

Practice and Challenges of Balanced Scorecard Oriented School Improvement Planning in Selected Government Secondary Schools of Tigrai

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Abstract

Balanced Scorecard (BSC) oriented school improvement planning (SIP) was introduced in secondary schools of Tigrai Regional State since 2012. This study was undertaken to investigate the practice and challenges of BSC oriented SIP in selected government secondary schools of Tigrai. In this study, descriptive survey research design was employed. Both primary and secondary data were collected using questionnaire, semi structured interview and document analysis. Forty-nine school principals, 71 vice principals, 121 teachers, five supervisors and Parent Teachers Associations (PTA) members were selected as a sample using purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Data were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques. The study revealed that majority of school principals lack the competencies required for leadership position. In addition, though the school community has better understanding of SIP, majority of the school principals, teachers and parents were observed implementing BSC without having good understanding of what BSC is and how it is integrated with SIP. Besides, parents did not clearly understand what roles they are expected to play as members of the School Improvement (SI) committee. Moreover, principals' leadership ability and skills in BSC/SI planning are not up to the expected level. Although strategies that support schools in their BSC/SIP planning processes were introduced and practiced, the level of their implementation was found to be very low. Interviews conducted also proved that strategies used to support schools in their planning process were very rare. It was implied that providing further intensive training for school leaders, SI committee members and parents in areas such as the concepts of BSC/SIP, how they are aligned and measured are critical.

Keywords: Alignment, Balanced score card, practice, school improvement planning

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Introduction

School effectiveness and School Improvement Program (SIP) received considerable attention in policy and research discussions. For instance, Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon (2010, pp.41-42) indicated that “although effective school research is still being carried out, over the last several years, school improvement research has taken center stage”. Harris and Bennett (2001) cited in Harris et al. (2005) indicated the importance of leadership in securing school improvement and the crucial role a school leader can play. Botha (2002, p.6) further reiterated that a major point that has been neglected so far is the “school leader’s perception of improvement”. If the school leader does not believe in improvement, then there is very little likelihood that she/he will be able to persuade the other concerned parties to accept it. Moreover, Kaplan (2010) stated empirical evidences that suggest leadership as the most important variable in explaining the success or failure of school/organization. Hence, leadership may be both necessary and sufficient for success.

According to Gallagher (2004, pp.9-10) the capacity of schools to provide optimum learning opportunities for each and every student need to be measured in light of the extent to which students are advantaged or disadvantaged to achieve their potential in terms of their learning outcome. Schools with high performance capability are believed to enhance student learning and outcome across a range of domains such as learning and teaching, student environment, leadership and management, and community involvement. On top of that, she further pointed out excellent schools set long term strategic goals that are challenging but achievable (ibid). These goals are articulated through the school plan and provide focus, direction, motivation and purpose. This point has also been discussed by Klausmeir (1985) who indicated that great progress follows from careful planning. Conversely, failure, accompanied with much teacher frustration, occurs when schooling efforts are started without adequate planning. Cheng (1996a) cited in Harris *et al.* (2005, p.261) conceptualized strategic management in school as a management process that includes various stages of environmental analysis, planning and structuring, staffing and directing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating at the school level”. As part of the many efforts made to effectively implement SI planning, BPR was introduced in many organizations in Ethiopia including educational organizations.

Various driving factors were responsible for its introduction in many schools. For instance, Tigray Region Education Bureau-TREB (TREB, 2012) enumerated factors such as misalignment of annual plans with the strategic issues identified, lack of aligning plans with customer needs, misalignment of work practice from the basic principle of Business Processes reengineering-(BPR) and poor working culture. In a similar manner, BSC oriented SI plan was introduced by TREB as an addition of BPR initiative (TREB, 2012, p.2).

The concept of balanced scorecard was first introduced by Kaplan and Norton (1992). Since then, this innovation gained popularity in many business and industrial sectors and the adaptation or application of the BSC in these sectors has been a well-researched and documented endeavor. This being the case, however, its adoption and application in the education sector is a recent phenomenon (Karathanos & Karathanos, 2005). BSC was introduced by TREB in many primary and secondary schools in order to successfully facilitate one major issue of BPR i.e., the management measurement system. Establishing effective management system was found to be imperative for fulfilling and utilizing the human resources need, to achieving designed strategies

and to make organizational success sustainable. Hence, the TREB believed that introducing Balanced Score Card in schools would promote the effective implementation of BPR (TREB, 2012). Moreover, schools were demanded to align and integrate the already existing SI planning process through introducing BSC oriented strategic planning process. According to TREB (2013), the reason behind introducing BSC to schools is to enable schools fulfill their customers' satisfaction through better service delivery.

A research finding by Esayas (2010) concluded that strategic plans developed by secondary school leaders were not based on effective use of assessment data; goals were not properly set in terms of quality and quantity; school leaders had no adequate background and training to develop effective school strategic plans. Accordingly, Esayas has recommended sustained training to school leaders on planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of strategic plan. In addition, a study conducted by Draman, Lugaz, Alemayehu and Haileselassie (2011) pointed out high turnover, shortage of skills, lack of adequate profile for the post, poor working environment, poorly developed and implemented plans as the major challenges of educational leaders and managers in Ethiopia.

TREB (2013) further revealed in its education sector plan performance evaluation report that school plans prepared at the lower levels are lacking quality. Though the existing annual school plans were cascaded from the school strategic plan, schools' yearly plans were not prepared based on BSC and various gaps were observed in the planning process (*ibid*). Moreover, our practical work experience reveals that BSC was a debatable agenda in many of the conferences organized and held by TREB. Often principals express that planning school plans using BSC framework, implementing and integrating it with SIP has remained their major challenge. Hence, this study was initiated to investigate these issues empirically through providing plausible answers to the following research questions:

- *How are BSC and school improvement planning conceptualized by principals?*
- *To what extent BSC plan is aligned with school improvement plan?*
- *What major differences are there between BSC and SI planning?*
- *How competent are principals in developing the school BSC/SI plan?*
- *What support is available for principals while doing their school strategic plan?*

General Objective

The general objective of this study was to investigate the practice and challenge of BSC oriented SI planning in selected government secondary schools of Tigray and thereby indicate alternative solutions to fill the identified gaps.

Methodology

Survey research design was used in this study. Surveys are often used to help organizations monitor the implementation of specific decisions or new procedures and to evaluate the results of a promising intervention program (McNamara 1993, cited in Esayas & Getachew; 2015). This survey employed mixed-concurrent research strategy in which data for the study were collected simultaneously through quantitative and qualitative methods that involved survey questionnaire, in-depth interview and document analysis. Recently, mixing methods received considerable

support for the notion that any single method never adequately solves the problem of rival causal factors and each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality (Cresswell, 2013). Patton (1989) also stated that a qualitative method using the structured interview technique is used to supplement the survey (quantitative data) in that qualitative data can produce a wealth of knowledge from a restricted number of people.

Sources of Data

In this study, the researchers used both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary sources include sample school principals and vice principals (for curriculum), teachers (School Improvement Committee members), parents (only PTA members) and secondary school supervisors. Secondary sources used include school BSC/SI plan, minutes, reports, manuals and relevant guidelines written by Ministry of Education (MoE), TREB and Woreda Education Offices (WEOs).

Population, Samples and Sampling Techniques

Tigray Regional State Education Bureau, as one of the several social sectors, has seven zones and fifty-three woreda education offices under its supervision. According to MoE (2012/2013), there are 148 government general secondary schools in these woreda`s. The schools are spread in wider geographical areas; hence, a multi-stage probability sampling was employed in order to select samples. Supporting this Koul (2008, p.121) stated that a multi-stage probability sampling is comparatively convenient, less time consuming and less expensive method in areas with geographic distribution of units is scattered or when sampling of individual units is not convenient for several administrative reasons. Hence, zones were identified using a multi-stage sampling method; and simple random sampling (lottery system) was used in drawing samples among weredas, secondary schools and teachers. While principals and vice principals were selected using availability sampling, secondary school supervisors and parents (PTA members) were selected using purposive sampling given that there is only one supervisor in each woreda offices that oversee secondary schools. Parents were also selected based on their reading and writing ability. Accordingly, four zones (57%), 20 woredas (38%), 49 secondary schools (73%) and 49 principals (73%), 71 vice principals (53%) and 121 teachers (45%) were taken to constitute the sample size. Additionally, 5 secondary school supervisors and five secondary school PTA member parents participated in the study.

Instruments of Data collection

Data were mainly collected through survey questionnaire. Similar questionnaire was prepared and administered for school principals, vice principals and teachers represented as members of SIC. To supplement the information obtained from questionnaire, semi-structured interview was conducted with woreda secondary school supervisors and PTA member parents. Researchers also made review of related documents to support the quantitative data.

Validation of Instruments

The content and construct validity of the instruments were assessed by experts in the field of education with special emphasis on educational planning and management. In addition, pilot-test for the draft questionnaire was undertaken in eight secondary schools where a total of 16 principals and 16 teachers (PTA/school improvement Committee (SIC) members) were respondents. Based on the responses obtained, two items were omitted for being redundant, five items were also improved in the questionnaire to minimize ambiguity. Besides, the internal consistency of the responses for the survey questionnaire was calculated using Spearman's split- half method. The result of the reliability analysis for principals, vice principals and teachers' questionnaires with 53 items was 0.89. This indicated the questionnaire was strongly reliable. Verifying this, Yalew (2006, pp.206-228) wrote that "0.65 reliability can be accepted as minimum requirement if the variable of interest considers perception, attitude, interest, and personality". This study investigated the perception of respondents; hence Spearman's split half method was found to be fit.

Methods of Data Analysis

The quantitative data were coded, organized and entered into SPSS. Then, descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, aggregated means and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (One-Way-ANOVA) were computed to investigate the relationship between variables of interest and to support our claims and arguments. Besides, thematic and trend analysis were employed to analyze the qualitative data collected through semi-structured interview and document analysis.

Result and Discussion

Table 1: Respondents by Educational Level and Background

Respondent Types	Educational level and Background							
	First Degree in any subject		Second Degree in any subject		First Degree in EdPM		Second Degree in EdPM	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Secondary school Teachers	117	96.7	4	3.3	-	-	-	-
Secondary school Principals	17	34.7	4	8.2	16	32.7	12	24.5
Secondary school Vice Principals	51	71.8	2	2.8	12	16.9	6	8.5

Table 1 showed that majority of teacher respondents were at first degree level of education. Out of a total of 49 secondary school principals, about 17 (34.7%) principals and 51 (71.8%) vice principals have first degree in a subject matter while 16(32.75%) principals and 12(16.9%) vice principals have first degree in Educational Planning and Management-EdPM background. The remaining 4(3.3%) teachers, 4(8.2%) principals and 2(2.8%) vice principals have second degree in a subject matter background where also 12(24.5%) principals and 6(8.5%) vice principals had second degree in EdPM background

Table 2: Level of Conceptualization of Balanced Score Card (BSC)

No.	Item	Teachers N=121		Principals N=49		Vice Principals N=71		One Way ANOVA		
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	GM	F	Sig
1	BSC provides with the instrumentation needed to navigate to future competitive success	1.87	.752	2.82	1.09	2.01	.784	2.10	22.771	.000*
2	BSC translates our school's mission and strategy into a comprehensive set of performance measures	1.98	.785	3.12	1.18	1.86	.816	2.18	35.166	.000*
3	BSC measures our school's performance across four balanced perspectives	1.96	.789	3.39	1.26	2.20	.839	2.32	43.349	.000*
4	Basic premise of BSC is that financial results alone are not effective in identifying the drivers that affect financial results	1.97	.826	3.12	1.29	2.11	.871	2.24	26.843	.000*
5	BSC serves our school as communication tool, measurement and strategic management system	2.17	.803	3.12	1.30	1.93	.976	2.29	23.674	.000*
6	BSC is a tool to measure progress towards strategic goals in our school site, woreda, region and national levels	1.91	.847	3.27	1.22	2.18	.883	2.27	36.363	.000*
7	BSC is a framework adopted and linked with SI domains and is used as management tool to assess our school performance	1.88	.839	3.10	1.20	2.20	.935	2.22	28.785	.000*
8	BSC is a tool that provides a structure for measuring school quality and ranking schools for purposes of differentiated interventions	1.82	.796	2.98	1.32	1.85	.768	2.06	30.773	.000*
9	BSC is a result-oriented cycle of inquiry that engages us in an ongoing process of learning and improvement	1.70	.900	2.90	1.30	1.99	.902	2.03	25.361	.000*

Key: > 3.50 = Highly approved'; '2.50 - 3.49 = Moderately approved'; and '<2.50 = Highly disapproved'

Respondents were asked how they conceptualize BSC planning. And in reference to items asked, table 2 revealed that school principals' response to the items ranged with mean values of 2.82 and 3.39 which implied an average level of understanding of BSC and its practice. However, teachers' response trend to similar items was with a mean value that ranged from 1.70 to 2.17 and that of the vice principals with mean values ranging from 1.85 to 2.20 implying that both teachers and vice principals have lower understanding about BSC and its practice. The grand mean values ranging from a minimum of 2.10 up to a maximum of 2.32 also confirmed the low understanding and practice of BSC in schools. As per the calculated F value, there was significant difference among the perception of all groups of respondents concerning the concept of BSC for all items.

Table 3: Level of Conceptualization of School Improvement Planning

No.	Item	Teachers N=121		Principals N=49		Vice Principals N=71		One Way ANOVA		
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	GM	F	Sig
1	SI Plan is a working document used by our school to monitor progress over time and make revisions when necessary.	3.79	1.06	4.12	.881	3.93	1.06	3.90	1.940	.146
2	SI plan is a road map that sets how and when our school needs to make to improve student's achievement	3.57	1.08	4.04	.957	3.85	1.05	3.75	3.966	.020*
3	SIP involves disciplined use of evidence- based quantitative and qualitative methods in our school	3.53	1.04	3.98	.968	3.51	1.13	3.61	3.701	.026*
4	SIP is a mechanism by which public can hold our school accountable for student success and it can measure improvement	3.10	1.08	3.10	1.09	3.15	1.25	3.12	.059	.943
5	SIP helps our school develop better learning programs, better teaching strategies, and better administrative practices	3.39	1.09	3.61	1.17	3.63	1.11	3.51	1.366	.257
6	School strategic plan sets out our school's strategic direction for the next three years	3.54	1.13	4.08	.759	3.86	1.00	3.74	5.562	.004*
7	SI plan sets out the values, context, goals, targets and key improvement strategies related to selected student outcome areas	3.50	1.07	3.94	.852	3.72	1.07	3.65	3.451	.033*
8	Our school strategic plan has accounted for changes in our school culture, finances, and structure and stakeholder requirements	3.35	1.18	3.80	1.04	3.65	1.15	3.53	3.245	.041*

Key: > 3.50 = Highly approved'; '2.50 - 3.49 = Moderately approved'; and '<2.50 = Highly disapproved'

Respondents were asked how they conceptualize SI planning. And in reference to items asked, table 3 revealed that the response trend for items 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7 showed that teachers' response to the items ranged with mean values of 3.50 to 3.79 indicating better understanding of what SI planning and its major functions. Similarly, principals' response with mean values ranging from 3.94 to 4.12 and that of vice principals with mean values ranging from 3.51 to 3.93 implied a well understanding of SI planning and its major functions. The grand mean values ranging from a minimum of 3.61 up to a maximum of 3.90 also confirmed the well understanding of SI planning by respondents.

On the other hand, items 5 and 8 were rated by teachers with mean values of 3.39 and 3.35 respectively implying moderate understanding of the importance of SI planning. However, principals and vice principal's response to these items showed a mean value 3.61 to 3.80 and 3.63

to 3.65 respectively. This seems to suggest that principals and vice principals have better understanding of the importance of SI planning for the various activities of the school. The grand mean values ranging from 3.51 to 3.53 also reiterates high conceptualization of the importance of SI planning in the school. Item 4, however, was rated by teachers, principals and vice principals with mean values 3.10, 3.10 to 3.15 respectively indicating an average conceptualization of the role of SI planning to promote accountability of all in the schools. The grand mean value 3.12 supported the claim. The F value indicated the significant difference among the perception of all groups of respondents for items 2, 3, 6, 7 and 8. But, no significant difference was observed for items 1, 4, and 5

Table 4: Perceptions on the implementation of aligning BSC with SI

No.	Item	Teachers N=121		Principals N=49		Vice Principals N=71		One Way ANOVA		Sig
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	GM	F	
1	Expectations in terms of well-defined metrics and measurable indicators are evident in my school	3.63	.993	3.59	.998	3.72	.959	3.65	.286	.752
2	BSC helps us better structure strategic goals, link long-term goals with our tactical objectives and tactical plans	3.37	.993	3.47	1.10	3.51	1.16	3.43	.399	.672
3	Indicators our school selected best represent factors that lead to improved student, operational, and financial performance	3.36	1.08	3.31	1.05	3.45	.953	3.37	.319	.727
4	Indicators tied to student, stakeholder and organizational performance requirements represents a clear basis for aligning all processes with our school's goals	3.20	1.03	3.27	1.17	3.45	1.03	3.29	1.285	.279
5	Improvement does not materialize and efforts to be failures in my school due to set goals are too high	3.07	1.20	3.06	1.23	3.00	1.16	3.05	.074	.929
6	If a set target begins to appear too low, it is always adjusted upward later in my school	3.20	.971	3.29	1.06	3.23	1.03	3.22	.131	.877
7	Our school uses summative assessment to measure progress against key relevant external standards and norms	3.47	1.07	3.35	1.15	3.39	1.17	3.42	.251	.778
8	Lack of coherence and increased confusion is evident in our school's BSC	2.99	1.31	3.02	1.38	2.90	1.21	2.97	.153	.858

Key: > 3.50 = Highly approved'; '2.50 - 3.49 = Moderately approved'; and ' <2.50 = Highly disapproved '

As it is shown in table 4, respondents were asked to give their perception of alignment of BSC with SI planning processes. And in reference to items asked, item 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 were rated by teachers with mean values ranging from 2.99 to 3.47; by principals with mean values ranging from 3.02 to 3.35 and by vice principals with mean values ranging from 2.90 up to 3.45. This implied that various indicators, targets and assessments set in BSC and SI planning were moderately aligned. The grand mean values ranging from a minimum of 2.97 up to a maximum of 3.42 also confirmed moderate alignment. Besides, item 2 was rated by vice principals with a grand mean of

3.51; teachers and principals rated it from 3.37 to 3.47. This also implies a moderate alignment of BSC oriented strategic goals and the tactical plans existing in schools. However, item 1 was rated by teachers, principals and vice principals with mean values 3.63 to 3.59 and 3.72 respectively implying high alignment, well-defined metrics and measurable indicators between the two plans. The calculated value of F in table 4 for all items also indicated that there was no significant difference among the perception of all groups of respondents.

Table 5: The perception of respondents on the actual practice of BSC and SI planning in schools

No.	Item	Teachers N=121		Principals N=49		Vice Principals N=71		One Way ANOVA		Sig
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	GM	F	Sig
1	As per my practical experience there is no difference between the concept of BSC and SI strategic plan	3.31	1.16	3.24	1.07	3.24	1.17	3.27	.095	.909
2	BSC is planned after our school has prepared SI strategic plan (both BSC and SIP are simultaneously prepared in our school)	3.72	1.12	3.71	1.41	3.75	1.25	3.73	.014	.986
3	Indicators in the BSC are already aligned with the SI indicators so that BSC is the <u>only plan prepared in our school</u>	2.47	1.18	2.24	1.25	2.46	1.30	2.42	.646	.525

Key: > 3.50 = Highly approved'; '2.50 - 3.49 = Moderately approved'; and '<2.50 = Highly disapproved'

Respondents were asked their opinion on the actual practice of BSC and/or SI plans in a school. And, table 5 reveals that item 2 was rated by teachers, principals and vice principals with mean values 3.72, 3.71 and 3.75 respectively which implied high level of simultaneous BSC and SI planning in schools. On the other hand, item one was rated by teachers, principals and vice principals with mean values 3.31, 3.24 and 3.24 respectively which indicated all respondents moderately perceive that there is no difference between BSC and the existing strategic plan and the grand mean value 3.27 also supported moderate perception. However, item 3 was rated by teachers, principals and vice principals with mean values 2.47, 2.24 and 2.46 which implied lower alignment of indicators set in SI planning and BSC plans. The calculated value of F in the above table for all items also indicated that there was no significant difference among the perception of all groups of respondents. Corroborating this claim, the reviewed documents also showed that some schools prepare both BSC and SI plans while others prepared only BSC. There is no similar understanding among secondary schools on the way they conceptualize and develop the school BSC and/or SI strategic plan. There is also no clear directive whether a school ought to prepare BSC plan or both BSC and SI plan.

Table 6: School Principal's Management Ability and Skills Concerning BSC/SI Planning

No	Item	Teachers N=121		Principals N=49		Vice Principals N=71		One Way ANOVA		
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	GM	F	Sig
1	The principal conducts the school's self-assessment process every year and every three- years	3.55	1.22	3.90	1.07	3.39	1.25	3.58	2.608	.076
2	The principal involved the entire school community in the planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating process	3.40	1.12	3.43	1.08	3.31	1.10	3.38	.203	.817
3	The principal makes support and monitor the SIP process that takes place within the school community itself	3.30	1.06	3.27	1.13	3.25	1.13	3.28	.040	.961
4	The principal encourages the SI committee to meet and make data-based planning periodically	3.18	1.01	2.92	1.29	3.21	1.08	3.14	1.207	.301
5	The principal ensures SI committee members received assistance through training and experience sharing	2.92	1.14	2.98	1.20	2.87	1.20	2.92	.121	.886
6	The principal makes sure and manages the school budget to ascertain that it is used in planning and implementing goals	3.55	1.18	3.45	1.14	3.69	1.02	3.57	.717	.489
7	The principal creates link with NGOs and external experts to gain their professional and technical support about BSC/SI planning	2.74	1.00	2.49	1.23	2.62	1.06	2.66	1.041	.355
8	The principal provides information about the plan made to all stake holders through website, meetings, community liaison teams, and making copies available in office	2.82	1.11	2.73	1.32	2.73	1.03	2.78	.169	.845

Key: > 3.50 = Highly approved'; '2.50 - 3.49 = Moderately approved'; and '<2.50 = Highly disapproved'

Respondents were asked about school principal's management ability and skills in BSC/SI planning. As can be seen from table 6, items 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 were rated by teachers with mean values ranging from 2.74 to 3.40 by principals with mean values ranging from 2.49 to 3.43 and vice principals' response with mean values ranging from 2.62 to 3.31. This response trend seems to indicate that principal's ability to involve school community in planning, to support and monitor SIP process, encourage and train the SIP committee were rated moderate. The grand mean values ranging from 2.66 to 3.38 substantiated the observed result. Whereas item 6 was rated by principals as a moderate practice with mean value 3.45, teachers and vice principals rated it with mean values of 3.55 and 3.69 and with grand mean value 3.57 which implied that making sure and managing the school budget by the principal to ascertain it is used in planning and implementing goals was a high practice. While item 1, principal's ability to conduct the school's self-assessment process was rated by vice principals as a moderate practice with mean value of 3.39 teachers and principals rated it with mean values 3.55 and 3.90 implied that it was a high practice. The calculated value

of F in table 6 for all items also indicated that there was no significant difference among the perception of all groups of respondents

Responses obtained from interview also indicated that school principal's management ability and skills in BSC/SI planning is not up to the expected level. Principals were observed lacking knowledge about BSC and school improvement. Surprisingly, in some schools the existing plans were not known even by teachers and PTA members. All interviewed parent representatives proved that they have no clue as to what BSC and SI plans were. All of them said that they did not get any training. It was suggested that principals need support and training on how to plan and integrate BSC in the light of school improvement process. In addition to this, the reviewed school plan revealed problems and lack of clarity regarding set goals and other various indicators.

Table 7: Institutional Support Systems in Schools in their BSC/SIP Planning Processes

No.	Item	Teachers N=121		Principals N=49		Vice Principals N=71		One Way ANOVA		
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	GM	F	Sig
1	Woreda and regional education bureau supervisors provide regular support concerning BSC/SI planning for our school	2.28	.985	2.06	1.01	2.28	1.16	2.24	.866	.422
2	Tigray education bureau (TEB) continually review sample school BSC document to better align it with SI performance indicators	2.35	.928	2.02	.924	2.42	1.05	2.30	2.771	.065
3	TEB has created an online tool that makes our school BSC document accessible via the web for public consumption and for ease of use	2.01	.970	1.71	.866	1.96	.933	1.93	1.742	.177
4	Many guides and resources have been created over the years by TEB and WEO to further assist our BSC/SIP planning process	2.56	1.06	2.33	.987	2.55	1.01	2.51	.977	.378
5	TEB and WEO are participated in providing training, support and advice regarding school strategic planning process	2.50	1.07	2.37	.951	2.39	1.06	2.44	.361	.697
6	TEB and WEO are encouraging and supporting our school undertake its planning through collaboration and cooperation with the neighbor schools	2.49	1.03	2.35	.879	2.35	.879	2.39	1.155	.317
7	TEB and WEO use principals' meetings to provide each other with best planning practices and to model strategies that can be employed	2.69	.965	2.24	.855	2.20	.935	2.46	7.899	.000*
8	Woreda and TEB supervisors ensure that our school use accurate and comprehensive information in preparing its BSC/SIP	2.54	1.19	2.37	1.13	2.41	1.12	2.46	.495	.610

Key: > 3.50 = Highly approved'; '2.50 - 3.49 = Moderately approved'; and '<2.50 = Highly disapproved'

Respondents were asked about strategies implemented to support schools in their BSC/SIP planning processes. As can be seen from Table 7, items 1, 2, 3 and 6 were rated by teachers with mean values ranging from 2.01 to 2.49; by principals with mean values ranging from 1.71 to 2.35 and by vice principals with mean values ranging from 1.96 to 2.42. This seems to indicate that the support schools get in planning their BSC oriented SIP from various echelons of the bureaus were rated lower. The grand mean values ranging from a minimum of 1.93 up to a maximum of 2.39. In a similar vein, items 5, 7 and 8 were rated by teachers with mean values ranging from 2.50 to 2.69 which implied that teachers feel that TREB and WEOs averagely engaged in providing support, training, model better strategies and ensure the utilization of accurate information while developing SIP and BSC. However, principals and vice principals differed in rating these items indicating lower level of TREB and WEOs involvement and support. Based on the calculated F value, there was significant difference among the perception of all groups of respondents for only item 7. But, no significance difference for the remaining items. Responses obtained from document and interview seems to suggest that strategies that support schools in their BSC/SIP planning processes were introduced and practiced, but the level of their implementation was very low. This might imply that, unless scarce resources are assigned to the right strategies to support schools develop sound road map and controlling system, it is likely that student performance in schools remain below the standard.

Conclusions and Implications

There was small proportion of females in the school leadership positions. Majority of school principals were leading their respective schools without adequate knowledge and training about school leadership and management. This may imply the introduced school leadership programs are not providing more access to aspiring female leaders and the observed lower competence of principals in aligning BSC and SIP in part might be attributed to lack of adequate management and planning knowledge and expertise. Hence, the existing directive or blue print about school leaders' placement to the school principal ship position needs to be implemented properly so as to attract competent female applicants. Moreover, further educational opportunities and intensive training in school leadership should be provided to principals lacking the required competencies.

Schools were implementing BSC without having clear understanding of what it is. This might imply all involved in planning process are performing their task of integrating and aligning BSC with existing SIP without requisite skills and understanding. This, if not addressed, might continue to be a challenge. It is desirable for TREB and WEOs to closely work to build the capacity of school communities concerning BSC and SI planning and how they are aligned for better performance.

Some schools prepared both BSC and SI plans while others prepared only BSC. There is no clear directive whether a school ought to prepare BSC plan or both BSC and SI plan. This scenario might in turn leave schools without sound plan which would imply leading schools to fail in meeting the set educational goals strategically. Hence, TREB and WEOs should decide whether schools need to prepare either BSC or SI plans or only BSC considering the national direction regarding school improvement program implementation. Although institutional support systems that support schools in their BSC/SIP planning processes were introduced and practiced, the level

of their implementation was very low. The continuous support, training and monitoring and evaluation of TREB and WEO experts were very much lower. This might also be the reason for the existing disparities observed in schools. It is desirable for TREB and WEOs to devise strategies that put in place regular support, monitoring, evaluation and communication of plans continually. This might suggest the need to assign scarce resources to the right strategies to support schools develop sound road map and ensure its effective implementation and monitoring. When this is not the case, it is likely that student performance in schools would continue to remain below the expectations and school improvement would remain just a distant aspiration.

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