

# Influence of Monitoring and Evaluation Practices on The Performance of Government Agencies in Implementing Strategic Plans

## Case of Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) in Kenya.

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**Abstract:** Strategic planning is a critical process for organizations to achieve their goals, encompassing environmental, economic, and social performance. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices play a pivotal role in ensuring the successful implementation of strategic plans by providing oversight and feedback. This paper is a study on the impact of M&E practices on the performance of Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) in Kenya in the implementation of Strategic Plans. The paper explores several key factors including monitoring resources, resource persons competency levels, range of skills and stakeholder participation in M&E practices particularly within the public sector. Successful strategy implementation is influenced by factors such as people, systems, and mechanisms for coordination and control. Within the context of the Higher Education Loans Board, there is a need to assess the specific monitoring and evaluation practices implemented and their influence on strategic plan implementation. HELB can identify areas for improvement and align its practices with international best practices. Additionally, exploring gaps or shortcomings in monitoring and evaluation practices at HELB would enable targeted interventions and improvements to enhance strategic plan implementation. The study findings reveal challenges that hinder M&E practices such as inadequate resources, resource persons limitations in the required technical knowledge, competency, skills and the level of involvement for stakeholders to satisfactorily participate in strategic plan implementation and M&E practices. The findings have implications to HELB management, state corporations, researchers, and academicians, as it informs on some very key aspects including understanding the expectations of stakeholders in M&E practice, fostering positive attitude in M&E practices, the required range of skills and competency for M&E practices. Further research is recommended to investigate lack of resource visibility amid sudden budget cuts, lack of supporting environment i.e., absence of a performance culture, negative attitudes, lack of support from top management.

**Keywords:** Strategic Plan Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation practices, Performance of Strategic Plans in Government Agencies.

### 1.1 Introduction

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices play a crucial role in the successful implementation of strategic plans in government agencies. Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) is a state/government agency and a key player in Kenya's higher education students financing in the education sector. In 2014, the Government of Kenya emphasized the importance of strategic management practices in achieving successful change implementation in the country (Gok, 2014). This recognition highlighted the need for government agencies to adopt effective strategic planning processes, including monitoring and evaluation, to enhance their performance and service delivery. Robust strategic management practices were identified as contributing to organizational

effectiveness and the achievement of national development goals.

The Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) has been actively involved in developing and implementing strategic plans since 2009, spanning over a decade in strategy and performance management. These plans have provided HELB with a framework to articulate its vision, mission, and strategic objectives, aligning its activities with national higher education policies and priorities. HELB aimed to enhance student loan accessibility, improve loan recovery mechanisms, and strengthen its institutional capacity to meet the growing demands of Kenya's higher education sector.

However, understanding the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation practices in ensuring the achievement of strategic goals remains a significant area of inquiry. This paper aims to explore influence of monitoring and evaluation practices on the performance of government agencies in implementing strategic plans and the case study is Higher Education Loans Board in Kenya.

## 1.2 Purpose of the Study

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices are widely recognized as valuable tools for strategic learning, providing insights into the achievement of objectives and performance standards (Strydom, 2019). However, there remains a lack of full understanding regarding the role of M&E in strategic management. The disconnection between M&E and strategic decision-making often hinders the usefulness of M&E information (Preskill & Mack, 2017). To address this, integrating M&E into the decision-making process and developing a comprehensive strategy for evaluating organizational effectiveness are proposed as crucial steps.

The successful implementation of strategies is paramount for organizations to achieve their desired outcomes (Okumu's & Roper, 2013). However, strategy implementation is often challenging, with research indicating that less than half of formulated strategies are effectively executed (Hambrick & Canella, 2014). Failure to implement a strategy indicates a failure in the formulation process. Organizational performance is directly linked to strategy execution and the ability to capitalize on business environment opportunities. Thus, successful strategy implementation hinges on the effective execution of a well-crafted strategy.

This paper addresses the research gap in empirical evidence regarding the impact of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices on the implementation of strategic plans in parastatals in Kenya. By focusing on the specific context of the Higher Education Loans Board (HELB), which provides financial assistance to higher education students, valuable insights can be gained into the factors contributing to successful strategic plan implementation in parastatals. The paper also incorporates the application of resource-based view theory, change theory and results theory to deepen the understanding of strategic plan implementation. The findings of this paper will contribute to the knowledge on how M&E practices can enhance the implementation of strategic plans in parastatals, resulting in improved performance, efficient resource utilization, and successful fulfilment of organizational mandates.

Ultimately, this paper aims to provide recommendations and insights that can guide policy and practice for effective strategic plan implementation in parastatals, benefiting not only the Higher Education Loans Board but also other government agencies in Kenya and within similar contexts.

## 1.3 Objectives of the study

Despite government agencies achieving full compliance with the policy to adopt strategic plan process, numerous parastatals in Kenya face challenges in effectively implementing a substantial portion of their strategic plans. Consequently, these organizations experience poor performance, demoralized staff, and the inefficient use of financial resources. The misconception that strategic planning alone is sufficient for strategic management, without adequate emphasis on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices, further exacerbates the problem. For parastatals to thrive in the competitive operating environment, successful implementation of their strategic plans is crucial. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the extent to which M&E practices influence the implementation of strategic plans, with a specific focus on the case study Higher Education Loans Board (HELB).

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To determine the availability of monitoring resources in M&E practices and how this influences the performance of HELB implementation of the strategic plan.
2. To determine the required competence levels for resource persons (staff & stakeholder) in M&E practices and how this influences the performance of HELB implementation of the strategic plan.
3. To determine how stakeholders participation in M&E practice influences the performance of HELB implementation of strategic plan.

## 2.1 Literature Review

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This section presents a comprehensive literature review that focuses on relevant studies related to the M&E practices and the implementation of strategic plans in government agencies by looking at existing literature concerning the interplay between monitoring resources, competency levels, and stakeholder participation in strategic plan implementation. Given the scarcity of research on this topic in Kenya, this study holds significant value in contributing to the existing literature from a Kenyan perspective.

## 2.2 Monitoring and Evaluation Practices in Government Agencies

Several studies have explored monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices in government agencies across different countries. These studies provide insights into the implementation and effectiveness of M&E practices, shedding light on the challenges, best practices, and potential improvements in this field. These studies contribute to the understanding of M&E practices in government agencies by highlighting key factors for successful implementation, challenges encountered, and potential solutions. They provide valuable insights that can inform the improvement of M&E practices in government agencies globally. A study conducted by Smith and Johnson (2020) examined the use of M&E practices in a federal government agency in the United States. The research focused on assessing the integration of M&E into decision-making processes and its impact on program performance. The study identified key success factors, *such as strong leadership support, clear performance indicators, and a culture of learning and adaptation*. In a study by Thompson and Collins (2019), the author explored the implementation of M&E practices in a government agency in Britain. The research aimed to understand the challenges faced by the agency in monitoring and evaluating its programs and policies. The study highlighted the importance of stakeholder engagement, data quality, and *capacity building for effective M&E practices in the British government context*.

A study conducted by Silva and Santos (2018) examined the M&E practices in a government agency in Brazil. The research focused on the utilization of M&E information for decision-making and program improvement. The study emphasized the need for a *results-oriented approach, integration of M&E in strategic planning, and the importance of building M&E capacity* at all levels of the organization. Ogunleye and Ajiboye (2021) conducted a study on M&E practices in a Nigerian government agency. The research aimed to assess the utilization of M&E data for evidence-based decision-making and performance improvement. The study identified challenges related to data quality, *stakeholder engagement, and the need for institutionalizing M&E practices* within the Nigerian government context. In a study by Ngowi et al. (2019), the author examined the implementation of M&E practices in a government agency in Tanzania. The research focused on understanding the challenges faced by the agency in monitoring and evaluating its programs and projects. The study highlighted the importance of building M&E capacity, developing standardized monitoring tools, and promoting a culture of learning and accountability. A study conducted by Muthee and Nyamongo (2020) explored the implementation of M&E practices in a Kenyan government agency. The research aimed to assess the effectiveness of M&E systems and their impact on program performance. *The study identified the need for strengthening M&E capacity, enhancing data quality, and improving the utilization of M&E findings for decision-making in the Kenyan context*.

## 2.3 Implementation of Strategic Plans

The implementation of strategic plans is a crucial factor for organizations to achieve success and maintain competitiveness. Several studies have examined the factors influencing strategic plan implementation in government agencies across different countries. These studies shed light on the challenges and key determinants of successful implementation. In the United States, Yang and Hsieh (2013) conducted a study on the implementation of strategic plans in public organizations. The research emphasized the importance of *effective communication, employee involvement, and leadership support in ensuring successful implementation*. Similarly, Cambridge and MacLellan (2019) explored the challenges faced by healthcare organizations in Canada during strategic plan implementation. The study highlighted *conflicting priorities, limited resources, and resistance to change as barriers to successful implementation*. In Brazil, Frota, Oliveira, and Casagrande (2019) examined the impact of leadership on strategic plan implementation in the automotive industry. The study found that *effective leadership* played a crucial role in aligning the organization's vision, values, and goals with the strategic plan, leading to successful implementation.

Research conducted in European countries such as the United Kingdom and Spain has also contributed to understanding strategic plan implementation in government agencies. Al-Tit (2018) focused on strategic planning implementation in UK hospitals and identified *employee resistance, inadequate resources, and insufficient training and development programs as barriers*. Buil-Carrasco et al. (2020) investigated the implementation of strategic plans in public organizations in Spain, emphasizing factors such as *organization size, decentralization, stakeholder involvement, and top management commitment* as influential in successful implementation. In Africa, Oyewunmi and Abasilim (2019) examined the challenges of implementing strategic plans in Nigerian universities, highlighting *lack of commitment, poor communication, inadequate resources, and poor leadership as obstacles*. Ngowi et al. (2017) conducted a study in Tanzania, *identifying inadequate resources, poor communication, lack of political will, and resistance to change* as challenges in the public sector. In Kenya, Nyakeriga (2018) examined the factors influencing strategic plan implementation in newly established public universities, emphasizing *human resource management practices, organizational culture, leadership, effective communication, and consensus*. Kirui (2017) investigated institutional factors influencing the implementation of strategic goals in former local authorities in Kenya, *identifying organizational culture,*

*structure, leadership, and financial resources* as significant factors.

These studies provide valuable insights into the factors influencing strategic plan implementation in government agencies across different countries. The findings highlight the importance of effective communication, leadership support, employee involvement, adequate resources, stakeholder engagement, and organizational culture in achieving successful implementation. By understanding these factors, government agencies can enhance their strategic plan implementation processes and increase the likelihood of achieving their desired outcomes.

### **3.1 Theoretical Review**

Muchelule (2018) highlights the significance of incorporating theories in research to offer a comprehensive understanding of observed phenomena and to explain and predict behaviors based on empirical evidence. The utilization of theories involves the systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. In this study, the theoretical framework will draw upon three selected theories: the theory of change (ToC), Resource-Based Theory, and the Results theory. These theories have been chosen based on their relevance in elucidating the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable being investigated.

### **3.2 Theory of Change**

The theory of change, developed by Stein and Valters, provides a framework for addressing complex project issues and achieving long-term goals. It emphasizes factors such as data quality, effective project management leadership, and planning. This theory guides the implementation of project activities and outlines necessary changes for success. While valuable, it has limitations in explaining long-term sustainability, hence the study complements it with the Resource-Based View Theory and Results Theory.

### **3.3 Resource-Based View Theory**

The Resource-Based View Theory focuses on identifying the resources and capabilities required for a competitive advantage and long-term success. It highlights the role of internal resources and capabilities in shaping an organization's performance. By leveraging and developing these resources effectively, organizations can improve efficiency, profitability, and financial performance. In this study, the theory guides the analysis of monitoring tools and emphasizes the significance of human resources in improving project performance.

### **3.4 Results Theory**

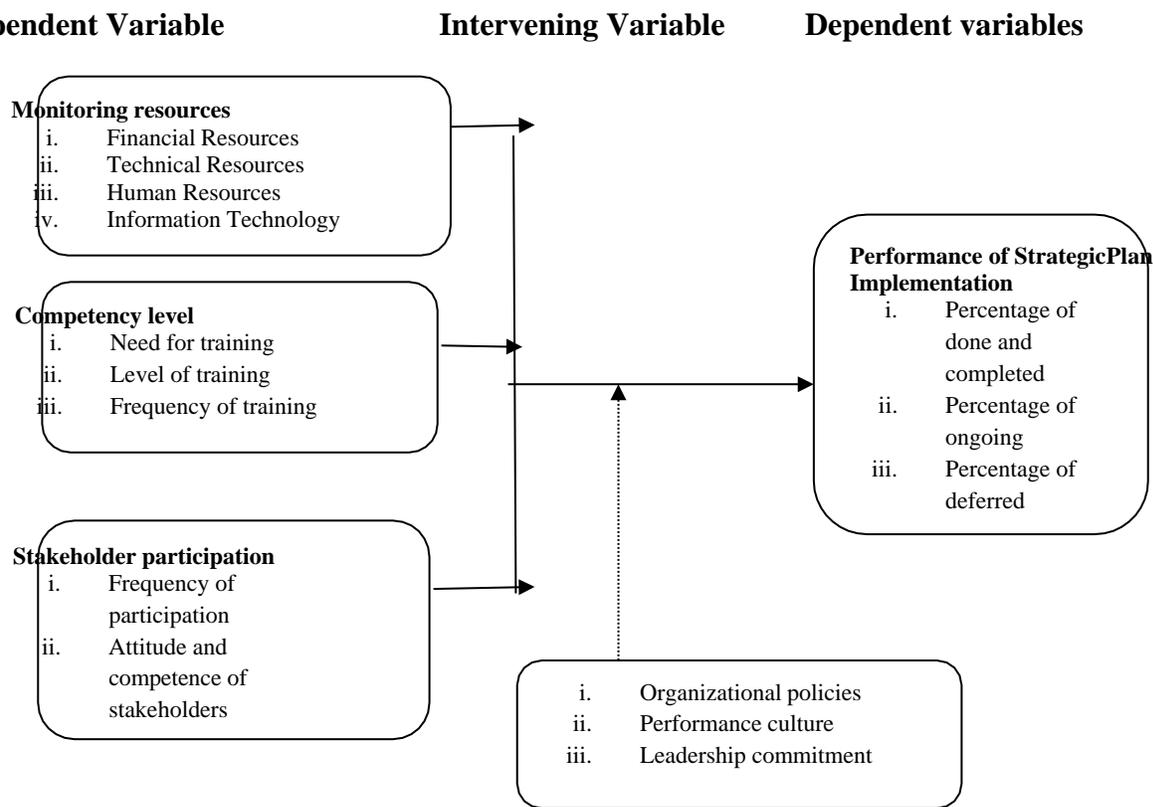
The Results theory emphasizes a results-oriented approach to project management. It encourages project leaders to prioritize the measurement of project outcomes and align project activities accordingly. By focusing on desired outcomes and monitoring progress, organizations can achieve better results. This theory guides HELB in formulating plans and implementing monitoring and evaluation systems to enhance project performance and achieve improved results. Through the Results theory, HELB can develop effective strategies for measuring project outcomes and directing activities towards desired results.

### **3.5 Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of this study outlines the indicators of the independent variables, including stakeholder participation, competency level, and monitoring resources. These variables are examined in relation to the dependent variable of performance in strategic plan implementation. By analysing these relationships, the study aims to provide insights into the influence of monitoring and evaluation practices on the success of HELB's strategic plan implementation efforts.

To elucidate the relationship between the independent variables of monitoring resources, competency levels, and stakeholder participation, and the dependent variable of strategic plan implementation, a conceptual framework is presented.

The variables and their relationship for this study are as shown in the figure 1



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Source: Own conceptualization 2023**

### 3.6 Gaps in the literature

A comprehensive review of the literature pertaining to the interplay between monitoring resources, competency levels, and stakeholder participation in strategic plan implementation. It also incorporates three relevant theories (theory of change, resource-based view theory, and results theory) to align with the research objectives of the study. To establish a clearer understanding of the relationship between the independent variables (monitoring resources, competency levels, and stakeholder participation) and the dependent variable (strategic plan implementation), a conceptual framework is presented as above.

While there is a considerable amount of literature on strategic plan implementation and monitoring and evaluation (M&E), a research gap exists regarding the combined impact of monitoring resources, competency levels, and stakeholder participation on this relationship. Additionally, there is limited understanding of how M&E practices specifically influence strategic plan implementation within government agencies in Kenya. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the influence of monitoring and evaluation practices on strategic plan implementation within the context of the Higher Education Loans Board. It will investigate each factor individually and explore their interconnectedness with the implementation of strategic plans. Given the scarcity of research on this topic in Kenya, this study holds significant value in contributing to the existing literature from a Kenyan perspective.

#### 4.1 Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the detailed procedures employed for data collection, organization, and analysis of the study research.

#### 4.2 Research Design

The research design was carefully planned to present the research findings in a structured manner, ensuring the support of claims regarding the effectiveness of evaluation and monitoring in the successful implementation of strategic plans at the Higher Education Loans Board. By adopting a mixed-methods approach, the researcher was able to comprehensively assess the variables associated with evaluation and monitoring practices, gaining valuable insights into their influence on project success in public sector organizations.

#### 4.3 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

In this study, stratified random sampling was utilized to select participants, categorizing them into two distinct strata: staff and stakeholders. This technique ensured adequate representation from both groups, facilitating a comprehensive examination of the research problem. The sample size was determined using Fisher's formula, considering a desired confidence level and margin of error. For this study, a sample size of 384 participants was required, based on a population size of 920 and a 95% confidence level. Fisher's formula, developed by Fisher in 1935, is commonly employed in research studies to determine an appropriate sample size.

#### 4.4 Sampling Technique

To implement stratified sampling, it is necessary to determine the proportion of the population that belongs to each subgroup. In this case, the population size was 920, and the required sample size was 384. The population was stratified into HELB staff and stakeholders. The proportion of HELB staff in the population was 27.5%, while the proportion of stakeholders was 72.25%. Using these proportions, the researcher calculated the number of participants needed from each stratum as follows:

Number of participants from HELB staff stratum =  $0.275 * 384 = 105.6$  (rounded up to 106)

Number of participants from stakeholder stratum =  $0.7225 * 384 = 278.4$  (rounded down to 278)

#### 4.5 Data Collection Methods

In this study, questionnaires and key informant interviews were utilized as the primary methods for collecting data. Questionnaires were chosen due to their structured format, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness in gathering data from a large number of respondents, specifically targeting the HELB staff. Likert scale questionnaires were employed to measure attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of the participants, combining closed-ended and open-ended questions to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaires underwent a pretest phase to ensure clarity and appropriateness. In addition to questionnaires, key informant interviews were conducted with HELB personnel and stakeholders involved in strategic plan implementation and monitoring and evaluation. Key informant interviews, using a semi-structured interview guide, allowed for in-depth exploration of topics and the collection of qualitative data.

#### 4.6 Data Analysis Techniques

After the fieldwork was completed, the data collected from the questionnaires was entered into SPSS software for analysis. The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS version 24, which offered a systematic approach and comprehensive coverage of common statistical data analysis techniques, making the results easily interpretable. Descriptive statistics, such as frequency, mean, standard deviation, and percentages, were employed and presented in table format.

#### 5.1 Summary of Findings

In this section, the results and findings of the study are presented, beginning with the response rate and indicating the percentage of participants who completed the questionnaires, is reported.

#### 5.2 Response Rate

The response rate for this study was 83.33%. Out of the 384 questionnaires that were issued to HELB staff and stakeholders, 320 questionnaires were completely filled out and returned. This indicates a good response rate, as it is generally accepted that a response rate of at least 60% is required to ensure that the results are representative and can be generalized to the population.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Unreturned questionnaires	64	16.7%
Returned questionnaires	320	83.3%

Table 1: Response Rate

### 5.3 Social Demographic characteristics

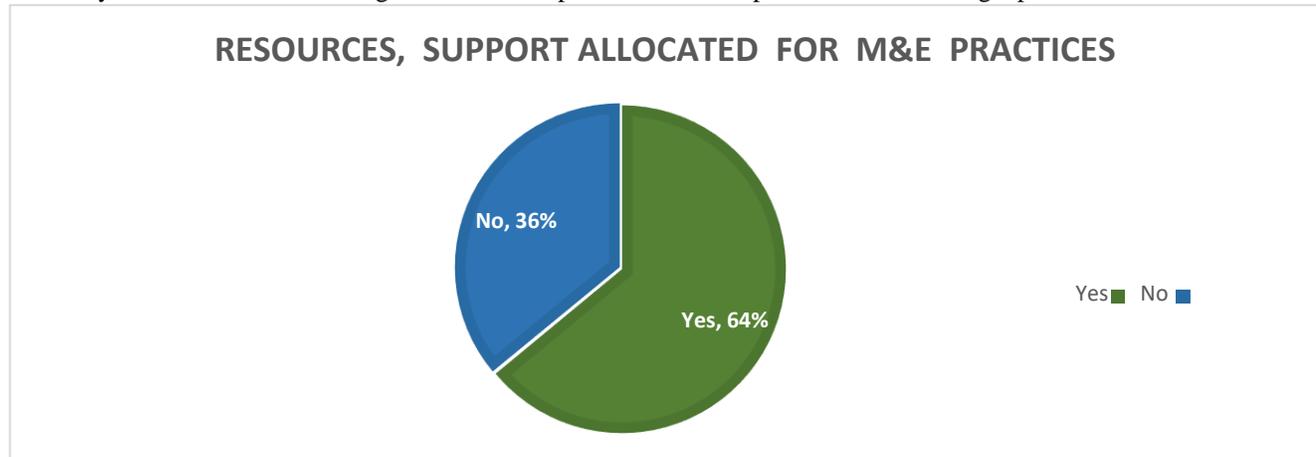
Additionally, the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants, such as age, gender, and educational background, are summarized to provide an overview of the sample composition.

Demographics	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	128	40%
	Female	192	60%
Academic status	Primary Education	5	2%
	Secondary Education	11	3%
	Tertiary Education	112	35%
	Graduate	144	45%
	Post-graduate	48	15%
Age	20 - 30 years	45	14%
	30 - 40 years	146	46%
	40 - 50 years	71	22%
	above 50 years	58	18%
Employment & Interaction with HELB	Less than 1 year	2	1%
	1 - 5 years	20	6%
	6 - 10 years	68	21%
	Above 10 years	230	72%

**Table 2: Social Demographic characteristics**

### 5.4 Monitoring Resources and Support in M&E practice

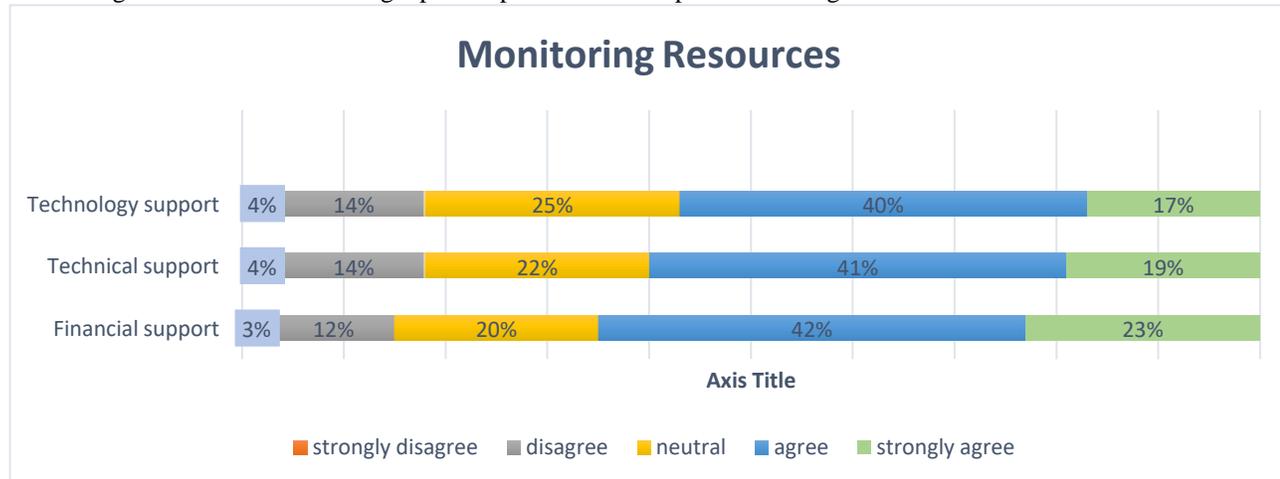
Based on the findings, a significant majority of respondents, accounting for 64%, believed that sufficient resources were allocated for monitoring activities related to strategic plan implementation. This indicates that there is a recognition of the importance of having adequate resources to effectively monitor and evaluate the progress of strategic plans. However, it is noteworthy that 36% of respondents expressed their dissatisfaction, stating that the allocated resources were either inadequate, inappropriate, or outdated for effective monitoring. This highlights the need for organizations to accurately determine the resource requirements necessary for successful monitoring and evaluation practices in the implementation of strategic plans.



**Figure 1: Allocation of Resources & Support for M&E Practices**

Regarding resources and support accorded to M&E practices, respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with the statement "The organization provides sufficient resources and support for monitoring and evaluation practices." The findings reveal that a majority of respondents agreed with this statement, with 23% strongly agreeing and 42% agreeing to financial support. A smaller proportion, 12%, disagreed with the statement, while only 3% strongly disagreed. Overall, 65% of respondents expressed a favorable view, indicating that the organization does provide adequate resources to support

monitoring and evaluation practices. These findings emphasize the significance of resources and support in ensuring effective monitoring and evaluation of strategic plan implementation as presented in figure 4.2.



**Figure 2: Sufficient Resources and Support for M&E Practices**

Based on the analysis, a majority of respondents (57%) agreed or strongly agreed that there is adequate technological support for the completion of projects at HELB. This indicates that the organization provides the necessary tools, equipment, and materials to support project implementation. Similarly, when asked about staff training on M&E, 60% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that staff receive regular training. This highlights the organization's commitment to enhancing staff capabilities in monitoring and evaluation practices.

These findings align with previous research emphasizing the significance of adequate monitoring and evaluation resources for successful strategic plan implementation. However, it is important to consider other factors such as leadership, stakeholder involvement, and communication in determining the overall performance of strategic plan implementation. Therefore, organizations should take a comprehensive approach, addressing multiple aspects to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation practices and the achievement of strategic goals.

**5.5 Competency Levels in M&E Practice**

The research study needed to determine the level and range of competence among staff and resource persons participating in M&E practice i.e., that they have sufficient knowledge, skills and qualifications either in the subject matter and in the related subject. Table 3 infers to the Level of competency and skill invested by the organization in resource persons in M&E practice and Table 4: Looks at the range of skills for resource persons in M&E practice.

Category	Training Certificate	University	Certification	On job training	Others
Monitoring and Evaluation	23%	1%	3%	58%	16%
Project Management	5%	2%	3%	17%	73%
Strategic Management	2%	14%	1%	66%	17%
Performance Management	22%	1%	2%	69%	7%
Corporate Management	17%	0%	1%	4%	78%

**Table 3: Level of Competency M&E practice**

Competency can be built from internal or external sources; the internal sources include training in certificate programs (training opportunities based on TNA) and on the job training which is commonly done through working supervised environment or similar work arrangements that expose the candidate to the required competency level. External sources are mostly professional and academic qualifications (which would form part of job requirements and obtained from higher education pursuits). Certifications training are courses which bring out the readiness of the candidate to undertake certain responsibilities and capacity as a professional.

The results indicate that a majority of the training in Monitoring and evaluation practices and key related categories are mostly conducted internally (on the job training) and these were performance management 69%, strategic management 66%

and monitoring and evaluation skills 58%. Academic qualifications within the given categories were all very low except for strategic management 14% and professional certifications were the lowest rated. The training certificate programs performed fairly well with M&E training taking the lead followed by performance management and corporate management.

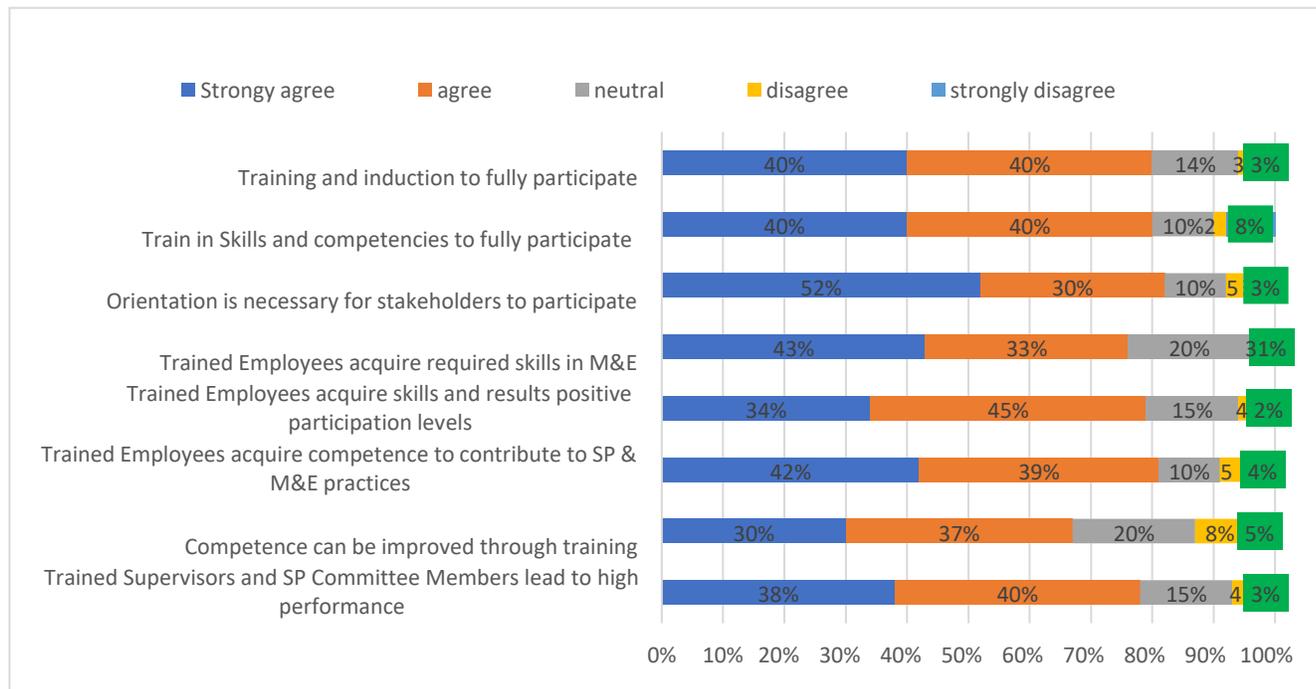
Most staff are trained internally (on the job) in the given skill aspects and top of the range is Performance management 69%, strategic management 66% followed by monitoring and evaluation practices. Certifications are the least held qualifications together with university degrees. Most resource persons had competency drawn at certificate level training.

Ranges	Monitoring Evaluation	Project Management	Strategic Management	Performance Management	Corporate Management
Very High	55%	40%	37%	47%	5%
High	31%	13%	31%	28%	31%
Medium	10%	10%	21%	24%	31%
Low	3%	22%	9%	1%	25%
None	1%	15%	2%	0%	8%

**Table 4: Scale Range for Competency levels in M&E practice**

The results indicate that a combined score for Monitoring and Evaluation 86% and Performance Management 75% as high to very high and hence the most relevant of skills for M&E practice while Project Management at 37% and Corporate Management 33% are the least relevant skills in M&E practice.

Likert questions were used to analyze the influence of competency levels in monitoring and evaluation through training, orientation and induction of resource persons during strategic plan implementation activities and monitoring and evaluation practices. The results are as presented in figure 5.5



**Figure 3: Staff and Stakeholder competency in M&E practice and SP implementation**

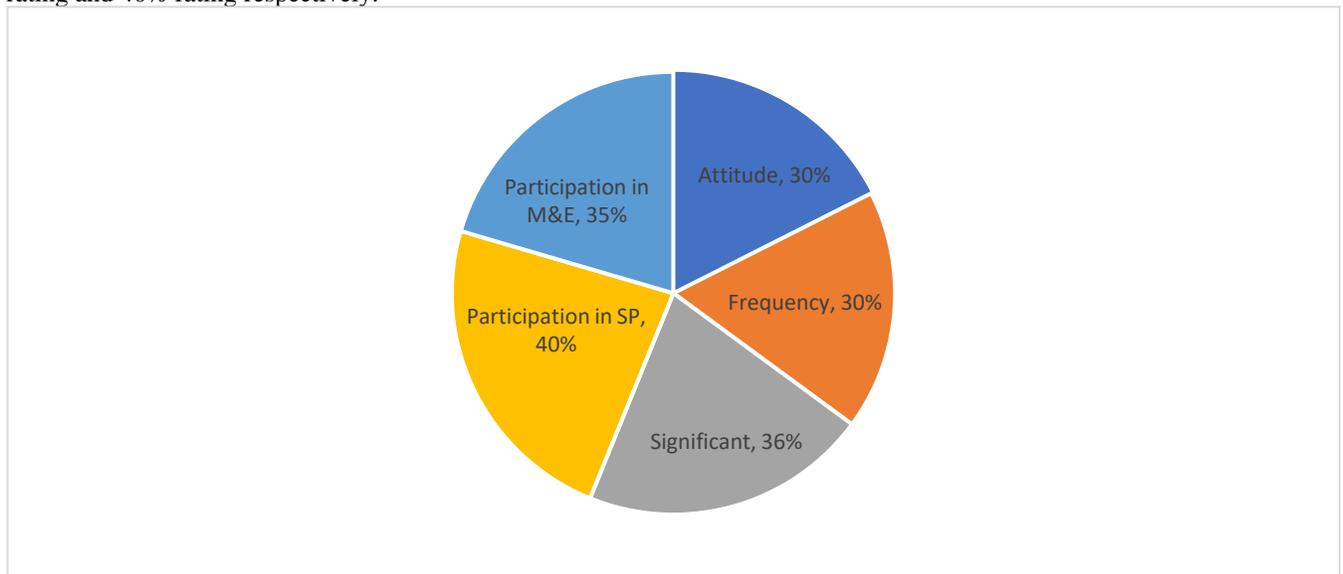
All the above findings indicate that there is some level of competency among staff members and stakeholders who are involved in monitoring and evaluation practices. Orientation is highly regarded at 52% for stakeholders to participate. Training is highly rated at 43% for employees to acquire required skills for M&E practice. Additionally, a significant proportion of respondents agreed that the training has enabled them to acquire skills for effective participation, 34%.

The results also highlight the positive impact of training on project success at HELB. A substantial number of respondents strongly agreed (42%) and agreed (39%) that the training on monitoring and evaluation has made it possible for employees to contribute towards project success. Furthermore, when assessing the level of performance of the strategic plan committee members and supervisors, a considerable percentage of respondents strongly agreed (38%) and agreed (40%) that their performance has led to improvement in project performance at HELB.

Overall, while the findings suggest some level of competency among staff members from training undertaken there is room for improvement in monitoring and evaluation practices. It is recommended to develop a structured training and capacity building program to identify skill gaps and provide targeted training in the identified areas. This should include technical skills in adapting to information technology, research work, data collection, and data analysis, as well as essential soft skills like teamwork, problem-solving, communication, and leadership. In the case of stakeholders, it seemed that only orientation and induction programs were provided as a way of improving competency levels as resource persons for M&E practices and SP implementation. However, if a deeper involvement of stakeholders is to be drawn from their participation, then it might be necessary to step up these programs to a more elaborate capacity and competency building program similar to the one suggested for staff. The findings also emphasize the importance of staff training and skills development in enhancing monitoring and evaluation practices and project performance, aligning with previous research studies.

### 5.6 Stakeholder Participation in M&E practices and SP implementation

The perception of stakeholders' participation in monitoring and evaluation was assessed using Likert scale questions. The analysis revealed that a majority of respondents agreed that stakeholder participation is highly important for project performance, with 35% rating and 40% rating respectively.



**Figure 4: Influence of Stakeholder Participation in SP implementation**

The study revealed that a majority of respondents agreed that stakeholder participation is crucial for the success of the strategic plan implementation at HELB. Specifically, 82% of respondents believed that the level of stakeholder participation determines the level of strategic plan success, and 76% agreed that all stakeholders significantly contribute to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and strategic plan success. Additionally, 68% of respondents recognized the significance of a high frequency of stakeholder participation in M&E for contributing to strategic plan success. Furthermore, 63% of respondents acknowledged that the attitude of stakeholders towards participation in M&E systems affects the implementation of the strategic plan.

These findings align with previous research that emphasizes the importance of stakeholder participation in M&E and strategic plan and implementation. Effective stakeholder participation has been found to lead to improved project outcomes, and engaging stakeholders positively influences the implementation of strategic plans. The study underscores the need to address poor stakeholder attitudes towards participation in M&E and to foster concerted efforts to ensure successful strategic plan implementation.

### 6.1 Summary of Conclusions

The conclusions and recommendations are drawn from a thorough examination of the data and the relevant literature reviewed throughout the research. The practical implications and future directions outlined in this chapter aim to enhance the understanding of the impact of monitoring and evaluation practices on strategic plan implementation within the Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) context.

The paper underscores the importance of allocating adequate resources, providing technical support, and conducting regular staff training in monitoring and evaluation practices at HELB. These factors contribute to the successful implementation of strategic plans. However, it is crucial to recognize that additional factors beyond resources also influence implementation outcomes, requiring organizations to consider a holistic approach to ensure effectiveness. The study's findings suggest that the presence of sufficient monitoring and evaluation (M&E) resources is crucial for the effective execution of strategic plans at HELB. Adequate allocation of financial resources, technical support, staff training, and utilization of information technology were identified as important factors for successful plan implementation. Participants acknowledged the availability of satisfactory resources and regular training in strategic management, performance management, and M&E for staff members. Furthermore, the study revealed that monitoring resources played a vital role in identifying challenges, facilitating timely interventions, and enabling stakeholders to track progress towards strategic plan objectives. Insufficient monitoring resources, on the other hand, were found to hinder decision-making and impede the successful implementation of the strategic plan. In addition to adequate M&E resources, the study also emphasizes the significance of other factors such as governance, leadership and management practices, change management programs, culture of performance, stakeholder engagement, open communication, and succession practices. Organizations should consider these factors alongside monitoring resources to ensure effective strategic plan implementation.

This study concludes that training and skills development are vital for effective participation in monitoring and evaluation practice. Continuous capacity building initiatives are crucial for staff involved in strategy formulation, implementation, and M&E practices. However, the study also highlights there is need to ensure training is expanded to identify a skill range for resource persons and should be well structured so that relevant skills are matched and utilized in the practice. There is a need to improve the capacity and effectiveness of resource persons as M&E and SP committee. HELB should also increase competence of resource persons in adaptation of information technology, coaching and mentoring and can be used for stakeholders participation. The findings align with previous research emphasizing the importance of training and competence in enhancing monitoring and evaluation practices in the public sector. Training is the tool used for building knowledge, capacity build and for a wider range of skills and improving attitudes among staff and stakeholders. Further research is required to identify other factors and developing strategies to address them effectively.

The findings suggest that stakeholders' participation is highly important for project performance and strategic plan success at HELB. The results indicate that stakeholder participation determines the level of strategic plan success and that all stakeholders significantly contribute to monitoring, evaluation, and strategic plan success. The study highlights the significance of a high frequency of stakeholder participation in M&E and emphasizes that the attitude of stakeholders towards participation affects strategic plan implementation. These findings underscore the need for organizations, including HELB, to prioritize stakeholder engagement and encourage their active participation in monitoring and evaluation systems. By recognizing the importance of stakeholder involvement and fostering a positive attitude towards participation, organizations can enhance the effectiveness of strategic plan implementation. To further understand the factors influencing stakeholder participation in M&E systems and their impact on strategic plans, additional research is recommended. This study emphasizes the critical role of stakeholders' participation in monitoring and evaluation practices for successful strategic plan implementation. HELB should prioritize stakeholder engagement, cultivate a positive attitude towards participation, and explore additional factors influencing stakeholder involvement to improve project performance and strategic plan success. In conclusion, the study highlights the critical role of stakeholder participation in strategic plan implementation as this will build their understanding of what is required from them during M&E practices. Engaging stakeholders in decision-making processes and cultivating positive attitudes and trust among stakeholders are essential for maximizing their contributions, identifying potential risks and creating impact from the strategies implemented.

## 7.1 Recommendations

To enhance monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices and improve project performance at the Higher Education Loans Board (HELB), several recommendations can be made based on the study's findings. Firstly, HELB should prioritize investing in training and skills development for its employees in M&E. This can be achieved through coaching, mentoring, and capacity-building programs to improve staff competencies and ensure more effective project performance. Special attention should also be given to training the strategic plan committee and staff members in the strategy department to enhance their understanding and proficiency in evaluation and monitoring techniques.

To enhance stakeholder participation in the evaluation of HELB's strategic plan, several recommendations emerge from the study's findings. Firstly, HELB should actively encourage stakeholder engagement by creating a supportive environment that values and promotes their involvement. By including stakeholders in the evaluation activities, HELB can benefit from their valuable insights and contributions, leading to a more comprehensive and effective assessment of the strategic plan's implementation. Secondly, HELB should prioritize enhancing stakeholder engagement throughout the strategic plan implementation process. This can be achieved by establishing regular communication channels, such as meetings and feedback mechanisms, to foster collaboration and dialogue between HELB and stakeholders. Moreover, involving stakeholders in decision-making processes will foster a sense of ownership and commitment to the success of the strategic plan. Thirdly, continuous awareness and training initiatives should be implemented by HELB to build stakeholders' knowledge and skills in monitoring and evaluation practices. By providing regular updates and capacity-building programs, HELB can empower stakeholders to actively participate in the evaluation process and contribute to informed decision-making.

Additionally, HELB should review and adapt its strategic plan based on stakeholder feedback and input. Addressing stakeholders' attitudes and concerns is crucial to ensure their willingness and interest in participating and taking ownership of the evaluation process. Lastly, establishing a continuous evaluation system will allow HELB to monitor and assess stakeholders' ongoing participation in the strategic plan's implementation. This systematic evaluation will facilitate the timely identification of gaps or challenges, enabling prompt interventions and improvements. By implementing these recommendations, HELB can enhance stakeholder participation, improve the monitoring and evaluation process, and ultimately ensure the success of its strategic plan implementation.

Lastly, active stakeholder involvement is vital. HELB should engage stakeholders in the development and review of the M&E framework and include them in the monitoring and evaluation activities of strategic plan implementation. By fostering transparency, accountability, and alignment of objectives, stakeholder involvement will contribute to improved performance. Implementing these recommendations, including resource allocation, technical support, staff training, comprehensive M&E framework development, and stakeholder involvement, will help enhance monitoring and evaluation practices and drive successful strategic plan implementation at HELB.

It is important to acknowledge that challenges may exist in the effective implementation of monitoring and evaluation practices in government agencies. Further research is recommended to investigate lack of monitoring resource visibility amid sudden budget cuts, lack of supporting environment i.e., absence of a performance culture, negative attitudes, lack of support from top management.

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