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## **BUDGETING AND ACCOUNTABILITY AS FUND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND PRINCIPALS’ EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATION OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examined the relationship between budgeting and accountability as fund management strategies and principals’ effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. A correlational design was used. The population of the study consisted of 6,893 teachers and 286 principals in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, from which 1,008 teachers and 69 principals were selected using proportionate sampling. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire structured along a four-point Likert scale, containing three demographic variables and twelve (12) items. The instrument was validated by educational experts in the Department of Educational Management. The reliability of the instrument was tested using the Cronbach’s alpha reliability test, and the analysis yielded a reliability score of .726, which showed that the instrument was reliable. The two research questions and the two hypotheses were analyzed using the mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and Pearson product moment correlation coefficient statistics was used to test the hypotheses. The result revealed that there is a positive relationship between fund management and planning strategies and principals’ effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, thus, the null hypotheses were rejected. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommended that public senior secondary school principals should be made to undergo training on Budgeting and accountability, to help them make better decisions about school finances.

**Keywords:** Budgeting, accountability, Fund, Management, Planning Strategies, Principals, Effective, Administration, Public, Senior, Secondary Schools, Rivers State.

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## INTRODUCTION

A school is one of the basic social welfare services the government of any country owes its citizenry. The provision of these services can only be calculated in monetary terms to make people aware of their full impact (Ebong in Asodike et al., 2013). She emphasized that, the monetary activities within the national economy calls for the coordination of interrelated activities for appropriate management of financial transaction in the social sector. The cost of all the needed goods and services required in the school system is sufficient justification for the scholarly concern in the auspices of school finance. It is untenable to run any organization without money. Money is the life wire of any organization. It is the fuel and lubricant which propels any business or social organization to be financed. In a school administration funds are used for the procurement of equipment, facilities, electronics, communication gadgets needed for effective administration, putting up infrastructure, furnishing the school and offices, paying of salaries of administrator, academic, and non-academic staff, maintenance of school plant and also for in service training course for required manpower development.

Fundamentally, management is one of the basic practices in any enterprise including school. Management of school funds essentially means planning, organizing, directing and controlling the financial activities in school so that the financial resources are used in an efficient and effective manner. The aim of financial management is to make adequate cash ready to meet required current and capital expenditure for maximum profit, and to ensure that the administration and management team are able to manage the budget in such a way that enhance effective utilization of funds made available to school heads. Financial management also entails forecasting, acquisition of fund and assistance in decision making on valuation. Thus, management of school funds requires more careful planning and resource management for higher quality education.

School finance management dates back to 1881, when a bill was passed at Lagos into an ordinance for the promotion and assistance of education. It was evolved through the payment of grant by the government of the day, between 1906 – 1919 to the 1942 – 1948 ordinances, which encouraged the setting of higher educational institutions and greater participation in funding education in Nigeria stated being viewed as an investment. Educational expansion was planned for in order to upgrade the manpower already in employment through further education to improve high level manpower.

Educational responsibility was to be distributed between the government, regions and local government. The served localities and the present were a matter requiring attention and policy decision. The Revenue Allocation Commission made recommendation on constitutional financial managements and grants paid according to regulations. The rise in enrolment, education teachers specialized in different fields brought more financial burden on education (Taiwo in Asodike et al., 2013). The success of channeling resources for high quality education largely depends on the finance management strategies adopted. However, administration refers to any formal effort geared toward the realization of goals using human, material and financial resources. Administration in school is refers to school administration or educational administration. Okendu in Usman (2016) defined school administration as a concept involving all the process through which resources are mobilized in educational institutions to accomplish the goals of education. For effective administration, the human and material resources are normally assembled together by educational administration within the school system for effective teaching and learning to be achieved.

In public secondary schools, the principals play the role of an administrator. They are saddled with the responsibilities of planning, organizing, coordinating, controlling and wanting other forms of resources. The management of academic and administrative affairs of schools traditionally falls within the purview of the principal. Amirize and Ololube (2018) asserted that the principal is responsible for controlling and coordinating all school activities ranging from student enrolment, planning of school time table, keeping school records like class register and logbook, updating his staff with information from Ministry of Education, making budgetary and fiscal plan, sourcing for fund to the school and managing the fund available to the school with the aim of realizing educational goals and objectives. For effective administration, the principal needs to manage the available funds in the school to avoid mismanagement, embezzlement, displacement of priorities in attending to school needs and wastages. Thus, an effective administrator oversees the effectiveness of the day-to-day activities of the school towards the attainment of set goals and objectives.

In consideration of the fact that education is capital intensive which implies that it cannot exist without funds which are limited in supply but the available fund needs to be effectively utilized to achieve educational goals. So, it is important that principals develop strategies and policies that will ensure that funds are economically, effectively and efficiently managed for attainment of educational goals at the secondary school level. Meanwhile shortage of funds is inimical to goal achievement of school administration, accessibility of fund makes school administration effective and leads to efficient instructional process which yield a quality output. It is against this background that this study is designed to investigate fund management strategies and principal's effective administration of public senior secondary school in Rivers State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The issue of finance in every educational system is essential. Schools generate funds internally and externally. These sources include income from school fees returns, investment ventures, sales and services while the external sources are from governmental and non-governmental sources. Governmental sources include grants, subventions and loans and the non-governmental sources form donations, endowment fund, appeal fund and even loans. However, some principals of public senior secondary in Rivers State are not left out from mismanagement acts and corrupt attitude as regards funds allocated to their schools. This may have been the reason most public senior secondary schools in Rivers State suffer gross misconduct, as cases of embezzlement and misappropriation of funds have become the order of the day. Funds allocated to principles for the maintenance of the school plant have been reported to be misused, grossly mismanaged, creating a great course of concern to educational stakeholders (Usman, 2016). According to him the tendency and urge to become wealthy often lead to such practices. Effective fund management strategies of planning, budgeting, accountability, integrity, etc. can help curb the ugly trend of fund mismanagement in public secondary schools in Nigeria. Consequence to this development, this study pursues to investigate budgeting and accountability as fund management strategies and principals' effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

## **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study is to investigate budgeting and accountability as fund management strategies and principals' effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The specific objectives of the study include to:

- Examine how budgeting as a fund management strategy can help principals' effective administration in public secondary schools in Rivers State.
- Determine how accountability as a fund management strategy can help principals' effective administration in public secondary schools in Rivers State.
- Find out the different challenges to effective fund management faced by principals in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

- How does budgeting as a fund management strategy lead to principals' effective administration in public secondary schools in Rivers State?
- How does accountability as a fund management strategy lead to principals' effective administration in public secondary schools in Rivers State?
- What are the different challenges to effective fund management faced by principals in public secondary schools in Rivers State?

## **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses guided the study:

- Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between budgeting as a fund management strategy and effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between accountability as a fund management strategy and effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- Ho<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the challenges to effective fund management and effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Concept of Management**

Management is the process of directing and controlling a group of people or an organization to reach a goal. This is an effective and efficient organization and the utilization of the available human and material resources in a certain system with purposes of achieving set goals of other system (Nwankwoala, 2016). To Amirize and Ololube (2018), management is an organizational process that includes strategic planning, setting objectives, managing resources, deploying the human and financial assets needed to achieve objectives, and measuring results. For Kelechukwu

(2011) management is a collaborative effort geared towards the utilization of human and material resources for attainment of organizational objectives. Amirize in Koko and Nwiyi (2019) defined management as the process designed to ensure the cooperation, participation, involvement and intervention of others in the effective achievement of some set or specific objectives in an organization. Then, Irikana and Weli (2019) asserted that management is an executive process function which involves the strategic process of designing and maintaining an environment in which individuals working together in groups efficiently accomplish selected objectives or desired goals. Therefore, management can be seen as a process of planning, decision making, organization, leading, motivation and controlling the human, financial, information and physical resources of an organization to attain its goals efficiently and effectively.

Management of education at the secondary level deals with the educational manager being in a position to connect the human factor and most especially financial resources and other material resources through comprehensive planning, organizing, directing, coordinating all the educational resources towards goal attainment. To buttress the above fact, Owhondah (2020) opined that educational management refers to the administration of the education system in which group combines human and material resources to supervise, plan, strategize, and implement structures to execute an education system. According to him, educational management is related to Henri Fayol's 14 principles of management which includes; division of labour, authority, discipline, unity of command, unity of direction, subordination of individual interests to the collective interests, remuneration, centralization, scalar chain, order, equity, stability of tenure of personnel, initiative and morale. Similarly, Mulder (2018) noted that Gulick and Urwick in 1937 summed up the elements of management using the acronyms POSDCORB which when written in full stands for; P-Planning, O-Organizing, S-Staffing, D-Directing, C- Coordinating, R-Reporting, B-Budgeting.

The above listed principles of management apply to management of various organizational sectors for which education is one. The educational manager needs to plan how things should be done to avoid sudden shortage which may hinder school activities. Plan and organize the use of human and material factors, direct and coordinate the activities of the school players and usage of the facilities to forestall clash of interest and efficient use of such facilities for optimum results. He reports/communicates to both the super-ordinate and the subordinates on issues that concerns them accordingly. He also budgets at the planning stage to make for judicious use of fund allocated. In education industry, all the above principles of management are integrated in every activity mobilized to assist in achieving pre-determined goal of secondary education.

### **Budgeting as a Fund Management Strategy**

Budgeting is essential to good financial management. It is the process of creating a plan to spend your money. It is simply balancing your expenses with your income. The spending plan is called the budget. The budget has been defined by different authorities and educational institutions in different ways. In the general sense, the budget is described as a precise statement representing a financial estimate of income and expenditure of the government for a certain period in cost accounting, budget means a quantitative statement prepared before a particular period to serve as an estimate of future receipt and disbursement (Business Jargons, 2018). Koko and Nwiyi (2019) defined budget as a planned action of organizations blueprint for the coming months of the coming or for a year expressed in monetary terms. The chartered institute of management

accountant (CIMA) in Oyeboade (2018) defined budget as a financial or quantitative statement prepared and approved prior to a defined period of time for the purpose of attaining a given objective.

Akhilesh and Michael (2021) perceived that budget is an estimation of revenue and expenses over a specified future period and is utilized by government, business and individuals. The integrated process of preparing, implementing and operating budgets is called budgeting. Budgeting is an essential instrument that can be used by school administrators to make sure that funds are properly managed. According to Izeoyi in Amirize and Ololube (2018), budgeting is a technique used by school administrators to help determine how many financial resources will be needed and they will be used. Ogbonnaya in Amirize and Ololube (2018) defined educational budget as the translation of educational needs into financial plan which is interpreted to the public in a way that when formally adopted, it expresses the kind of educational programme the community is willing to support financially and morally for a one-year period. Simply put, school budget is based on programmes and activities of a school fiscal year or a specified period of time (Amirize & Ololube, 2018). According to them, a good budget requires comprehensiveness, a meaningful presentation of budgeting balance and appropriate grouping of expenditure items. They explained further that there should be clear and realistic sets of goals and objectives to be achieved during budget planning, and that it must go through the process that is based on sound and quality information. Nwankwoala (2016) stated that a good budget preparation must adhere to the following:

- **Preparing the Budget:** This stage takes into consideration all the information collected from the educational plan; expenditure plan and revenue plan. Every staff along with the Head teacher is involved in the preparation of effective budget. Every item of need received from various departments is costed while sources of revenues and amounts are also defined. It is at this stage that the revenue and expenditure plans are brought together to form formal budget document.
- **Presenting the Budget:** The formal budget so formed is presented to the appropriate authority for appraisal, amendments if there are errors and for final approval and adoption. If irrelevancies and duplication as well as inconsistencies are observed, there may be need for a review of the budget.
- **Adoption of the Budget:** A well-made budget will be adopted at this stage along with budget proposals, for the entire Local Government Area concerned.
- **Administration of the Budget:** Administration of the budget involves disbursement of funds belonging to a school. It is the responsibility of the school administrators to do this. This must be in line with the authorization allowed in the approved budget document. They must make sure that services and items to be purchased with school money are carefully and favorably priced. These items must be of adequate quality. However, it is expected that the administrators should use their discretion in the administration of the budget. Even though they are expected to follow the provisions of the budget strictly, yet they should not be a slave to it, since the budget is only a financial guide. There should also be provision for budgetary revision in case of unexpected occurrences like natural disasters. This implies that a 10 percent contingency fund should be included in any annual budget to take care of the unexpected cost or expenditures.
- **Appraisal of the Budget:** Appraisal of the budget involves the auditing and verification of the accuracy of the accounts as maintained by the school system. The school

administrator should audit his/her school account from time to time to ensure strict adherence to budgetary provisions. In the same vein external auditors are equally meant to examine the efficiency and effectiveness of the administrations of the budget through accounting, auditing and reporting.

Although the principals of schools are responsible for planning and coordinating budget, but there is need for them to consult other relevant authorities and department to encourage corporate efforts and foster its preparation, implementation and operational process. The importance of budgeting as a fund management strategy cannot be overemphasized. It offers principals the opportunity for constant monitoring of the financial transaction of the school, serves as an instrument for control or financial discipline, provides a benchmark for periodic comparison and it clearly shows level of government commitment in funding education. Moses in Amirize and Olorube (2018) opined that the fundamental importance of a budget is that it controls the financial behaviour of administrators in the school system, meaning that a budget guides the financial management practices of educational administrators, whether in the primary, secondary or tertiary levels of education. Nwankwoala (2016) outlined some of the importance of budgeting to school administration as follows:

- It compels schools, boards or government to lay down plans of action;
- It shows the efficiency of school management as it states cost per unit of services;
- It creates an adequate framework for the sharing, accounting and auditing of finance made available to the school;
- It shows the expected revenue and the sources;
- It also shows other contributions and pressures on the budget that are anticipated in the financial year. For example, the pressure of inflation and how school intends to raise more money;
- It helps to made comparison possible between years in the quantity and quality of services rendered and required, number of teaching staff and work load.

Budgeting is a feasible fund management strategy. The planning, programming and budgeting system (PPBS) is the budgetary technique that guides administrator to diagnose the state of wealth of the institution. According to Koko and Nwiyi (2019), planning, programming and budgeting system involves the looking at the objectives one wants to achieve, looking at the alternative of the objective one wants to achieve, attaching the sequence as to the set goal and execute them.

Ebong in Asodike et al. (2013), described the PPBS technique thus, in

- P - Planning the objectives are clearly defined, alternative strategies for reaching and choosing objective are made possible. In programming the link between planning and budgeting is established which involves the elaboration of decisions on resources required and output to be achieved.
- B- Budgeting here refers to the process of translating the programme that have been decided on into the budget format with precision in terms of input, price and output.
- S- The PPBS is turned into a systematic process through the inbuilt characteristics of constant evaluation.

In effective administration of public schools, planning, programming and budgeting are based on the systems approach of setting goals or objectives for the school. It takes into consideration alternative means of achieving set objectives and allocation of financial resources of the institution in such a way that the desired outcome is realized. The importance of the PPBS system to the education system cannot be overemphasized. It has helped to solve the problem on the complicated issue of defining and measuring educational output, the complex alternative strategies which could lead to non-functional overload of information and lack of relevant data to provide for appropriate cost-effective analysis.

However, budgeting is an act of setting target. Also, in educational institutions especially in public senior secondary schools, the attainment of expected educational goals and objectives mainly depend on planning and management of school funds by the school administrators. Budgeting guarantees effectiveness of school administration by ensuring that only planned programmes are pursued, unnecessary spending is avoided and that all proposed expenditure are matched towards the expected revenue, leaving no room for deficit but rather creating a greater room for budget surplus (Moses in Amirize & Ololube 2018). Thus, this control instrument could serve as a measure to be used in allocating resources to education in line with specific programmes, project and other educational activities in a school within a specified time frame.

### **Accountability as a Fund Management Strategy**

Accountability in the education system is one of the vital mechanisms to be put in place towards achieving the goals of the school and ensuring effective fund management. Accountability is viewed in diverse perspectives. Ethically, Hunt in Usman (2016) viewed accountability as the readiness or preparedness to give an explanation or justification to relevant stakeholders for one's judgement, intensions, acts and omission when appropriately called upon to do so. To Irikana and Weli (2019) accountability refers to the process of being answerable to one's action or inaction in a specific area of endeavor of interest that one is entrusted with. Accountability ensures that people conferred with responsibility for public fund have a duty to report the way in which the resources were allocated, applied and the result achieved (Owhondah, 2018). Knezevick in Usman (2016) opined that the scope of accountability implies financial accountability, budgeting, fiscal auditing and reporting to satisfy the existing demands of the public. While Okpala (2012) stated that accountability is the obligation of persons or entities entrusted with public resources to be answerable for the fiscal, managerial and program responsibilities that have been conferred on them and report to those that have conferred these responsibilities.

Accountability in education is concerned with keeping records of school activities and using such records to assess institutional performance in relation to the achievement of predetermined objectives (Umesi et al., 2020). This is buttressed by Okoroma in Usman (2016) who argued that accountability in education has elicited much attention as a result of the following reasons:

- The system which facilitates the objectives in education is a creation of the society which must maintain checks and balances;



- Education is generally funded by society through taxes which must necessarily exercise some control in all facet of the educational process. The concept of educational accountability is used to describe;
- The nature, sources and amount of revenue inputs in education;
- The appropriation of revenues to various programmes; and
- The actual expenditure in these programmes.

Essentially, proper record keeping facilitates accountability in the management of school fund. The role of the administrator in all this regard includes; the establishment and maintenance of a clearly defined channel of accountability so that everyone involved in the handling or the management of school funds knows who to report to at any point in time, the administrator is also expected to ensure that financial records are audited regularly to averter regularities and to ensure that all monetary transactions are properly documented.

In the issue of school fund management, accountability is usually linked to the management of the scarce sources of education to ensure prudent utilization of available resources for the accomplishment of the stated goals of education. The integration of accountability in the education management processes helps to improve service delivery and control indiscipline in the organization thereby increasing efficiency in the system (Usman, 2016). Thus, accountability is the answerability of school heads (principals) on issues bordering on school income and expenditure. The school administrators (principals) are answerable to the ministry of education, the school board and all agencies funding education. Amirize and Ololube (2018) asserted that accountability has become a collective responsibility that must involve all stakeholders. According to them, principals are expected to handle the issue of fund in such a way and manner that shows responsibility and accountability to all the critical stakeholders i.e., parents, learners, the community and the government. In line with the above, Usman (2016) maintained that educational administrators are both accountable to the entire stakeholders in education as well as accountable for achieving the goals of education using available resources. Koko and Nwiyi (2019) explained the various areas of accountability as follows:

- **Accountability for Money:** The educational administrators are expected to give account for the money received. The account is based on how he collected and disbursed the money for the smooth running of the school system.
- **Accountability for Things:** The administrator also accounts for all physical facilities in the school, such as the school buildings, vehicles, laboratories, and even the staff needs to be adequately accounted for, though in request.
- **Accountability for Results:** The objective of an educational system is very important in this regard. The school administrators need to give a proper account of the achievements of the objective of every educational activity within the specified account and that is why they insist that teachers should do their best as to produce good result.
- **Accountability for Actions/Deeds:** The actions of the school administrator and the entire staff and student actions or deeds within a given school and given period must be accounted for by the administrator himself. Therefore, school managers should not exhibit lukewarm attitudes toward the subordinate activities or behaviour believing that they will be held responsible for such activities.

In order to aid the process of accountability in public secondary school, principals should among others (i) identify the goals and objectives of the educational system (ii) assess periodically how fully such goals and objectives have been achieved (iv) identify which factors assisted or hampered strategy's goal accomplishment in the system and (v) design strategies to improvement. To improve accountability for effective administration of public secondary schools, administrators should deploy the following strategies:

- **Regular Supervision:** This is a technique that assists educational administrators to foster the professional growth of workers in the education system. It enhances the development of appropriate educational goals and facilitates the selection of appropriate teaching procedures and facilities.
- **Staff Motivation:** Administrators should know how to keep good morals of their workers in order to obtain maximum efficiency and effectiveness from them.
- **Effective Communication:** This helps educational administrators to fulfill their executive functions of planning, organizing, motivating, resolving conflicts and controlling activities which are linked to accountability. This can enhance job satisfaction and create in employees a high sense of belongingness and loyalty to the organization.
- **Evaluation:** This is a formal process carried out within a school setting to improve on the present level of performance. It helps to monitor effectiveness of a school system.

### **Challenges of Effective Fund Management in Public Secondary School**

Effective fund management is one of the responsibilities of principals in public secondary schools. In execution of this task, they are faced with a number of problems including leadership incompetency. Most administrators do not have necessary skills to manage fund effectively, they lack leadership qualities to plan, budget and account for fund. This maybe as a result of the fact that majority of them are untrained and do not have the necessary professional training required for the performance of such duties. According to Amirize and Ololube (2018), the fact that principals rose from the rank as classroom teachers to become heads (principals) without adequate professional preparation for task of that magnitude has no doubt worsen their handicapped situation in school fund management.

Also, in the area of competency most principals are not conversant with the proficiency in finance management and are not qualified to be finance managers. A good number of educational administrators as well as planners are not knowledgeable enough with financial terminologies, concept and principles in order to practice as Chief Executive of Institution or Organization (Amirize & Ololube, 2018). They added that these terminologies include planning, budgeting system, cost benefit analysis, financial accounting, taxation etc. The issue of incompetency of leaders is a foundational problem that has ravaged the effective administration of school with embezzlement of funds, wastages, diverting of public fund to personal pocket etc. In line with above, school heads, teachers and non-teaching staff must go for financial management training to enhance leadership skills and proper financial management in educational institutions (Walter, 2019).

Misappropriation of school fund is another problem or challenge associated to effective administration in public secondary school. Misappropriation of school fund is the misuse of money officially allocated for a particular task in the school system. Mestry in Ololube (2016) opined that misappropriation is an intentional or illegal use of fund for one's own use or other

unauthorized purposes, particularly by public officials. When principals misappropriate or misuse funds allocated to schools for other purposes not in line with the schools' budget, it brings lapses in the smooth running of the school. It can also hinder the procurement of equipment, instructional materials etc.

Mismanagement of school fund is a challenge to effective fund management. In the view of Ololube (2016), fund mismanagement is the management processes and practices that deliberately mishandle money made available to a person in a way that are characterized as badly or carelessly. He emphasized that the mismanagement of education funds means to manage incompetently or dishonesty of education funds put in one's care. Financial management in public secondary school is an integral part of the principals' responsibility which cover areas such as procurement of fund their allocation, monitoring their use in the interest of accountability and producing financial report for relevant stakeholders. Without good financial management practices, schools would find it difficult to achieve their goals. Mobegi (2015) affirmed that schools that experienced high financial mismanagement had inadequate facilities which attracted students transfer from one school to another and this had effect on the quality education as it affected syllabus coverage which directly impacted on performance. Thus, financial management and reporting system for all public schools should be enhanced to minimize opportunities for embezzlement of funds and to improve transparency in the management of secondary schools (Mobegi et al., 2012).

Lack of properly planning which is as a result of financial inadequacies is a major challenge to effective fund management in schools. Education plans are worthless where there are no finances to execute them (Nwankwoala, 2016). The mismanagement and misappropriation of school funds are all as a result of lack of proper planning. This certainly creates situations of confusion and backwardness in education (Nwankwoala, 2016). In line with the above, Walter (2019) posited that lack of planning affects the effectiveness of schools as it complicates reporting on achieved objectives and result. According to him, the planning process helps to develop objectives, key activities, milestones, key performance indicators (KPIs), financial policies and procedures. Consequently, most school principals struggle to effectively implement their budgets, and this hinders the school to improve the quality of education. Affirming this Nsikan and Emmanuel in Ololube (2016) asserted that proper planning and effective administration are needed because no organization functions excellently without fundamental policy framework in its planning, organizing and controlling mechanism.

Lack of budgeting control is a constraint to effective fund management. In any organization, budgets served as guides or benchmark to financial planning and project management. However, most principals and bursars are being found wanting during the audit process due to poor financial policies and procedures. In most schools, budgets are not being effectively monitored to the extent that the numerous budget amendment and adjustment are being done without the required authority approval (Walter, 2019). This is against the financial policy thus the school development plan should inform budget management and as such minimize deviation from set goals.

Lack of budget reviews another factor that hinders effective fund management in public secondary school. Financial control is a fundamental aspect of effective financial management. Budgets are not being reviewed after every end of school term hence there will be no budget analysis being done. Budget review is part of financial control to determine any variance between planned and actual results. The determination of the variances is useful as a spur to immediate remedial action if actual performance is below expectation. Budget review helps to

enhance financial control and this is a continuous process to ensure school resources are mobilized and distributed effectively. The process also enhances monitoring and evaluating school's financial progress and initiating corrective action.

There is a lack of leadership accountability in school financial management. This is exhibited through the seemingly pervasive abuse of offices by school heads (principals). School heads are regarded as the accounting officers of schools and as such they use their power to force bursars to release funds or make other payments without following procedures. This emanates from improper and ineffective school management and lack of stringent accounting rules and procedures. Such practices exhibit a lack of values, honesty and integrity. A competent principal should objectively manage and execute school's budgeting activities among other diverse responsibilities and he should ensure compliance with the principles of legality, transparency, efficiency and legality.

Schools also face the challenge of falling to account for expenses incurred as a result of the absence of receipt to support the expenditures incurred. Poor record keeping leads management to difficulties in administering, developing and supervising education system. According to Agabi in Asodike et al. (2013), proper record keeping facilitates accountability in the management of school fund. Without records, it is practically impossible to determine responsibilities for actions and hold individuals accountable.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The researcher adopted the correlational design. It is because the study is concerned with the relationship between fund management strategies and principals' effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Secondary and primary information was gotten from books, journals, magazines, newspapers, past projects/dissertations/theses and internet prints. The primary information was mainly gotten through the administration of the research instrument administered on respondents in the public senior secondary schools of study.

### **Population of the Study**

The population of the study comprised of the entire 6,893 teachers and 286 principals in the 286 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State (RSSSSB, 2021).

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

The sample size for the study was 1008 teachers and 69 principals drawn from the entire population which represents 15% of the total population. Furthermore, proportionate sampling was used to select teachers and principals while a simple random sampling technique was used to select three (3) schools from each local government area in the state.

### **Instrument for Data Collection**

A Questionnaire was adopted in this study as the research instrument for data collection, titled, "Budgeting and Accountability as Fund Management Strategies and Principals' Effective

Administration Questionnaire (BAFMSPEAQ)". The instrument consisted of two sections, A & B. Section A was to sought information on demographic data of the respondents, while Section B was sought answers from the respondents on three (3) research questions with sub items which covers dimensions of budgeting, accountability and challenges of effective fund management. The questionnaire was closed structured using the four-point Likert-type scale of strongly agreed (SA) = 4, agreed (A) = 3, disagreed (D) = 2, and strongly disagreed (SD) = 1. In answering the research questions, the mean scores of each item was compared with the real limit of the numbers:  $4+3+2+1 = 10$ ,  $10 \div 4 = 2.5$ .

### **Validity of the Research Instrument**

The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by presenting the instrument to the researcher's supervisor and two other lecturers in the department for vetting. Their suggestions, corrections and recommendations were put into consideration in the final draft of the instrument.

### **Reliability of the Instrument**

Reliability test was conducted on the sample, for the purpose of assessing the internal consistency of the measures through pilot study with the aid of SPSS computer application. The output confirmed that all the items tested were valid and internally consistent. The reliability of the instrument was tested using the Cronbach's Alpha method, which revealed .726 which is up to the accepted standard.

### **Method of Data Collection**

The researcher administered the questionnaire with the help of four research assistants who were adequately trained for the exercise. This ensured quick administration of the questionnaire and also easy retrieval of the questionnaire.

The researcher issued 1077 questionnaires and, in the end, retrieved only 980, of which 81 were not useful, leaving only 899 valid questionnaires. This represents approximately 83.5% response rate and this is considered significant for the study.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

Data obtained through the administration of questionnaire on respondents were analysed using mean and standard deviation statistics to answer the research questions while, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The result in Table 1 shows the status of the respondents, either teachers or principals. From the table above, we can see we have teachers, which is 94.15% that represents the greater percentage of the sample and 53 principals with 5.85%.

The table above shows the different amount of time spent in the teaching profession, with the largest groups being those who have been in the service for 1-5years having 30.7%. The next

group of respondents are the 6–10 years having a 23.8%, followed by the 16 years and above group with 22.9% and lastly, the 11-15 years group having a 22.6%.

The above table shows the academic qualification of the respondents. 307 people have obtained their B.Ed while, 320 people have gone further to add an M.Ed, and 272 respondents have gone further to have their Ph.D.

Table 1: Respondents Demographic Information

<b>Status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
Teacher	846	94.15
Principal	53	5.85
<b>Total</b>	<b>899</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Years of Experience</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
1-5	276	30.7
6-10	214	23.8
11-15	203	22.6
16 &above	206	22.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>899</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Academic Qualification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
B.Ed	307	34.1
M.Ed	320	35.6
Ph.D	272	30.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>899</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Research Question One:** How does budgeting as a fund management strategy lead to principals’ effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 2: Budgeting as a fund management strategy and Principals’ effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers state

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Remark</b>
1	Budgeting makes principals of schools to be financially discipline.	2.48	1.121	Disagree
2	Budgeting helps principals to make periodic comparison between quantity and quality, number of teachers and workload.	2.60	1.138	Agree
3	Compels schools, boards or government to lay down plans of action.	2.44	1.120	Disagree
4	Creates an adequate framework for the sharing, accounting, and auditing of finance available to the school.	2.50	1.159	Agree
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>2.505</b>		<b>Agree</b>

The table above shows the various mean and standard deviation values of data from the respondents’ questionnaires about whether or not budgeting as a fund management strategy can lead to principals’ effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. With a grand mean of 2.505, the respondents have shown their agreement on the subject matter, which is further reinforced by the decisions shown on items two (2) and four (4), which talks about how budgeting helps principals make periodic comparison between quantity and quality, number of teachers and workload; and how budgeting creates an adequate framework for the sharing, accounting and auditing of finance available to the school.

**Research Question Two:** How does accountability as a fund management strategy lead to principals' effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 3: Accountability as a fund management strategy and Principals' effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers state

S/N	Items	Mean	SD.	Remark
5.	Integration of accountability in the education management process help improve service delivery and control indiscipline.	2.58	1.154	Agree
6.	Accountability helps administrators to assess institutional performance in relation to the achievement of predetermined objectives.	2.67	1.098	Agree
7.	Principals with accountability exhibit respect for values, honesty and integrity.	2.54	1.093	Agree
8.	Principals strictly comply with the principle of legality, transparency and efficiency.	2.53	1.062	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.58</b>		<b>Agree</b>

The table above displays the mean and standard deviation values which help us to have an insight on the respondents' minds, with respect to the question of how accountability as a fund management strategy, can lead to principals' effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. With a grand mean of 2.58, the general feeling towards this notion is positive. That is to say, the respondents agree that accountability as a fund management strategy improves the effective administration of the principals in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

**Research Question Three:** What are the different challenges to effective fund management faced by principals in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 4: Challenges to fund management strategies and Principals' effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers state

S/N	Items	Mean	SD.	Remark
9.	Leadership incompetency on fund management.	2.44	1.100	Disagree
10.	Misappropriation, mismanagement and embezzlement of school funds.	2.52	1.113	Agree
11.	Lack of planning and budget review	2.65	1.117	Agree
12.	Lack of leadership accountability.	2.44	1.120	Disagree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.513</b>		<b>Agree</b>

In the table above, the respondents show their opinion concerning the challenges to effective fund management that will be faced by the principals in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Going by the mean of 2.44 in both items nine (9) and twelve (12), we see that the respondents disagree about leadership incompetency on fund management and lack of leadership accountability being challenges to effective fund management that will affect the work of the principals in public senior secondary school. However, this is not the case in items ten (10) and eleven (11), with the mean of 2.52, and 2.65, the respondents agree that misappropriation, mismanagement and embezzlement of school funds; and lack of planning and budget review are serious detriments to effective fund management. However, with a grand mean of 2.513, it shows

that the respondents averagely agree that leadership incompetency on fund management, mismanagement, misappropriation and embezzlement of school funds, lack of planning and budget review and lack of leadership accountability are all challenges to Principals effective administration in public senior secondary school in Rivers state.

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant relationship between budgeting as a fund management strategy and effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 5: Pearson correlation coefficient of respondents’ answer for budgeting as a fund management strategy and effective administration

		Budgeting as a Fund Management Strategy	Effective Administration
<b>Budgeting as a Fund Management Strategy</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.003
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.043
	N	899	899
<b>Effective Administration</b>	Pearson Correlation	.003	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.043	
	N	899	899

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The results from the table (5) of analysis for hypothesis one stated above showed that there is a significant relationship between budgeting as a fund management strategy, and principals’ effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, where correlation value  $r=.003$ ,  $p<0.043$ . The implication of this result is that the respondents agreed that budgeting as a fund management strategy, positively influences principals’ effective administration in public senior secondary schools. Thus, hypothesis one was rejected.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant relationship between accountability as a fund management strategy and effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 6: Pearson correlation coefficient of respondents’ answer for accountability as a fund management strategy and effective administration

		Accountability as a Fund Management Strategy	Effective Administration
<b>Accountability as a Fund Management Strategy</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.052
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.035
	N	899	899
<b>Effective Administration</b>	Pearson Correlation	.052	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.035	
	N	899	899

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The results from Table 6 above for hypothesis two stated showed that there is a significant relationship between accountability as a fund management strategy, and principals’ effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, where correlation value



$r=.052$ ,  $p<0.035$ . The implication of this result is that the respondents agreed that accountability as a fund management strategy positively influences the principals' effective administration in public secondary schools. Thus, hypothesis two was rejected.

**Hypothesis Three:** There is no significant relationship between the challenges to effective fund management and effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 7: Pearson correlation coefficient of respondents' answer for the challenges to effective fund management and effective administration

		Challenges to Effective Fund Management	Effective Administration
<b>Challenges to Effective Fund Management</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.042
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.043
	N	899	899
<b>Effective Administration</b>	Pearson Correlation	.042	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.043	
	N	899	899

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The results from table 7 for the analysis of hypothesis three showed that there is a significant relationship between challenges to effective fund management, and principals' effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, where correlation value  $r=.042$ ,  $p<0.043$ . The implication of this result is that the respondents agreed that challenges to effective fund management, positively influences principals' effective administration in public senior secondary schools. Thus, hypothesis three was rejected.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### Budgeting as a fund management strategy and Principals' effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers state

Hypothesis three of this study states that there is no significant relationship between budgeting as a fund management strategy and effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The hypothesis was rejected because there is a significant relationship between budgeting as a fund management strategy and effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State as evidenced by the result of our analysis; correlation value  $r=.003$ ,  $p<0.043$ , and further emphasized by Moses in Amirize and Ololube (2018) who stated that the importance of budgeting as a fund management strategy cannot be overemphasized as it offers principals the opportunity for constant monitoring of the financial transaction of the school, serves as an instrument for control or financial discipline, provides a benchmark for periodic comparison and it clearly shows level of government commitment in funding education. They even went further to say that the fundamental importance of a budget is that it controls the financial behaviour of administrators in the school system, meaning that a budget guides the financial management practices of educational administrators, whether in the primary, secondary or tertiary levels of education.

## **Accountability as a fund management strategy and Principals' effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers state**

Hypothesis four of this study states that there is no significant relationship between accountability as a fund management strategy and effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The hypothesis was rejected because there is a significant relationship between accountability as a fund management strategy and effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State as evidenced by the result of our analysis; correlation value  $r=.052$ ,  $p<0.035$ . Our claim is backed up by Usman (2016) who is of the opinion that the integration of accountability in the education management processes helps to improve service delivery and control indiscipline in the organization there by increasing efficiency in the system.

## **Challenges to fund management strategies and Principals' effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers state**

Hypothesis five of this study states that there is no significant relationship between the challenges to fund management and Principals effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The hypothesis was rejected because there is a significant relationship between the challenges to fund management and Principals effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State as evidenced by the result of our analysis; correlation value  $r=.042$ ,  $p<0.043$ . Many sources have made statement supporting our deduction. One of them is Amirize and Ololube (2018), who are of the opinion that the fact that most principals rose from the rank as classroom teachers to become heads (principals) without adequate professional preparation for task of that magnitude (which is a challenge), has no doubt worsen their handicapped situation in school fund management.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

This study sought to examine the relationship between budgeting and accountability as fund management strategies and principals' effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The study had three (3) objectives, three (3) research questions and three (3) hypotheses, that were analysed based on the responses provided by the respondents.

The study was anchored on the functionalism theory. Different fund management strategies, including: planning, budgeting, accountability, were discussed extensively, as well as the challenges to effective fund management. The design of the study was the correlational design, which helped the researcher to describe the characteristics of respondents and analyse the relationships that existed between variables. The population of the study consisted of teachers and principals in public senior secondary schools in the Rivers State area of Nigeria. They were randomly selected from the different schools in the state. The questionnaire was structured in the four-point Likert-type scale of strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, and strongly disagreed.

Reliability and validity tests were conducted on the sample, for the purpose of assessing the internal consistency of the measures through pilot study with the aid of SPSS computer application. The output confirmed that all the items tested were valid and internally consistent. The reliability of the instrument was tested using the Cronbach's Alpha method, which revealed .726, which is up to the accepted standard.

The data gathered for the study were analysed using mean and standard deviation analysis, through the aid of SPSS. The Pearson Product Moment Coefficient was adopted to test the relationship between fund management strategies and Principals' Effective Administration at 0.05 level of significance.

The findings of the study revealed that budgeting and accountability as fund management strategies indicated a strong positive relationship with principals' effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The study therefore rejected all the null hypotheses and concluded that budgeting and accountability as fund management strategies are essential for principals' effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

## Recommendations

In view of the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- Public senior secondary schools principals should prepare budget in consultation with other stakeholders such as heads of department, senior teachers and the board of Governors for effective school administration.
- Accountability should be a standard practice for all school principals to achieve effective fund management in schools and curb financials irresponsibility.
- Budgeting and accountability should be non-negotiable in secondary schools, as the lack of these things could spell doom for the financial state of the administration.

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