management systems, Masters in Business Administration, Bachelor's in Theology, other Bachelor's in Philosophy. I have been in administration, educational institution for quite some time now KII-BoG-Gulu-Male 11.

Participants who have acquired experience in the field of education normally exhibit deep insights which position them to make meaningful contribution to board discussions in terms of policy, curriculum development and learner performance. Experience in leadership is a crucial matter which allows participants to manage different stakeholders, uphold standards and make informed decisions. It is due to this leadership experience that participants were able to rally each other and other stakeholders to work together and enhance their performance in school board settings.

However, there was a challenge noted by the participants in regards to composition which is the quality of members especially those who represent constituencies like Local government, Parents, foundation body and former students.

"There is a need for a committed board; it's essential to select board members who can add value and move the school to another level. The foundation body should not just stop at the appointment of the board and head teacher but should go to the extent of selecting competent individuals with specific fields of expertise that complement the school's needs. KII-BoG-Tororo-Male-3"

This underscores the importance of the foundation body to constitute a competent board and a functional school leadership to champion progress of the institution.

4.2.1.2 Clear Knowledge of BoG Role (Expertise and Skills)

This section looked into whether the BOG members clearly know their roles and responsibilities as they execute their duties.

One respondent said:

We look at academic issues, teachers, teaching learning materials required, we also look at stuffing gap all related to directly academic KII-BoG-Gulu-Male-7.

This is just one component of the role of the BoG. The roles and responsibilities go beyond just having and academic oversight. This shows that many BoG members tend to lean towards the committee they are assigned to.

Another respondent answered that:

I am supposed to communicate the teachers views to the BOG and pick from the BOG the issue pertaining to teachers back to the teachers KII-BoG-Arua-Female-8.

This participant is more oriented towards the constituency she represents, that is the teachers. The role of the BOG goes beyond the people you represent including financial oversight, monitoring academic performance, resource mobilization, policy formulation among others.

In the same respect another respondent had this to say:

"When discussing issue in the board you have to bring ideas that can really bring the institution to a greater height in fact that can change and improve the institution in all aspects spiritually and even academically including public relations, so the leadership skills helped a lot." KII-BoG-Arua-Male-9.

This statement much as it brings out some critical areas of BoG roles, it does not precisely spell out the core duties the BoG should be engaged in. This shows that the BoG members need to be sensitized on their core duties to enable them function effectively.

One of the key functions of the BoG is the financial oversight as noted by a respondent:

The board makes policies like fee collection, admission guidelines for students. Budget allocation for ongoing formation of teachers through sponsorship of teachers. This systematic approach to financial oversight has strengthened the board's governance capacity and provided clearer insights into operational management. KII-BoG-Tororo-Male-3.

This by all means is a very critical function of the board, but there are a lot to be done by the board other than financial oversight alone which could be policy related, leadership role and academic functions among others.

Among the things the BoG is expected to do is arrive at conclusions on critical issues objectively:

As a board, we once received a report that the Head Teacher was tribalistic regarding allowances and that he was selling off cows of the school. We constituted the board into a committee to investigate the concern and report back to the board. The findings concluded that there was no case, and the accusation was thrown out. This report was even shared with the Ministry of Education and Sports for record purposes. This demonstrates our commitment to proper investigation of concerns and transparent reporting. KII-BoG-Tororo-Male-3

This reflects good governance practice, where mechanisms exist to objectively address complaints, protect reputations, and uphold public trust. This of course is a key role which should not only be the BoG roles but a multifaceted role which brings good practice that promotes school performance.

The Board should work closely with teachers and the parents in promoting school performance. One respondent noted that: *"The board receives reports from the head teacher, discusses them, and sorts out key issues with structures like Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs) KII-BoG-Tororo-Male-5."* This approach demonstrates a shared governance model that enhances transparency, accountability, and participatory problem-solving within the school system. But the board should always stretch their roles beyond stakeholder engagement and critically look at factors hindering educational performance and improve them.

Lastly, one participant gave his opinion on his role as:

My role in the board is to facilitate understanding of policies, role of education both academic and administrative. Education is not about skills of teaching only but rather the experience of teaching because we interphase with various learners from different background. In the board we have learn budgeting and planning cycles of government, board rights and teachers sharing the same rights so these are bindings.

Previously we thought its for outsiders. Through the committee of finance, management decision can be approved or disapproved. KII-BoG-Tororo-Male-1

This statement shows partial understanding of BoG roles from the members and it clearly indicate the need for a more robust understanding of board roles from selected members.

Resource Mobilization

Among the key functions of the board is resource mobilization to help in infrastructural development, purchase of school bus, among others. A respondent acknowledged the contribution of the board in this respect:

The BOG did some fund raising to do the construction of the dormitory at school KII-BoG-Arua-Female-8.

The submission indicates the resourcefulness of the Board which goes beyond oversight roles but extends to the ability to mobilise resources. It proceeds to identify an important area of building a physical infrastructure portfolio, in this case, dormitory.

The headteacher with support of the Board solicits for funds to facelift the school:

Through the help of the BOG and the headteacher is coming up to clear the mess of the predecessor and this has been witnessed on the renovation works done in the school which has face-lifted the school. KII-BoG-Arua-Male-10.

Unlike in the previous submission which precisely notes construction of a dormitory as a role of the board, this one adds that the board is also to restore the school, especially in terms of the negative effects of the outgone headteacher and also the buildings should be renovated. This role demonstrates the transient nature of the board as one that preserves the school in its entirety through administrative transitions.

Another initiative of the board to facilitate school performance is in improving the laboratory in a bid to promote sciences: *“The board also has a plan of expanding the laboratory for it has become small, it also has a plan to put a storage library”* KII-BoG-Arua-Male-9. These plans demonstrates the depth to which the board needed to go in order to support academics. A key role the board performs is to promote academic excellence like in building laboratory to encourage good performance in science subjects.

Creating strategic partnerships and writing project proposals can be another avenue of soliciting for funds by the BoG:

The board is really working round the clock in writing projects and creating partners outside to put the storage dormitory for the boys. KII-BoG-Arua-Male-9.

This initiative demonstrates the ongoing engagement of the board. While earlier submissions have preferred a kind of “on and off” mechanism of operation, the board is presented as being in a continuous engagement in the school’s operation. Writing project proposals and creating partnerships are some of the ongoing activities that the board is expected to perform.

Income generation at school level is another source of income to boost the already scarce resources of the school. A respondent remarked that:

The board advised the school to have alternative incomes within the school. Like poultry keeping, rearing pigs and sharing of skills. KII-BoG-Tororo-Male-4.

This approach shows that the board on an advisory capacity is able to support the school administration through the headteacher to develop in-school income generating activities. It is therefore the duty of the administration to come up with innovate ways to achieve this.

Financial Management by the Board

The board is also tasked with the mandate of managing the finances of the school including allocating budgets and authorising expenditures. One respondent noted that:

There is allocation of money for sports in the budget and our students are also participating in the coca cola tournament. KII-BoG-Gulu-Male-7.

While academics are at the forefront of formal education, the board goes an extra mile to holistic education with particular focus on enhancing students’ talents through games and sport. They allocate funds to sports programmes like participation in coca cola tournament. This also serves to boost help students build friendship with their peers and boosts the image of the school.

Financial management requires vigilance and adherence to the budget and this requires close monitoring of the expenditure as noted by one participant as stated below:

When it comes to the issue of accountability, the board members especially the finance committee should be a little bit strict on the expenditure of the school, and control the Head Teacher. KII-BoG-Arua-Male-9

The submission holds accountability in high regard and considers it a key duty of the board. While operating in committees, the board is expected to rigorously regulate the school expenditure by closely monitoring the activities of the headteacher. In this way, the board is poised as the custodian of the school's financial wellness.

To enforce transparency and accountability, the designated BoG officials must be signatories to the school account and release funds according to the budget line.

There are some policies by the ministry of education and sport (MoES) for board members being signatories to account, it says all 3 must sign (Board chairperson, treasures or finance secretary and Head teacher) this promotes transparency and accountability. KII-BoG-Tororo-Male-2.

This policy seeks to enhance financial accountability, where checks and balances are observed. Such mechanism is enforced by the members of board being signatories to the school account in order to promote transparency and accountability. The board is therefore required to champion financial accountability and transparency.

Some schools however need to streamline the way funds are collected and accounted for. For instance, one participant said:

At our school Parent Teacher Association (PTA) fee is collected by each teacher and receipts issued, this enables us to be transparent but in practice this not a good practice. Money collection should be centralised and through the bank.

The submission presents that too much decentralisation is risky. This is depicted by teachers who also collect fees. Instead of focusing on their duties, they perform that of the bursar too. This creates room for ineffectiveness among the teachers who end up stretching beyond their mandate and also it increases risk of discrepancies and undermines good financial practices such as securing money in bank.

Oversight on Academics

The section provides findings on the oversight role of the BoG on academics. One participant noted that:

As a member of the board I belong to academic staff committee, so we look at academic issues, teachers, teaching learning materials required, we also look at staffing gap all related directly to academic. KII-Bog-Gulu-Male-7

The finding explores a core activity of the board as academics. Through the participation of a committee, the board is able to guide the academic achievements of the school. It shows that academic performance does not start from the teachers or students but right from the board who set the parameters for academic success. It is therefore evident that good academic performance first starts with the competence of the school board that sets conducive environment and good parameters before it is executed through the school system and realised in the students.

The board is tasked with ensuring that academic performance is improved or kept up to the required standard. They do this through the academic committee of the board.

The board is not so much directly involved in improving academics, but they focus on how to improve the learning, how to pay teachers among others. KII-BoG-Gulu-Male-7

Similar to the previous submission, the participation of the school board is as an indirect participant in the school academic journey. It is seen to operate through the academic committee which focuses on improving learning and payment of teachers. This underscores the role of the board in securing and maintain the desired manpower and ensure academic success.

Another intervention by the Board in their oversight role is support to the teachers:

They have played important role by monitoring teachers' activities through the head teacher. The BoG also carry out some visits to the school to address teachers whereby they emphasize the needs to teach well and have good performance in the school. KII-BoG-Arua-Male-10.

This finding indicates the oversight role of the board which is portrayed as monitoring teacher's activities through the headteacher. This means, the board understands it is the duty of the headteacher to supervise the teachers. Through this intervention, the board supports the headteacher through encouraging team spirit among teachers and by encouraging them to work towards good performance of the school.

The BoG as well exhibit their role of academic oversight by showing enthusiasm in enhancing academic performance of the school. One respondent remarked that:

They normally sit in the academic committee BOG to discuss the academic performance of students in the exams done for example internal exams and others. They criticize if the result is bad and put strategies how to improve and if it is good they look for ways of sustaining it. KII-BoG-Arua-Male-10.

The role of oversight of the board is stressed in this submission and more specifically still. This role is characterised by students' results analysis and critical appreciation from which lessons are drawn and guidelines developed so as to mitigate loss, maintain or enhance good performance.

Good academic performance is not only an activity of the school but it goes beyond the school. The parents and the community too have a role to play in promoting good academic performance of a school. One participant noted that:

But the BOG always tries to sensitize the community through various functions and events like funerals among others and also students are always talked to during the evening assembly.

A submission as this, underscores the role of the board showing how far reaching it can get in sharing the vision of the school. While it oversees the general running of the school, the board is also positioned as a public relations entity of the school to the community. They speak about the school, its value and rally support for the institution.

The BoG in a bid to promote academic excellence is always ready to finance issues related to academics.

And internally the BOG is always ready to facilitate any academic activity which is done at school both internally and externally for example seminars.

Such a stance by the board underscores the primacy of academics. Through financing academic related activities, the board demonstrates its support for academic achievement and places it as a core business of focus. Secondly, the multiplicity of academic activities serves to reinforce the focus on academic success which the school ought to achieve through the teachers and students.

4.3 Policy Formulation and Revision/MoES Policies/ BoG Policies

The school BoG have the mandate with coming up with policies for the school to ensure smooth running of the school and improving school performance. One respondent noted: *We need to revise our financial management policies to enhance transparency in resource allocation and utilization* KII-BoG-Tororo-Male-5. This submission underscores the policy making role of the board and goes further to target financial management. While it is correct to highlight the governance position held by the board, there is a risk of looking at it merely in terms of finance management.

Some policies are provided for as a requirement from the Board. A respondent said:

"I really believe that most of the policies that we have are based on standard provisions of policy."

KII-BoG-Gulu-Male-11. The response signals a passive position taken by the respondent which is indicative of a less engaged board, one which depends so much on external directives, especially from already existent policies. This implies limited innovation and less critical engagement to determine what works for the school.

Another respondent on the issue of policy said:

We formulated a discipline policy in case of violence (fighting) among students and teacher's vs student. For the case where a teacher fought with a student, the board resolved to compensate the boy through a bursary for a whole year. KII-BoG-Tororo-Female-2.

This approach demonstrates the proactive stance of the board which is able to create policies, determine its course of operation and is forward thinking. It also demonstrates the strong commitment toward achieving its priorities of maintaining a disciplined learning environment.

The government also issues out policies to govern the school, one respondent noted that:

There are some policies by the MoES for board members being signatories to account, it says all 3 must sign (Board chairperson, Treasures or finance secretary and Head teacher) this promotes transparency and accountability. It also stipulates the amount of money. KII-BoG-Tororo-Female-2.

MoES policy requires three signatories to the school account. By observing this, the board aligns itself to national frameworks guiding education. However, ending at providing signatories to the account, the board is portrayed as limited in its fiduciary role of risk assessment, budgeting, forecasting, and alignment of resources to institutional goals.

4.4 Board Diversity

The participants reported that while including members from other denominations on the board is beneficial, it is important to maintain majority representation from the founding body as one of the board members reported in the narrative below.

"I think it is good to bring other members from other denominations rather than Catholics but it should not be half or they should not suppress our foundation body in the sense that there are other critical decisions that are taken which benefits the founding body so they should be three quarter, and the other quarter given to other denominations and this could be healthy." KII-BoG-Arua-Male-9

This submission demonstrates the need to preserve and champion the original institution's values and also stresses where the decision-making power belongs on the board. When we have other members who do not belong to the foundation body on the board then we can be guaranteed of a broader opinion other than sticking the Catholic values and orientations of which some of them may not necessarily be good governance practice.

Another participant also noted that:

The major positions in the BOG are supposed to be taken up by a Catholic KII-BoG-Arua-Female-8.

Of the 12 members of the BoG only one is a non-Catholic KII-B0G-Gulu-Male-11.

The local government seconded me on the board simply because am a Catholic KII-B0G-Moroto-Male-12

Much as the above findings suggests the orientation of the board should be towards the foundation body. This orientation is depicted as stretching from the allegiance of the members towards the ideology of the foundation body to the physical numbering of the foundation body representations on the board. However, the dominance of Catholic members on the school Board limits religious and ideological diversity, eventually thinning standpoints in decision-making. While it aligns with the school's faith-based identity, it may exclude qualified individuals from other backgrounds and reduce inclusivity and community representation.

4.5 Gender Representation in School Governing Boards

According to the data, there is a significant imbalance in the composition of the board where ten in eleven participants interviewed were male, reflecting a 20% composition of female. It also revealed that none of the board chairpersons were female. Even from the secondary data collected on the board composition in the schools under study, women are minority standing at 30%. This displays a gross imbalance in representation according to gender. The data indicates a significant gender imbalance in the composition of school governing boards.

Drawing from the data presented, the clear male dominance over female in school board leadership bears implications that the voices of women are not pronounced in school governance circles, and the fact that it is goes unchallenged stems a possible societal mindset that favours male dominance in leadership matters.

5. Discussion, Conclusion, Recommendation

5.1 Board Composition

A Principal Component Analysis (PCA) analysis revealed a single dominant component, suggesting a unified construct in how school leaders perceive various aspects of board composition followed by board member competency and skills (0.739), and stakeholder representation (0.710). These uniformly high loadings (all above 0.7) indicate that these three aspects of board composition are strongly interrelated in head teachers' and DoS' perceptions. The emergence of a single component with such strong loading has important implications for understanding board governance. It suggests that initiatives to improve board composition should take a comprehensive approach, recognizing that these three aspects; competency, representation, and diversity are interconnected in practice and perception. This finding provides valuable guidance for policymakers and administrators in developing integrated approaches to enhancing board composition in Catholic grant-aided secondary schools.

This single component solution suggests that head teachers and DoS view board composition as an integrated construct where gender diversity, member competency, and stakeholder representation are closely linked elements rather than independent dimensions. The strong positive correlations show that when head teachers and DoS evaluate one aspect of board composition positively, they tend to rate the other aspects positively as well, suggesting a holistic perception of board composition quality.

The study findings show that gender representation is wanting in board representation. According to the data, there is a significant imbalance in the composition of the board where ten in twelve participants interviewed were male, reflecting a 20% composition of female. It also revealed that none of the board chairpersons is a female. Even from the secondary data collected on the board composition in the schools under study, women are minority standing at 30%. This displays a gross imbalance in representation according to gender. The data indicates a significant gender imbalance in the composition of school governing boards and yet studies have shown that

gender diverse boards are critical to improve organizational outcomes, including better financial performance, higher stakeholder trust, and improved reputation. In a school setting, this can translate into more effective school governance, responsive policy-making, and stronger community engagement (OECD, 2022).

This position aligns with modern governance theories like Agency, Stakeholder and stewardship theories that emphasize the importance of diversity and representation in improving decision-making and legitimacy in leadership bodies. It also highlights the potential limitations of evaluating board attributes in isolation. This finding speaks to the available literature. Craery, Foutty and Mitchel (2023) found that gender diversity in the board leads to in-depth discussions and better decision making. Similarly, Gazley, Chang & Bingham (2010) established that board diversity and stakeholder representation impacts positively to effective school governance. OECD (2019) stresses the importance of plurality in the board in improving board debate, fostering inclusivity and reducing groupthink. Therefore, gender-balanced boards mirror and support broader institutional commitments to equality and representation, particularly in contexts where education is seen as central to social justice.

The other two factors of board member competency and skills, and stakeholder representation were not significant at the multi variate testing. This finding however, emphasizes the significant role that the knowledge, skills, and expertise of board members play in the effectiveness of school board governance. When the board is composed of competent members it brings vibes in terms of strategic thinking, financial acumen, understanding of policy, and leadership abilities that translates into informed decision-making and long-term strategic planning. This finding is supported by literature. Nicholson and Kiel (2004) contributed on the importance of individual and collective competencies in aiding the school board to fulfill their oversight, strategic, and advisory roles. Lack of relevant competencies among board members can undermine school governance processes, limit accountability, and weaken stakeholder trust.

The finding associated with stakeholder representation show the importance of inclusivity in governance that appreciates the views and interests of key stakeholders. The board have effective representation from the broader constituencies they serve, including staff, parents, students, community members and the political leadership. This finding is supported by the stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), which postulate that organizations are accountable not just to shareholders or funders, but to a wider group of stakeholders whose support is essential for sustained success. This helps in creating the board legitimacy, trust building, and promotes transparency in decision-making processes. Wanyama et al (2004) noted that for businesses to thrive, they need to function in an environment that includes various stakeholders. When the board is composed of people of the same faith especially school founded by religious denominations, there is the problem of objectivity, transparency and accountability. A member noted that *“of the 12 members of the BoG only one is a non-Catholic”* KII-B0G-Gulu-Male-11. Another member also made reference that *“the local government seconded me on the board simply because am a Catholic”* KII-B0G-Moroto-Male-12. This composition of stakeholders is not healthy for a board of a school.

5.2 Synthesis and Implications

The findings suggest that board composition improvements require a comprehensive approach, recognizing the interconnection between competency, representation, and diversity. This integrated perspective offers valuable guidance for policymakers and administrators in enhancing board composition in Catholic grant-aided secondary schools.

5.3 Recommendations

A study should be conducted to empirically examine the relationships between the structural and operational aspects of board governance frameworks and the performance of private and grant-aided schools. This research must investigate governance mechanisms, decision-making processes, and accountability to clarify their impacts on institutional effectiveness and student outcomes.

Additionally, it is suggested that further research be conducted to explore the influence of gender diversity in school leadership on leadership effectiveness, institutional performance, and organizational climate. Such investigations would enhance understanding of inclusivity and equity within educational governance.

Furthermore, comparative studies are recommended to analyze governance models in both public and private schools, with an emphasis on leadership autonomy, stakeholder involvement, and accountability. The findings from this research could provide valuable insights into how variations in governance affect educational quality across different contexts.

5.4 Conclusion

This study found that school leaders perceive board composition as a single, unified concept, where gender diversity, member competency, and stakeholder representation are closely linked. The principal component analysis confirmed these aspects are strongly interrelated, suggesting that improving board governance requires a

comprehensive approach. A major concern identified is gender imbalance, with women significantly underrepresented on school boards. This lack of diversity contradicts research that shows gender-diverse boards lead to better decision-making, accountability, and governance outcomes. Although competency and stakeholder representation were not statistically significant in multivariate testing, they remain essential to effective governance, supported by both literature and practice.

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