Education board participation in teacher performance review and secondary school outcomes in Zambia's Copperbelt Province

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ABSTRACT

Education boards in Zambia are legally mandated to oversee teacher performance and contribute to school improvement. However, empirical evidence on how they perform this role and whether their involvement is associated with school outcomes remains limited. This study examined the relationship between education board involvement in teacher performance review and secondary school performance in Zambia's Copperbelt Province. The study was guided by two complementary theoretical frameworks: Carver's policy governance model, which distinguishes between governance and management roles, and Epstein's school-family-community partnership model, which emphasises the conditions under which stakeholder involvement contributes to educational improvement. The study employed a concurrent embedded mixed-methods design within a pragmatic worldview. The target population comprised 700 respondents, including teachers, department heads, deputy head teachers, accounts assistants, head teachers, Parent-Teacher Committee (PTC) chairpersons, and learner representatives from ten secondary schools across five districts of Zambia's Copperbelt Province. The quantitative sample comprised 187 respondents selected through stratified and simple random sampling. The qualitative sample comprised 14 participants (head teachers, PTC chairpersons, and learner representatives) selected through expert and homogeneous purposive sampling. Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire that measured board participation in teacher performance reviews (8 items; $\alpha = 0.792$) and in school performance (8 items; $\alpha = 0.815$). Qualitative data were collected using a semi-structured interview guide, with interviews lasting 45 to 75 minutes. Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS Version 26, employing descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations), Pearson correlation, and multiple regression. Qualitative data were analysed using deductive thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework, with assistance from NVivo 12 software. Descriptive results indicated weak Board participation in teacher performance reviews (grand mean = 2.60 on a 5-point scale). Pearson correlation revealed a modest positive relationship with school performance ($r = 0.231$, $p = 0.001$). However, multiple regression analysis demonstrated that teacher performance review did not independently predict school performance after accounting for other governance functions ($\beta = -0.102$, $p = 0.392$). Qualitative insights explained these patterns through three mechanisms: role ambiguity regarding the board's responsibilities for teacher oversight, limited technical capacity to interpret performance data effectively, and professional tension stemming from poorly executed involvement. The study concludes that mandating board participation alone is inadequate; effective involvement requires clear role definition, structured governance practices, and targeted capacity-building efforts that clearly differentiate governance oversight from instructional management.

Keywords: Copperbelt Province, Education Boards, School Governance, Secondary Schools, Teacher Performance Review, Zambia

I. INTRODUCTION

Global education governance reforms have increasingly focused on stakeholder participation and decentralisation as strategies to improve school performance, accountability, and instructional quality (Sayed, 2010). These reforms have broadened the role of school-level governance structures, such as school boards, to include oversight functions that extend beyond infrastructure and finance to encompass instructional quality and teacher performance (Leithwood & Menzies, 1998; Pont et al., 2008). In Zambia, Education Boards were established in 1995 as part of the national decentralisation policy articulated in *Educating Our Future* (Ministry of Education [MOE], 1996). This policy explicitly states that parents bear primary responsibility for their children's education, followed by the wider community, thereby legitimising community involvement in school governance (MOE, 1996). Education Boards were created as formal structures enabling communities to participate in decision-making, accountability, and school oversight. The Education Act No. 23 of 2011 further consolidated the functions of Education Boards by assigning them multiple governance responsibilities that directly impact instructional quality. These include interpreting and implementing

national education policies, monitoring the effectiveness of school management, and ensuring compliance with established standards (Government of the Republic of Zambia [GRZ], 2011). Of relevance to this study is the Quality and Standards Subcommittee's mandate to review teacher performance, monitor teaching and learning, and support the achievement of school objectives (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2005). Given the robust evidence that teacher quality is one of the strongest school-based determinants of learner achievement, this statutory mandate positions Education Boards as potentially influential actors in promoting teacher effectiveness and improving school performance (Darling-Hammond, 2013).

However, evidence from both international and domestic contexts shows that the effectiveness of school governing bodies in assessing teacher performance hinges on role clarity, professional legitimacy, and institutional capacity (Nkundabanyanga et al., 2015). Teacher performance review is a professionally sensitive and technically complex process requiring pedagogical knowledge, clear evaluation criteria, and trust between evaluators and teachers (Danielson, 2007; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2013). When governance actors lack this expertise or when the boundaries between governance and management are poorly defined, Board involvement can undermine instructional quality rather than improve it by causing role conflict, professional friction, and resistance from teachers. In Zambia, concerns have been raised about the capacity of Education Boards to effectively carry out technically demanding functions, such as teacher performance reviews. National reports and governance evaluations highlight ongoing challenges, including inadequate training for Board members, limited institutional autonomy, overlapping governance responsibilities, and weak accountability mechanisms (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 2016). These issues raise questions about whether Education Boards can fulfil their statutory duties in ways that genuinely support teaching and learning.

While existing Zambian studies have examined Education Boards in community schools and the impact of decentralisation policy on the performance of colleges of education (Yumba, 2021; Kambilombilo & Banda, 2015), secondary schools, particularly from Copperbelt Province, Zambia which have more complex organisational structures and instructional demands, have received comparatively less empirical attention. Evidence from other Sub-Saharan African contexts is mixed. Some studies report positive associations between school board involvement and teacher performance, while others identify governance-management conflicts related to government policy and capacity gaps that constrain effectiveness (Wandera et al., 2024; Sibajene et al., 2023). Consequently, empirical clarity is lacking regarding the nature and extent of the Education Board's involvement in teacher performance reviews in Zambian secondary schools, and whether this involvement is associated with measurable school performance. The Copperbelt Province provides an ideal environment for exploring these issues. As the province where Education Boards were first introduced, it has the longest history of Board operation, a high concentration of secondary schools, and persistent concerns about school performance. This historical background allows for assessing the real-world effectiveness of decentralised governance innovations over time. Therefore, this study examined the influence of Education Board participation in teacher performance review on school performance in secondary schools in Zambia's Copperbelt Province and explored the factors shaping this governance role.

In this study, 'teacher performance review' consistently refers to the formal and informal methods used by Education Boards to assess teacher effectiveness. This includes analysing overall performance data, reviewing evaluation summaries, and ensuring that teacher practices align with school goals. This terminology is favoured over alternatives such as 'teacher evaluation' or 'teacher performance oversight' because it encompasses both monitoring and developmental aspects of Board involvement, while clearly differentiating governance-level review from individual management-level appraisals.

1.1 Research Questions

i. To what extent does the Education Board participate in teacher performance review in secondary schools?
ii. What is the association between Education Board participation in teacher performance review and school performance?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study is grounded in two complementary theoretical perspectives that together provide a framework for understanding the conditions under which Board participation in teacher performance review may be effective or counterproductive.

2.1.1 Carver's Policy Governance Model

Carver's Policy Governance Model offers a foundational framework for distinguishing between governance and management roles (Carver, 2006). According to Carver, governing boards should focus on defining organisational ends

(goals, values, and intended outcomes) while delegating the means (professional practices and operational decisions) to capable managers. This distinction suggests that school boards should develop policy frameworks for educational quality and monitor aggregate performance indicators rather than engage in direct individual teacher evaluations. Empirical research supports this view, showing that failing to maintain this distinction often causes role confusion, micromanagement, and conflicts between boards and professional staff (Bush & Glover, 2014). In this study's context, Carver's model indicates that effective Board participation in teacher performance reviews should centre on system-level oversight, analysing aggregated performance data, ensuring alignment with school goals, and overseeing the effectiveness of school-level evaluation systems, rather than directly involving themselves in individual teacher appraisals.

2.1.2 Epstein's School-Family-Community Partnership Model

Epstein's School-Family-Community Partnership Model (Epstein, 1995) complements Carver's governance perspective by emphasising the conditions under which stakeholder involvement contributes to educational improvement. Epstein identifies six types of involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. The dimensions of decision-making and communicating are particularly relevant to this study, as they highlight that stakeholder participation is not inherently beneficial; rather, it produces positive outcomes only when participants possess adequate capacity, roles are clearly defined, and communication is systematic. Epstein's framework suggests that for Board participation in teacher performance review to be constructive, it must be properly structured, grounded in evidence, and aligned with professional standards. When these conditions are absent, participation may become superficial or even detrimental.

2.2 Empirical Review

This section reviews empirical evidence organised according to the two research questions: (1) the extent of Board participation in teacher performance review, and (2) the association between Board participation and school performance.

2.2.1 Extent of Board Participation in Teacher Performance Review

Research consistently indicates that the extent of Board participation in teacher performance review is often limited across various contexts. In Kenya, Msemo and Kitula (2024) found that School Boards influenced school effectiveness through support and monitoring functions, but their impact was constrained by inadequate professional expertise and training. Critically, when Boards attempted to engage directly in teacher evaluation without appropriate expertise, they created confusion and resistance among teachers. Wandera et al (2024) study in Uganda similarly found that capacity limitations and ambiguous role boundaries frequently constrained the Board's effectiveness in teacher oversight.

In Tanzania, Maeda (2021) found that school boards contributed to school planning and supported teaching and learning when they had adequate training and clear role definitions. However, their effectiveness was compromised when training was inadequate or when roles were ambiguous. Tabu and Lekule (2022) documented that boards in Mbeya District were more effective when they had structured communication channels with school management and when board members understood their roles. In South Africa, Malatji et al. (2023) found that school governing bodies struggled with role clarity and capacity, particularly in complex areas such as performance management and discipline, with governing body members often not understanding the limits of their authority. In Zambia, Mwelwa and Phiri (2025) evaluation of corporate governance practices on resource management among public secondary schools found that while schools demonstrated strong accountability in reporting academic performance, they struggled with financial oversight, transparency issues and resource management. Yumba's (2021) doctoral study revealed that, despite formal governing frameworks, community schools faced significant challenges with infrastructure, funding, and teacher shortages, indicating that the existence of governance structures did not automatically lead to effective governance.

2.2.2 Association between Board Participation and School Performance

A consistent finding across various contexts is that active board involvement in school governance positively influences school outcomes, though the strength of this association varies. In Uganda, Nkundabanyanga et al. (2015) found that board role performance and finance committee effectiveness were significant predictors of perceived school performance. Their regression analysis showed that active engagement, such as financial expertise and committee diligence, had a greater impact than structural factors, including board size and meeting frequency. In Kenya, Musungu et al. (2023) established a strong link between school budget development processes and financial accountability, demonstrating that inclusive budget preparation significantly improved resource management. Mogere and Momanyi (2024) examined the influence of board practices on teacher performance, finding that unclear authority and lack of expertise undermined teacher trust in governing bodies. Their research revealed that teachers viewed board involvement

in performance matters as legitimate only when boards operated within clearly defined boundaries and demonstrated appropriate expertise.

In South Africa, Mestry and Khumalo (2012) documented that governing bodies in rural schools frequently overstepped their boundaries in disciplinary matters, creating tension and undermining school management. Malatji et al. (2023) found that school governing bodies struggled with role clarity and capacity, leading to conflicts with school management and teachers. In Zambia, the relationship between Board involvement and school performance remains underexplored, with existing studies having described board activities rather than empirically examining the governance-performance relationship.

2.3 Summary of Literature Review

The literature review has established that Carver's Policy Governance Model and Epstein's School-Family-Community Partnership Model provide complementary frameworks for understanding Board participation in teacher performance review. Empirical evidence from global, African, and Zambian contexts indicates that Board participation in teacher performance reviews is often limited, and the association between such participation and school performance is inconsistent, depending on enabling conditions such as role clarity, technical capacity, and professional legitimacy. A significant research gap exists in Zambia regarding the empirical examination of Board involvement in teacher performance review and its relationship with school performance in secondary schools.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

Guided by a pragmatic worldview, this study employed a concurrent embedded mixed-methods design. This approach prioritised quantitative data collection, supplemented and contextualised by qualitative data, enabling a comprehensive analysis of Board participation in teacher performance review. The quantitative strand provided statistical evidence on the extent and effect of Board involvement, while the qualitative strand offered explanatory depth by capturing stakeholder experiences and perspectives. Data collection was cross-sectional, with all data gathered within a single academic term to maintain temporal consistency.

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in ten secondary schools across five districts of Zambia's Copperbelt Province: Chingola, Kitwe, Luanshya, Mufulira, and Ndola. The specific schools were Butondo, Kantanshi, Chifubu, Mukuba, Mindolo, Luanshya Girls, Luanshya Boys, Chingola, Chikola, and Kansenshi Secondary Schools. These schools were purposefully selected because they participated in the initial pilot programme for Education Boards in 1995, providing the longest operational experience with Board governance in Zambia. The selection also ensured diversity in school type (co-educational and single-sex institutions) and performance levels.

3.3 Target Population

The target population for this study comprised 700 respondents from the ten secondary schools, including teachers, department heads, deputy head teachers, accounts assistants, head teachers, Parent-Teacher Committee (PTC) chairpersons, and learner representatives serving on Education Boards.

3.4 Sampling and Sample Size

3.4.1 Quantitative Sample.

The quantitative sample size was determined using Yamane's formula ($n = N/(1+N(e)^2)$) with a 5 per cent precision level and 95 per cent confidence interval, yielding a target sample of 255 respondents (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Divakar, 2021). Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure proportional representation across respondent categories. Within each stratum, defined by school and role, simple random sampling was used to select participants. A total of 187 valid responses were received, representing a response rate of 73.3 per cent. The final quantitative sample comprised 134 teachers, 38 department heads, 8 accounts assistants, and 7 deputy head teachers.

3.4.2 Qualitative Sample

The qualitative sample was determined using data saturation principles, resulting in 14 participants. Six head teachers were selected using expert purposive sampling, based on criteria including a minimum of 3 years of experience, involvement in at least 2 complete budget cycles, and representation across school types and performance categories. Three PTC Chairpersons were selected using homogenous sampling based on having served at least one full academic year. Five Learner Representatives were selected using homogenous sampling based on current or previous service on Education Boards.

3.5 Data Collection Tools and Procedure

3.5.1 Quantitative Instrument

A structured questionnaire measured Board participation in teacher performance review (eight items) and school performance (eight items) using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Items were adapted from validated instruments used in similar governance studies (Nkundabanyanga et al., 2015; Musungu et al., 2023) and contextualised to the Zambian Education Board structure. Three experts reviewed the instrument to establish content validity.

3.5.2 Qualitative Instrument

A semi-structured interview guide explored participants' experiences of Board involvement in teacher performance review. Open-ended questions covered the nature and extent of Board participation, the perceived effectiveness of Board oversight, the challenges and enablers of Board engagement, and the perceived links between Board involvement and school outcomes. Interview durations ranged from 45 to 75 minutes.

3.5.3 Pilot Testing

A pilot test was conducted in two schools not included in the main study: Ndeke Secondary School in Kitwe District and Mufulira Secondary School in Mufulira District. The pilot sample comprised 25 quantitative respondents and 4 qualitative participants. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha yielded $\alpha = 0.789$ for the Board participation scale and $\alpha = 0.801$ for the school performance scale. The final main study reliability coefficients were $\alpha = 0.792$ for Board participation and $\alpha = 0.815$ for school performance.

3.5.4 Data Collection Procedure

Questionnaires were distributed during staff meetings to achieve higher response rates. Research assistants were deployed to explain the study's purpose and answer questions. Qualitative interviews were conducted in private settings, audio-recorded with participant consent, and transcribed verbatim.

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS Version 26. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were computed for the Board participation items. Pearson correlation examined the bivariate relationship between teacher performance review and school performance. Multiple regression analysis tested whether teacher performance review predicted school performance after controlling for budget preparation and learner discipline. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

3.6.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data were analysed using a deductive thematic approach following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework: familiarisation with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final analysis. NVivo 12 software was used to manage coding and theme development.

3.7 Ethical Concerns

Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Zambia's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) under reference number HSSREC-2025 AUG:035. Administrative permissions were secured from the Provincial Education Officer for the Copperbelt Province, District Education Board Secretaries for the five districts, and head teachers of the ten participating schools. All participants provided written informed consent after receiving detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights. Participants were assured of confidentiality, with data reported in aggregate and pseudonyms used for all quotations. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Data were stored securely and accessible only to the research team.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Extent of Board Participation in Teacher Performance Review

4.1.1 Quantitative Findings

To answer the first research question, descriptive statistics were computed for the eight items measuring Board participation in teacher performance review. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics on Board Participation in Teacher Performance Review (N = 187)

Item	Statement	M	SD
1	The Education Board finances training programs for the teachers	2.25	1.212
2	The Education Board motivates teachers	2.35	1.288
3	The Education Board provides feedback or recommendations regarding teacher professional development needs	2.61	1.271
4	The Education Board establishes guidelines or criteria for teacher performance reviews	2.64	1.302
5	The Education Board is involved in decisions related to teacher promotions or disciplinary actions	2.64	1.318
6	The Education Board receives and reviews summaries of teacher performance evaluations	2.72	1.239
7	The Education Board monitors teaching and learning to enhance teacher quality and effectiveness	2.79	1.363
8	The Education Board ensures that teacher performance aligns with the school's educational goals	2.83	1.291
Grand Mean		**2.60**	**0.19**

Note. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

Table 1 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for each of the eight items measuring Board participation in teacher performance review. The overall grand mean of 2.60 (SD = 0.19) indicates that respondents generally perceived the Education Board's involvement in teacher performance reviews as weak, falling between "Disagree" (1.81-2.60) and "Neutral" (2.61-3.40) on the 5-point scale. Examining individual items, the lowest-rated activities were financing teacher training programs (Item 1, M = 2.25, SD = 1.212) and motivating teachers (Item 2, M = 2.35, SD = 1.288). Both items fell within the "Disagree" range, indicating that Boards are perceived as not actively engaged in these supportive functions. The highest-rated items were ensuring that teacher performance aligns with the school's educational goals (Item 8, M = 2.83, SD = 1.291) and monitoring teaching and learning to enhance teacher quality (Item 7, M = 2.79, SD = 1.363). These items fell within the lower end of the "Neutral" range, suggesting that Boards are slightly more visible in oversight and alignment functions than in direct support functions. The standard deviations across all items ranged from 1.212 to 1.363, indicating considerable variability in respondents' perceptions, which may reflect differences in Board practices across schools. Overall, the results suggest that Board participation in teacher performance review is predominantly passive, with Boards more likely to receive information than to take proactive, supportive actions.

4.1.2 Pearson Correlation of Teacher Performance Review

Table 2 shows a Pearson Correlation Matrix for eight items assessing Education Board participation in teacher performance reviews (N = 187).

Table 2

Pearson Product–Moment Correlation Matrix for Items Measuring Education Board Participation in Teacher Performance Review (N = 187)

Item	Indicator	M	SD	Correlation Matrix							
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	The board finances teacher training programmes	2.25	1.21	—							
2	The board motivates teachers	2.35	1.29	.48**	—						
3	The board provides feedback on teacher professional development needs	2.61	1.27	.42**	.51**	—					
4	The board establishes guidelines for teacher performance reviews	2.64	1.30	.39**	.44**	.58**	—				
5	Board participates in teacher promotions / disciplinary decisions	2.64	1.32	.36**	.41**	.49**	.61**	—			
6	Board reviews summaries of teacher performance evaluations	2.72	1.24	.34**	.38**	.46**	.57**	.63**	—		
7	The board monitors teaching and learning processes	2.79	1.36	.31**	.35**	.43**	.54**	.58**	.66**	—	
8	The board ensures alignment between teacher performance and school goals	2.83	1.29	.29**	.33**	.40**	.49**	.54**	.61**	.69**	—

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation. **p < .01 (2-tailed).

The findings in Table 2 reveal positive, statistically significant correlations between the items, all at the 0.01 level ($p < .01$). This suggests that the items are interconnected and together measure a consistent construct.

The correlations range from weak to strong positive relationships. The weakest association is between Board financing of teacher training programmes and the alignment of teacher performance with school goals ($r = .29$, $p < .01$), although it remains statistically significant. Moderate correlations are observed across several governance and support functions, including financing training and motivating teachers ($r = .48$, $p < .01$), and motivating teachers and providing feedback on professional development needs ($r = .51$, $p < .01$). Stronger relationships are evident among performance management functions, such as participation in promotions and reviewing performance summaries ($r = .63$, $p < .01$), reviewing performance summaries and monitoring teaching and learning ($r = .66$, $p < .01$), and monitoring teaching and learning and aligning performance with school goals ($r = .69$, $p < .01$).

4.1.3 Qualitative Findings

Qualitative data analysis generated the theme of **Role Ambiguity**, which helps explain the weak Board engagement reflected in the quantitative results. Participants expressed uncertainty about the proper role of Education Boards in relation to teacher performance.

> *"There is confusion regarding what the Board should do about teacher performance. Although it is not their responsibility, some Board members like to assess teachers directly. Instead of focusing on individual teacher evaluations, they ought to focus on systems and policies. Tension arises when they attempt to become involved in specific cases."* (Participant 3, Head Teacher, 15+ years' experience, 23 October 2025)
>
> *"The issue is that the Education Act says 'review teacher performance' but does not specify what that means in practice. Does that imply watching lessons? Examining the outcomes? Conducting teacher interviews? When it is unclear, everyone has a different interpretation. For fear of going too far, some boards take no action. Some attempt to accomplish too much, creating issues."* (Participant 1, Head Teacher, 11-15 years' experience, 15 October 2025)
>
> *"To be quite honest, I am not exactly sure what needs to be done regarding teacher performance. We, parents, know that instructors should be doing a good job of teaching, but how can we measure that? We are not specialists in schooling. We depend on the head teacher to let us know about any issues."* (Participant 4, PTC Chairperson, 3-5 years' experience, 27 October 2025)

4.2 Association between Board Participation and School Performance

4.2.1 Correlation Analysis

To examine the relationship between Education Board involvement in teacher performance review and school performance, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Pearson Correlation between Teacher Performance Review and School Performance

Variable	1	2
1. Teacher Performance Review	—	
2. School Performance	.231**	—

Note. N = 187. **p < 0.01 (2-tailed).

Table 3 presents the Pearson Correlation Coefficient between Education Board involvement in teacher performance review and school performance. The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.231$) indicates a modest positive relationship between the two variables. This means that as Board involvement in teacher performance reviews increases, school performance tends to increase as well, though the relationship is weak. The p-value ($p = 0.001$) is less than 0.01, indicating that this correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). In practical terms, this suggests that schools where Boards are more actively engaged in teacher performance review tend to demonstrate slightly better overall performance outcomes. However, the modest strength of the correlation ($r = 0.231$) also indicates that Board involvement in teacher performance review explains only a small proportion (approximately 5.3%, as $r^2 = 0.053$) of the variation in school performance, meaning that other factors beyond teacher performance review contribute more substantially to school performance.

4.2.2 Qualitative Findings

Qualitative data analysis yielded the theme of **Limited Technical Capacity**, which helps explain the modest strength of the correlation. Participants indicated that Board members lack the pedagogical expertise needed to evaluate teacher performance meaningfully.

> *"Most Board members are unaware of what constitutes high-quality instruction. They observe test scores and attendance, but they lack knowledge of curriculum delivery, pedagogy, and the intricacies of many*

disciplines. Without this knowledge, how can they meaningfully evaluate teachers' performance?" (Participant 2, Head Teacher, 6-10 years' experience, 16 October 2025)

"Parents on our board include retirees, small business owners, and farmers. Despite their lack of educational experience, they are decent people who are passionate about the school. They are unsure of what to ask when we show them data on student achievement, attendance rates, and class observation scores. They nod and agree." (Participant 6, Head Teacher, 6-10 years' experience, 27 October 2025)

"I believe the Board members want to help, but they do not really understand what happens in classrooms. They talk about teachers, but they have no idea what good instruction looks like. Occasionally, they pay more attention to unimportant things, such as teachers being on time, than to whether students are truly learning." (Learner Representative 12, 28 October 2025)

4.2.3 Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was performed to assess the effect of Education Board involvement in teacher performance reviews on school performance, while controlling for other Board activities (budget preparation and learner discipline). The results are presented in Tables 3, 4, and 5.

Table 4

Model Summary for Regression Predicting School Performance

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	SE of the Estimate
1	0.360	0.129	0.115	0.86285

Note. Predictors: (Constant), Budget Preparation, Teacher Performance Review, Learner Discipline.

Table 4 presents the model summary for the multiple regression analysis. The multiple correlation coefficient (R = 0.360) indicates a modest positive relationship between the set of predictor variables (budget preparation, teacher performance review, and learner discipline) and school performance. The coefficient of determination (R^2 = 0.129) indicates that the three predictor variables together explain 12.9% of the variance in school performance. This means that approximately 87.1% of the variance in school performance is explained by factors not included in this model, such as learners' socioeconomic status, the quality of instructional materials, or school leadership practices. The adjusted R^2 (0.115) is slightly lower than the R^2, accounting for the number of predictors in the model, and suggests that the model would likely generalise reasonably well to other samples from the same population. The standard error of the estimate (0.86285) represents the typical distance between observed school performance scores and those predicted by the model, indicating the precision of the predictions.

Table 5

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Regression Model

Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Regression	20.250	3	6.750	9.066	< .001
Residual	136.244	183	0.745		
Total	156.494	186			

Table 5 presents the analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the regression model. The F-statistic (9.066) tests whether the regression model is significantly better at predicting school performance than using the mean of school performance alone (a model with no predictors). The p-value (< 0.001) is less than 0.05, indicating that the model is statistically significant. This means that the combination of budget preparation, teacher performance review, and learner discipline reliably predicts school performance, and the model fits the data significantly better than a model with no predictors. The regression sum of squares (20.250) represents the variation in school performance explained by the model, while the residual sum of squares (136.244) represents the unexplained variation. The total sum of squares (156.494) is the sum of these two components, representing the total variation in school performance.

Table 6

Regression Coefficients for Predicting School Performance

Predictor	B	SE	B	T	p	95% CI
(Constant)	2.894	0.183	—	15.846	< .001	[2.533, 3.255]
Budget Preparation	0.234	0.076	0.273	3.092	0.002	[0.085, 0.383]
Teacher Performance Review	-0.086	0.100	-0.102	-0.858	0.392	[-0.283, 0.111]
Learner Discipline	0.160	0.089	0.212	1.810	0.072	[-0.015, 0.335]

Table 6 presents the regression coefficients for each predictor variable. The unstandardised coefficient (B) for budget preparation is 0.234, which means that for every one-unit increase in Board involvement in budget preparation (on the 5-point scale), school performance is predicted to increase by 0.234 units, holding teacher performance review and learner discipline constant. The standard error (SE = 0.076) indicates the precision of this estimate. The standardised coefficient (β = 0.273) allows comparison across predictors; it indicates that budget preparation has a modest positive effect on school performance. The t-statistic (3.092) and p-value (0.002) indicate that budget preparation is a statistically significant predictor of school performance at the $p < 0.05$ level. The 95% confidence interval [0.085, 0.383] does not include zero, confirming the statistical significance of this predictor.

In contrast, teacher performance review has an unstandardised coefficient of -0.086, meaning that for every one-unit increase in Board involvement in teacher performance review, school performance is predicted to decrease by 0.086 units. However, this effect is not statistically significant. The standardised coefficient (β = -0.102) indicates a small negative effect. The t-statistic (-0.858) and p-value (0.392) indicate that teacher performance review is not a statistically significant predictor of school performance at the $p < 0.05$ level. The 95% confidence interval [-0.283, 0.111] includes zero, indicating no statistical significance. Learner discipline shows a positive but not statistically significant association with school performance (B = 0.160, β = 0.212, p = 0.072), with a confidence interval [-0.015, 0.335] that includes zero.

Because the p-value for teacher performance review (0.392) is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis that Board involvement in teacher performance review has no significant effect on school performance cannot be rejected. This finding indicates that, when other Board functions (particularly budget preparation) are accounted for, Board involvement in teacher performance review does not independently contribute to explaining school performance.

4.2.4 Qualitative Findings on Regression Results

Qualitative data analysis generated the theme of **Professional Tension and Contestation**, which explains why the regression coefficient is negative (though not significant) while the bivariate correlation is positive.

> *"It frequently feels more like interference than support when the Board tries to comment on teacher performance. Because they do not believe the Board has professional authority to assess teacher performance without well-defined boundaries or capabilities in this field, educators feel defensive. Instead of being cooperative, the connection turns hostile."* (Participant 14, Head Teacher, 15+ years' experience, 28 October 2025)

> *"Last term, a Board member unexpectedly entered a classroom to 'observe' a teacher. The teacher was incensed because she thought it was impolite and unprofessional. I had to act as a mediator and clarify that board members do not have the authority to make individual observations. However, the harm had already been done. The teacher felt spied on."*(Participant 9, Head Teacher, 11-15 years' experience, 21 October 2025)

> *"Teachers hear about Boards going too far. Instead of viewing the Board as 'us,' they begin to perceive it as 'them.' This erodes the collaboration we are attempting to establish. Because they worry that it will be used against them, teachers feel reluctant to ask for help or reveal difficulties."* (Participant 13, PTC Chairperson, 15+ years' experience, 22 October 2025)

4.3 Discussion

The results show that Education Board involvement in teacher performance reviews is weak and inconsistent (grand mean = 2.60). Boards are more visible in monitoring performance and aligning it with school objectives than in encouraging teachers or supporting professional development, suggesting that their involvement is primarily passive rather than substantive. Similar patterns have been documented in African contexts, where governing authorities cannot frequently and meaningfully engage with educational quality (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012; Maeda, 2021; Tabu & Lekule, 2022). Qualitative data indicate that role ambiguity is a major limitation. Board members were unsure of their mandate regarding teacher performance, consistent with Carver's (2006) assertion that blurring the lines between management and governance undermines effective monitoring. Boards' limited participation in professional development, especially in complex secondary school environments, is explained by this ambiguity, which deters them from participating securely in teacher-focused activities.

Participants described Boards as receiving reports without critically engaging with their instructional implications, reflecting what Mansuri and Rao (2013) describe as superficial or "thin" participation. In line with previous studies, Boards appeared more effective in areas such as financial oversight, where expertise is more readily accessible, than in instructional governance, which requires specialised professional knowledge (Nkundabanyanga et al., 2015). The study also found that Board participation in teacher performance reviews is related to school performance, but only weakly (r = 0.231, p = 0.001). This aligns with the literature suggesting that governance involvement influences outcomes only when Boards have the technical capacity to interpret and use performance information effectively (Bush

& Glover, 2014). The qualitative theme of limited technical capacity explains this modest association, as Board members lack the pedagogical expertise needed to meaningfully evaluate teacher performance.

School performance does not appear to be improved by the Board's participation in teacher performance reviews relative to other governance roles ($\beta = -0.102$, $p = 0.392$). According to qualitative research, instructors frequently view board involvement as invasive rather than helpful, which may lead to professional conflict. Studies from Southern and Eastern Africa have shown similar conflicts, in which teachers' trust in governing bodies was weakened by unclear authority and limited knowledge (Malatji et al., 2023; Mogere & Momanyi, 2024). These results cast doubt on the notion that greater stakeholder participation is always advantageous and lend credence to criticisms that participation lacking clarity and ability may be ineffectual or even harmful (Mansuri & Rao, 2013). The results expand on Epstein's School-Family-Community Partnership Model by showing that technical proficiency, legitimacy, and distinct role boundaries are necessary for stakeholder participation in professional domains like teacher performance reviews. In the absence of these requirements, collaboration may compromise rather than improve school performance. Carver's Policy Governance paradigm is also supported by the study, which demonstrates that Boards operate more efficiently when they prioritise system-level accountability over individual professional practices.

Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

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V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This study examined Education Board participation in reviewing teacher performance and its influence on secondary school performance in Zambia's Copperbelt Province. The findings show that, despite a statutory mandate, Board involvement in teacher performance review is generally weak and inconsistently practised (grand mean = 2.60). In most cases, Boards engage passively by receiving information rather than using it strategically to support instructional improvement. The study further concludes that Board participation in teacher performance reviews has a limited relationship with school performance ($r = 0.231$, $p = 0.001$) and does not independently contribute to school performance when other governance functions are taken into account ($\beta = -0.102$, $p = 0.392$). This is largely due to role ambiguity, limited technical capacity, and unclear professional boundaries, which can lead to perceptions of interference and undermine collaboration. More constructive engagement is evident where Boards focus on system-level oversight and aggregate performance trends rather than individual teacher evaluation. Altogether, the study demonstrates that the effectiveness of Education Board involvement depends on role clarity, capacity, and alignment with governance principles, rather than on participation alone.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the Ministry of Education should provide clear policy guidelines defining Board roles in teacher performance reviews, emphasising governance-level oversight, monitoring aggregate performance, and ensuring alignment with school goals, while leaving individual teacher appraisals to head teachers. District authorities should offer induction and ongoing training for Board members on interpreting performance data, distinguishing between governance and management, and maintaining professional boundaries, with workshops on instructional quality indicators that do not evaluate individual teachers. Boards should focus on strategic oversight of overall school performance, supported by regular collaborative meetings with school leadership to review aggregate data and guide school improvement. Further research should examine the effectiveness of different capacity-building models for Board members and explore the relationship between Board financial literacy and school performance using objective performance measures.

Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

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