

# Sitting Lay Out Attributes of the Boards of Management for Effective Curriculum Accountability in the Public Secondary Schools in Kenya: A Case of Njoro Sub-County

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this observational research paper was to inquire into the sitting lay out attributes of Boards of Management with a view to enhancing their curriculum accountability in the public secondary schools in Kenya. Active participation by BOM members is critical in ensuring effective curriculum accountability in the public education sector in Kenya. It had been observed that most BOM members in Njoro Sub-County remained passive and indifferent during BOM meetings despite their prompt attendance. However, this phenomenon had not been empirically inquired into despite its contemporary significance. The study was conducted in 20 sampled public secondary schools in Njoro Sub-County using structured observational schedules. Data coding and analysis was carried out and presented in these schedules, with 50% serving as a critical score for either positivity or negativity during interpretations. It was found out that effective participation of the BOM members was largely a function of the meeting venues, meeting duration, sitting lay-outs, dressing code, body language, the intervening factors, use of ICT devices and the welfare provisions during BOM meetings. BOM members did not prioritize on Curriculum and instruction as key agenda during deliberations. Therefore, there was low consideration of curriculum accountability in the meetings. Some members remained passive and indifferent during BOM meetings. Most BOM meetings took place in school boardrooms which were convenient. Most members displayed naturalness and being at-ease during the meetings. However, a few members displayed tension and reservedness. Majority of the members were decently but not officially dressed. Majority of the BOM ensured basic welfare provision of the members present. Therefore sitting lay out attributes of the BOMs were significant determinants of effective curriculum accountability in the public secondary schools in Njoro Sub-County-Kenya.

**Keywords:** Curriculum Accountability, Novel Curriculum Insights, Participant Observer, Visible Body Language, Dressing Code, Shifting Curriculum Domain, Sitting Lay out Attributes

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## 1. Introduction

Curriculum Accountability refers to the condition of being liable or responsible for curriculum implementation actions at a school set up. The accountability aspect is viewed as the extent to which responsibility and liability are given, assigned or accepted in the context of curriculum implementation. When applied to the public education sector, it means that the managers of instructional programmes are to be held responsible for their educational decisions, actions

and learning outcomes. The outcomes are determined by learners' achievements elicited from both the formative and summative evaluations of their curriculum. Educational stakeholders take a major concern on Curriculum accountability in the public secondary schools since this is one of the sectors where public resources are expended [10]. Indeed, the MOE regard curriculum accountability as a mandatory agenda of deliberations during BOM meetings.

Utmost curriculum accountability would therefore be a key agenda item during BOM deliberations. Members are

expected to actively deliberate on the agenda items in an enabling venue, sitting lay out and positions. The *sitting lay out* is the operational term employed in the present study to inquire on the pertinent observable BOM meeting attributes.

Attainment of curriculum objectives in an educational institution depends on the provision of enabling working environment to the curriculum actors [11]. As the legitimate educational managers, the BOMs are some of the most active curriculum actors in Kenya's secondary education sector [7]. Their meetings should be convened in the most appropriate and enabling school venues, devoid of any stressful and interruptive environment. The sitting lay-out aspects in such venues should facilitate for progressive and fruitful deliberations amongst the members. An enabling situational climate enhance both curriculum leadership and accountability amongst the BOM members [15]. However, this is one of the unstudied areas in the public secondary education sector in Kenya. An empirical inquiry into this area would ascertain the actual situation in these public schools.

Accountability in curriculum implementation involve responsibility and commitment of various curriculum actors. There has been a shifting domain in curriculum leadership from the main school practitioners to local community leadership and control [13]. Gatere [7] in the article; "Demanding to be Taught", observed that a team of BOG / PTA members, teachers and non-teaching staff should conduct evaluation of the various school programmes. Implicit in this is the fact that Board members have a role to play in the schools' curriculum and instruction. These roles could be visibly observed in BOM deliberations with a view to improve on curriculum accountability.

The Ministry [2] has spelt out the core role of the Boards of Governors as follows;

The school Board is charged, among other things, with seeing to it that the school is managed properly. For example, the Board is required to ensure, that the property of the school is properly utilized and that the school's finances are used for the benefit of the school. The Board also reviews cases of suspended students and makes recommendations on what action should be taken.

The above citation suggests that the Ministry of Education had not initially observed direct curriculum roles for the school Boards. Apparently, this left another grey area in which school Principals enjoyed autonomy in the manner and process in which they enacted curriculum in schools. While they remained accountable to the Boards on expenses incurred in the construction of physical facilities, the principals were largely unaccountable in terms of curriculum and examination performance of the learners [1]. Contemporary educational stakeholders are demanding all forms of accountabilities from the curriculum leaders, including curriculum performance appraisals and annual budgets [5]. Board meetings are normally loaded with all manner of school-based issues to be deliberated in the most effective manner within a spelt out time frame. Therefore BOM sitting venues and welfare factors should be of utmost significance during deliberations [17].

## 2. Statement of the Problem

The visible curriculum accountability aspects of the BOM members are significant in determining the quality of their meetings. This would determine by extension the effectiveness of the members in curriculum accountability in their respective schools. BOM meetings are expected to display team work spirit in the manner in which members deliberate on the tabled agenda items. Internal curriculum accountability should be visible amongst the members present in the meeting. This means that members must be actively involved in the BOM deliberations. However, there is no evidence of concrete BOM policy to guide on internal proceedings of meetings. Such a prerogative rests with the office of the school Principal and perhaps, the BOM chairperson.

Given its wide curriculum accountability, this endeavor should not be a one-person show but a concerted effort by all the members present. Principals in public secondary schools in Kenya experience a myriad of curriculum accountability challenges [8]. There should be systematic consultations and coordination amongst the instructional stakeholders within the school system [16]. But little was known about the school-based meeting venues for the BOMs as the members executed their constitutional management mandate in schools on behalf of the Ministry of Education [10].

The issues of accountability in curriculum evaluation are real and the benefits of the curricula in use are expected to be vividly tangible among school stakeholders during BOM proceedings [12]. The meeting venues, starting time, scheduled duration, the sitting lay outs and the visible body language are hardly known to the curriculum enthusiasts. This knowledge would determine the level of participation by the members during BOM proceedings. The success of curriculum development process depend on the findings from the situational analysis of the context in which the process takes place [14]. This involves the collection of the basic information about the education system, specific management styles and the learning outcomes.

School Boards of Management are an important element for effective curriculum accountability in a school situation. Both the teachers and learners are accountable to these boards in terms of performance and disciplinary issues in the school [4]. These Boards have been procedurally established for public secondary schools in Kenya to guide on internal school policies on curriculum and management ([2]. In some cases school boards can be radically powerful and can bring about drastic curriculum changes in a school situation [6]. Studies conducted by [13] revealed that 'school boards have become effective and efficient organizations and principals have appreciated the collaborative form of governance adopted in terms of school board systems'. However, how to increase or improve the effectiveness of school boards in their accountability is an unstudied problem. The statement of the problem is therefore *an observational inquiry of the sitting lay out attributes of the BOM members for effective curriculum accountability in the public secondary schools in Kenya with special reference to Njoro Sub-County.*

### 3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to observe the sitting lay out attributes of the BOM for effective curriculum accountability in the public secondary schools in Njoro Sub-County. The study elicited recommendations and interventions that could enhance effectiveness of the boards in curriculum accountability in the schools. The study could be replicated in similar systems of education regionally or globally for the purpose of the furtherance of knowledge.

Huge amounts of public resources are expended during curriculum planning, development and implementation in these schools. Due diligence and prudence should therefore be exercised while deliberating on curriculum issues in schools. The study elicited novel curriculum insights for the perpetuation of both knowledge and research in the field of curriculum studies. Finally the study provided a framework for enhancing curriculum leadership reforms in Kenya.

### 4. Significance of the Study

This study elicited significant contributions to various curriculum sectors and stakeholders in Kenya. Adoption of the recommendations would ensure accountable and transparent deliberations by the BOM members in the schools. The BOM meeting venues and sitting plans would also be improved to render them more appropriate and enabling for meetings. The study offers a contemporary framework for the empowerment of the Boards of Management for effective accountability in curriculum implementation. Embracing the inherent policy recommendations could lead to re-focused BOM that would deliberate issues professionally devoid of internal wrangles and conflicts. The study offers an empirical justification for integration of novel curriculum accountability insights in the field of curriculum studies. Finally, the research could be replicated in other related educational bodies with a view to improving the effectiveness of their service delivery programmes.

### 5. Objective of the Study

The specific *objective of the study* was; *'To observe the sitting lay out attributes of the BOM for effective curriculum accountability in the public secondary schools in Njoro Sub-County'*. The *research question of the study* was drawn from the preceding research objective thus; *'What sitting lay out attributes of the BOM can be observed for effective curriculum accountability in the public secondary schools in Njoro Sub-county'*. Since the objective of the study lean towards an observational inquiry, a structured observational schedule was constructed for this purpose.

### 6. Research Design

An observational research study involves structured observation of phenomena or processes as they occur in real-time set up where the researcher is a participant observer [9].

In this case the present researcher carried out the pertinent observations in his educational jurisdiction as an Ex-Officio member of the BOM while representing the Ministry of Education. A common observation schedule had been constructed to serve as an observation checklist for the 20, out of 45, randomly sampled public secondary schools in Njoro Sub-County. Each of the school had been assigned a number ranging from digit 1 to digit 45. The numbers were written in homogeneous pieces of papers with a view to avoid selection bias. After a about a 30-seconds thorough shuffling of the papers on an office table, the present researcher picked 20 of them randomly. Upon unfolding them, the 20 schools written in the papers were confirmed and recorded. The schools then served as the confirmed samples for the observational study during BOM meetings. Subsequently, the researcher procedurally attended the BOM meetings both as an official as well as an observational researcher during the study duration.

From the preceding paragraph, it is imperative to underscore that the area of study doubled up as the researcher's work station. Consequently, no suspicion of obtrusion emerged from the observed BOM members since there was an occupational legitimacy conferred to the researcher by work status. Ethical issues involved in observing people without their knowledge or consent were therefore of little consideration. The specific data recording were carried out in the observation schedule immediately after the BOM meetings.

#### 6.1. Observation Check List

An observation check-list of the items and the behavior of the participants to be observed during BOMA meetings had been prepared (see Table 1). The venues of the meeting, the starting time and meeting duration, the visible body language, the dressing codes and the welfare aspects in the meetings were observed and recorded in the check list. Similarly, the prevailing environment of the meeting and the participants' overt behavior were observed. The participants' sitting arrangements and positions were also considered. This was vital in determining the attention, purpose and spirit of the meetings as displayed by the BOM members [9].

These observations were recorded and analyzed for presentation in respect to the research objectives under consideration. Observations were simultaneously conducted with the data collection using the other instruments. The researcher had the benefit of synchronizing the observations and attendance to the 20 BOM meetings within his work station where he acted as an observer participant. It was not permissible to attend BOM meetings outside the researcher's station. The observed behavior of BOM members during meetings was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively from the observation check list.

#### 6.2. Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The observational checklist also served as the data collection and analysis tool. Both quantitative and qualitative

paradigms were employed to analyze the observed data. There were 20 structured checklists with respective data collected from the 20 public secondary schools. Data analysis was conducted by use of coded observational frequencies ranging from digit 1 to 4, coded tallied frequencies and computed percentages carried out in the scoring grid of the checklist. A 50% score was considered significant in determining the degree of positivity or negativity of the observed attribute. Subsequent interpretations and discussions followed the data analysis and presentation.

## 7. Data Analysis and Presentation

This section deals with data analysis and presentation. Subsequent interpretations follow the findings. Table 1 below was analyzed and employed to present the findings from the study. It was established that majority 55% of the BOM meetings were held in *school boardrooms*. These rooms were ideal for BOM meetings since they were appropriately structured for such meetings. However, a minority 25% of

the BOM meetings were held in *school libraries*. Two minority 10% of the BOM meetings were held in *the principal's office* and *classrooms* respectively. The space of the three latter venues were not appropriately structured for BOM meetings. Using them during school days was a setback to effective curriculum delivery of the day. Learners were denied their legitimate administrative and tuition facilities routinely used on daily basis. Thus independent school boardrooms were most convenient for BOM meetings.

Most 60% of the BOM meetings started at 10:00am and took a 3-hours duration. A minority 20% of the meetings started at 9:00am and took a 2-hours duration. A minority of 10% of the meetings started at 8:00am and 11:00am, respectively. However, no meeting took a duration of 1 hour. Inadvertently, the few meetings that started at 11:00 am also took more than a 3-hours duration. This is a manifestation of poorly planned meeting; starting late and ending late. These would be unpopular meetings with the members due to lateness in starting and ending time. Such meetings would be ineffective in ensuring curriculum accountability.

**Table 1. OBSERVABLE SITING LAY OUT ATTRIBUTES OF BOM DURING PROCEEDINGS/DELIBERATIONS.**

S/ N	Observed Activity	Coded Observation Frequency				Scoring grid out of 20 BOMA Meetings			
		1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
1.	Meeting venue	Board Room	Principal's office	School Library	Classroom	1111111111 11 55%	11 2 10%	11111 5 25%	11 2 10%
2	Starting time	8:00am	9:00am	10:00am	11:00am	11 2 10%	111111 4 20%	111111111111 12 60%	11 2 10%
3	Meeting Duration	About 1 hr.	About 2hrs	About 3 hrs.	More than 3 hrs.	0 0 0%	111111 6 30%	111111111111 12 60%	11 2 10%
4	Sitting layout	Hollow square	Boardroom (long rectangular table)	U-shaped (Horse shoe)	Class-room like	1111 4 20%	111111111111 11 55%	111 3 15%	11 2 10%
5	Commonly tabled Agenda Items	School Budget & Finances	Physical Facilities Development	Curriculum & Instruction	Disciplinary Cases	111 2 10%	111111111111 12 60%	111111 6 30%	1 0 0%
6	Dressing Code	Officially Dressed	Decently Dressed	Casually Dressed	Below Dressing Decorum	1111 4 20%	111111111111 12 60%	111 3 15%	1 1 5%
7	Body Language	Naturalness	At-ease	Tensed	Reserved	111111111111 11 55%	1111111 7 35%	1 1 5%	1 1 5%
8	Intervening Factors	On-going Building Projects	Games and Sporting Activities	Heavy Down pour	Noise from Learners	111111111111 10 50%	11111 5 25%	111 3 15%	111 2 10%
9	Use of ICT Devices	Projected in Slides	Presented Hard Copies	Presented By whatsapp	Presented Orally	11 2 10%	1111111111111111 16 80%	11 2 10%	0 0 0%
10	BOM Members' welfare	Ten O'clock Tea	Lunch Was offered	Return Fare offered	Nothing was offered	1111 4 20%	11111111111111111111 20 100%	11111111111111111111 16 80%	11 2 10%

Majority 55% of the BOMA Meetings embraced a *Board room sitting layout* where members sat in a long rectangular table all focused to the chairperson who sat at the head of the table. This is ideal layout since it facilitated deliberations with a direct focus to the chair and the secretary. However, a minority 20% and 15% respectively embraced the *Hollow-square* and *U-shape* (horse-shoe) sitting lay out. Face-to-face

contact by members was evident in the Hollow-square and U-shape sitting layout since the chair maintained direct eye contact with the members. However, these layouts were rarely embraced as seen in the table.

It was evident that school's *physical facilities development* was the most commonly deliberated agenda, taking 60% of the meeting time. This was followed by school's *curriculum*

and Instruction agenda taking a minority 30% of the meeting time. The school's *Budgetary and Finances* agenda took a minority 10% of the BOM meeting time. No *any disciplinary case* was observed in the sampled schools. It was evident that most BOM meetings prioritized on *school's physical facilities development* agenda items compared with the curriculum and instruction items.

It was also evident that most 60% BOM members were *decently dressed* for the meeting. A minority 20% were *officially dressed*. Coincidentally, the latter were mostly the Executive Members of the BOMs. While another minority 15% was *casually dressed* still a smaller 5% minority was *below the dressing decorum*.

In terms of observable body language, a majority 55% of the members exuded *naturalness* during the meetings. These members were evidently naturally receptive to the meetings' proceedings. Another minority 35% was *At-ease* during deliberations. They were enthusiastic to the proceedings. Another smaller minority 5% of the members appeared *tensed*; displaying low participatory spirit. Still, another smaller minority 5% of the members appeared *reserved* from the BOM proceedings. These latter two smaller minorities had minimum input during the proceedings.

Half or 50% of the BOM Meetings' proceedings were interfered by the *on-going building projects* in the school. A minority 25% were interfered by *on-going games* and sporting activities while smaller minorities of 15% and 5% of the meetings were interfered by *heavy down pour* and *noise from learners*, respectively. It was established that some Executive Boards purposed to hold their meetings concurrently with the on-going building projects to enable members assess the achieved progress by visiting the site. However, this did not only interfere with the meetings' proceedings but also with the teaching-learning process. *This was a significant observation of the passion with which BOM members prioritized building construction issues over curriculum and instruction issues.*

Most 80% of the BOM meetings were presented using *minutes in hard copies*. A minority 10% of them were presented using *projected computer slides*. The latter were building constructions whose chronological progress had been captured using the *computer slides*. Another 10% minority of the minutes had been circulated using the '*WhatsApp*' social media. However, not all BOM members were in possession of smart phones for effective follow up of the proceedings. *This notwithstanding, these two latter cases were progressive and adaptive to the use of ICT devices during BOM meetings.*

Finally, observations were made on the BOM members welfare aspects. There was *lunch provision* in 100% or in all the BOM meetings under observation. Most 80% of the BOM members' *return fare* was reimbursed. A minority 20% had been served with the 10:00 o'clock tea. However a minority 10% of the BOM meetings lacked any welfare provision. Though participation of members should be voluntary, their welfare aspects should nonetheless be considered.

## 8. Conclusions and Recommendations

This section deals with the conclusions and recommendations from the foregoing data analysis and presentations. Majority of BOM meetings were held in *school boardrooms*. These were *ideal venues for such meetings*. However, minority of the meetings were also held in *the classrooms, school library* and in *the principal's offices*. These latter three venues were not appropriately designed for such meetings. Using them during teaching-learning sessions was a setback to effective curriculum delivery on the day BOM meeting was in progress. Learners could be denied vital facilities for their instructions.

Most BOM meetings started at 10:00am with a *3-hours* duration. A minority of them started at 9:00am with a *2-hours* duration. Very few meetings started at 8:00am and 11:00am. However, no meeting took a 1-hour duration. The few meetings that started at 11:00am took more than a 3-hours duration. These would be unpopular meetings with the members unless they had been notified of the sitting time earlier. Inadvertently, they depicted inherent meeting challenges. Such meetings would also be ineffective in ensuring curriculum accountability in schools due to time constraints.

*Conclusively, most BOM meetings started at 10:00am and took a 3-hours deliberation duration.*

The *classroom layout* was the *commonest sitting lay-out* during BOM Meetings. However, a few meetings embraced the *horse-shoe, square-table* and *round-table* sitting layouts. The *Round-Table* sitting layout is the conventionally acceptable layout since it enhances equity and overt participation by members. Face-to-face contact by members would be possible with the session chair maintaining eye contact with each member. *Use of lap-tops and content projection devices would be quite convenient in this type of sitting lay out.* However, this was rarely embraced as was observed in the table.

The next level of observation was on the members *dressing code, body language, the intervening events, use of ICT devices and the members' welfare*. These were categorical variables that determined the effectiveness of the BOM members in curriculum accountability. It was evident that most BOMA members were *decently dressed* for the meeting. A minority of them were *officially dressed*. Coincidentally, the latter were mostly the Executive Members of the boards. While another minority was *casually dressed* still a smaller minority was *below the dressing decorum*. In terms of observable body language, a minority of the members exuded *naturalness* during the meetings. These members were observed to be naturally receptive to the meetings' proceedings. Another minority of the members were *at-ease* during deliberations. These members appeared enthusiastic to the proceedings. Another minority appeared *tensed*; displaying low participatory spirit as meetings progressed. Finally, another smaller minority appeared *reserved* from the meeting's proceedings. This minority displayed minimum input in the proceedings.

*Conclusively, only those members whose body language exuded naturalness and were also at-ease appeared accountable to the BOM proceedings and the pertinent agenda items.*

A minority of the BOM Meetings' proceedings were interfered by the *on-going building construction* in the schools. It had been established that some Executive Board members purposed to hold meetings concurrently with the on-going building constructions to enable members assess the achieved progress in the construction sites. However, this did not only interfere with the meetings' proceedings but also with the teaching-learning process. *This is a critical observation of the passion with which BOM prioritized school building constructions compared with curriculum and instruction issues.*

Most BOM meetings were presented using hard copy minutes. A minority were presented using computer projectors. These were building constructions whose chronological progress had been captured using *computer slides*. Another smaller minority of the meetings' agenda had been circulated to members using WhatsApp *social media* devices. But, not all members were in possession of smart phones for effective follow up of the proceedings. *However, these two latter cases were progressive and adaptive to the use of ICT during BOM meetings.*

Finally, observations were made on the BOM members welfare aspects. There was lunch provision in all BOM meetings under observation. Most BOM members' return fare was reimbursed while a minority 20% of them were served with the 10:00 o'clock tea. However 10% of the meetings lacked any welfare provision. Though attendance and participation of the members in the BOM meetings should be voluntary, their welfare aspects should nonetheless be considered.

## 9. Recommendations/Guidelines on Convening BOM Meetings

The BOM meetings should be conveniently held in school boardrooms where there would be no interference with the teaching-learning processes in the school. Most ideal BOM meeting should commence at 10:00am and end at 1:00pm taking a maximum of 3-hours duration. BOM meetings should prioritize *curriculum and instruction* agenda items in their deliberations to ensure *effective curriculum accountability in the public secondary schools*.

BOM members should attend meetings being decently dressed so as to maintain the professional decorum bestowed to their management mandate. The BOM members' body language should be as natural as possible during BOM meetings to ensure maximum participation by all members present. The convening of the BOM meetings in the school should not necessarily interfere with the teaching-learning process in the school. These meetings should progressively embrace use of ICT devices to ensure effective and efficient deliberation of the tabled agenda items. BOMs and school administration should endeavor to modestly meet the basic welfare requirements of the board members present.

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