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## **Financial Management Practices in Cross River State Secondary Schools: Means and Methods for Attainment of Excellence**

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study was to ascertain the financial management practices in Cross River State secondary schools. Financial management skill is a sine qua non for every school administrator for efficient and effective running of the school to ensure judicious use of available funds. The population for the study consisted of 80 principals and 80 bursars of secondary schools in Cross River State. Two research questions and one hypothesis were used to elicit information from the respondents. An Instrument – Financial Management Practices Questionnaire (FMPQ) was used to collect data. The 24 items of the instrument were subjected to the test of construct validity use factor analysis to ensure the face validity. The data obtained from the instrument were subjected to statistical analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the questionnaire and the t-test was used to analyse the hypothesis.*

For any organization or society to function well, it must be financially viable. This is because finance is required for the establishment of infrastructures, equipment, salaries etc. To operate any system or project without adequate finance is quite an uphill task which could lead to either non-accomplishment or frustration on the job. Finance pervades all disciplines and is involved in all human and economic activities. It highly influences the psychological behaviour of individuals as well as the sociological and economic environment of organizations. Thus finance occupies a very crucial position in decision making of individuals, business, non-business organizations and the government be it state or federal governments.

Financial management is the managerial activities which deals with planning, controlling, organizing the financial resource of an organization; that is, the management of the finances of a business in order to achieve the financial objectives of the business (Donnell and Keontz, 2004). More so Onye (2000) opined that financial management may be defined as the process involved in ensuring that financial resources are obtained and used both profitably and effectively, that is, in the accomplishment of the objectives of the organization. It is a managerial activity which is concerned with the planning and controlling of an organization's financial resources (Anene, 2001).

Ukeje (2006) opined that financial resources means purchasing power, in the form of cash or credit. The essence of financial management is the effective and efficient administration of an organization's financial resources to achieve the stated goals of the organization.

The backbone of an institution is finance and the principal is the manager of this finance. The principals are therefore the "officers controlling vote". The school principalship has been recognized as a key position in administration of schools. The administrative effectiveness and efficiency of the principal in management of the school and human resource tend to determine, to a large extent, the organizational climate of the school especially in the area of finance. Whether or not he has a bursar, he has the responsibility of seeing to it that adequate financial position is made in the budget for his school.

It is often his responsibility to see that the allocation in the school budget are spent according to the directives of his employer and in accordance with the financial regulations and procedures (FGN 2004). He invariably has to decide in the order of priority how to carry out his expenditures. He may be responsible for certain types of revenue collection, such as tuition fees, caution fees, caution deposits, examination fees, uniform fees and so on. Receipts have to be issued for all such monies. If he is an imprest holder, he should see that records are carefully kept of all items of expenditure. He has to see that a good system of accounting is often maintained in the school. In this respect, proper accounting procedure laid down by his employer should be followed. In most schools, this is the responsibility of the bursar but he still has to fulfill a supervisory function. (Ezeocha, 1985).

Obinna (1985) opined that financial management refers to administering funds under the guidance of a body of knowledge and a disciplined way of proceedings.

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Financial management is indeed important in the achievement of set objectives in secondary schools.

Management involves both planning and controlling. A manager forecast the likely outcome of particular actions which are intended to assist the achievement of his objective if the forecast is satisfactory, those actions are adopted as an operating plan. Therefore, the manager keeps watch on the implementation of the plan and are the results achieved so that if these deviate from his forecast he can either modify the plan or the manner in which it is being implemented (controlled). Planning and controlling are therefore two closely bound management functions which the financial manager performs in the modern enterprise (Pandy, 2000).

According to Ezra (2008), the function of financial management is to review and control decisions to commit and recommit funds to a new or ongoing uses. Contributing to this, Onye (2000) added that financial management is the wise managing of funds with a view to maximizing the revenue available in achieving the financial objectives. Financial manager has functions which include the review and control of decisions to commit funds to uses. Thus, in addition to raising funds, financial management is directly concerned with decision making on proper use of available funds. This is then why Pandy (2000) considered financial management as an integral part of the overall management of an organization. The roles and responsibilities of the administrators (principal, bursar and finance officers) in the prudent management of funds should therefore include the following:

- Review and control of management decisions taken.
- Supervision of cash receipts and payments and safe guarding of cash balances.
- Custody and safeguard of very vital securities, finance policies and other valuable papers.
- Record keeping and reporting
- Investment and finance decision.

The above roles include both:

- (a) Managerial finance functions which require skilled planning and
- (b) Routine finance functions, on the other hand which do not require great managerial ability to carry out.

These roles are chiefly clerical and incidental to handling of managerial finance functions.

Maurice (2007) posited that a good way to appreciate what financial management is all about is to relate it to economics, as an applied economics which concerns itself with the allocation of scarce financial resources among competing uses. Financial management therefore, requires skilled financial managers who, in the midst of scarce resources, can list their needs in order of preference. This will ensure wise utilization of available funds through the application of sound management principles.

Morelus (2001) maintained that where there is wide gap between planned goals and actual performance in most Government establishment of developing

countries, it is due to the failure of the financial administrator to perceive the vital aspect of the budget as a bridge between the plan and the action. He supported this by stating that the goals and objectives must generate new budget. The budget is an important tool for financial management.

Adaralegbe (2001) defines the budget as an expression of public purpose and educational programme. It is a reflection of past performance including both successes and failures. It is also a reflection of hope for that optimistic future when success will predominate and failure minimized. The school budget becomes the medium whereby educational policies are translated into fruition. Thus, the budget is an economic blueprint, a reflection of resource allocation decision strategies, with programme objectives structured by the amount of resources available.

Adesina (2001) defines the school budget broadly as an outline of the plan for financing the school system for a given period. Budgeting and planning are continuous processes that covers the entire school year. The budget acts as the bridge between the plan and the action. Auditing on the other hand, is a proper tool for financial management. Therefore, whether principals of schools like it or not they have got to address themselves to the rudiments of accounting processes so as to be successful in their jobs.

### **Statement of Problem**

For any organization or society to function well, it must be financially viable. This is because finance is required for the establishment of infrastructures equipment, salaries etc. To operate any system or project without adequate finance is quite an uphill task which could lead to either non-accomplishment or frustration on the job.

The situation in our schools, today is just as in most other facets of our national life, most austere, to say the least. Most of our schools are poorly equipped, poorly accommodated, and poorly maintained. This arises from the “no-money explanation” usually given by our government even in the midst of oil boom which should ensure adequate revenue to this nation.

The question then is, how do we expect school principals to perform their best, in such austere situation? How can the students learn the much emphasized skills in science and agriculture if they are not provided with equipment to use? It is true that most of our communities and public-spirited individuals are doing their best to help but adequate funding of the schools is yet to be realized. Based on the foregoing, the study is designed to address the issue of financial management in Cross River State secondary schools.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study is significant for establishing the facts about the financial management practices in Cross River State Secondary schools. It will show the various sources of funds for management of schools; its findings will create awareness. It is expected that the findings of this study will benefit the educational administrators, government and the society at large.

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To educational administrators, the study will help them in eliminating segregation especially by highlighting and streaming the financial management duties of both principals and bursars; sensitize them on other sources of fund apart from those known to them.

The findings of the study will help employers of labour to ensure that available funds are judiciously managed and insist on employing trustworthy people in the area of finance.

To the government, the findings of this study will create awareness to the Cross River State Post-Primary School Management Board (PPSMB) on some of the problems encountered by principals in managing the available funds. The study will also sensitize the school board on the lapses that lead to mismanagement of funds. The

### **Scope of the Study**

Study will be of immense importance and use to school principals.

This study is delimited to the extent to which financial managers (male and female) in secondary schools in Cross River State source for and judiciously manage the available funds. These financial managers include principals, bursars and accounts clerks.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study is designed to ascertain the financial management practices of secondary school principals in Cross River State. Specifically, this study sought to:

1. identify the major sources of funds for the management of secondary schools;
2. investigate how principals manage available funds.
3. ascertain the problems associated with financial management in secondary schools.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions were developed to guide the study;

1. What are the major sources of funds for the management of secondary schools?
2. How do principals manage the funds available to them?
3. What are the major problems associated with financial management practices in secondary schools?

### **Hypotheses**

The null hypotheses below guided the study and they were tested as 0.05 level of significance  $H_{01}$ .

There will be no significant difference between the mean ratings of the principals and bursars with regards to the management of available funds in secondary schools.

### **Research Design**

This study is basically a descriptive survey research. It was designed to investigate the financial management practices in Cross River Education Zone.

### **Population of Study**

The population of the study comprised 308 secondary school principals and bursars in 17 Local Government Areas of C.R.S Education Zone. (Based on the 2005/2006 school year, the population of principals and bursars was 154 each).

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

The sample consists of 80 principals and 80 bursars which gave a total of 160 respondents. The simple random technique was used. The sample was stratified into two strata, namely.

1. Principals
2. Bursar/Accounts clerks in bursary departments.

### **Instrument for Data Collection**

The instrument for data collection is structured questionnaire named Financial Management Practices Questionnaire (FMPQ). This was equally reviewed and modified to ensure that the items match with Nigerian culture and adequate to provide information on financial management. The instrument consists of 18 items.

### **Validation of the Instrument**

The instrument was validated by 3 experts in Test and Measurement. The corrections and other inadequacies of the draft instrument as observed by these experts were made.

### **Reliability of the Instrument**

The reliability of the instrument was determined using Crombach's Alpha for the internal consistency of the items. As internal consistency index of 0.87 was considered adequate for the instrument.

### **Data Collection Technique**

An earlier meeting with some of the principals helped the researchers to fix appropriate dates for distribution and collection of the questionnaire which was the chief instrument for the study. The questionnaire which was made up of two parts – A and B consists of 18 items each and were personally administered to the respondents and collected back by the researcher.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The data collected were analysed to answer the three research questions posed. The responses of the questionnaire items were weighted using modified Likert Four-Point category system: thus:

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- 1. Strongly Agree (4 points)
- 2. Agree (3 points)
- 3. Disagree (2 points)
- 4. Strongly Disagree (1 point)

$$\text{Mean } \bar{X} = \frac{4 + 3 + 2 + 1}{4} = \frac{10}{4} = 2.50$$

In analyzing the data, the simple mean was used to answer the research questions. The z-test statistics was used to test sole hypothesis formulated for the study.

Evidence from the analysis of data in respect of research question one (Table 1) shows that all the items constituting the cluster, except one, met acceptance criteria mean of 2.50 and above the four point rating scale. While the highest recommendation went for item 2 (mean of 3.54 and 3.50), and the lowest recommendation went to items with mean 1.78 and 1.96.

This therefore shows that the respondents (principals and bursars) unanimously agreed that the major sources of funds for the management of secondary schools include school fees paid by students, levies from parent teachers association, grants from Federal and State Governments, internally generated funds and donations. They however, did not accept philanthropic organizations as a major source of funds for schools.

**Analysis and Result**

**Research Question I:**

What are the major sources of funds for the management of secondary schools?

**Table 3: Mean Ratings for Secondary School Principals and Bursars on the Major Sources of Funds for the Management of Secondary Schools.**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Principals		Bursars	
		X	Decision	X	Decision
1.	Parents Teachers Association (PTA)	3.06	S.A	3.08	S.A
2.	School fees paid by students	3.54	S.A	3.50	S.A
3.	Federal, State and Local Government	3.28	A	3.10	S.A
4.	Internally generated funds	3.14	S.A	3.14	S.A
5.	Philanthropic	1.96	D	1.78	D
6.	Donations	2.90	A	2.84	D

The responses of principals and bursars on 18 items of financial management practice questionnaire were computed using mean and standard deviation to answer the questions. The analysis revealed that the mean ratio for both principals and bursars from question items range between 1.98 and 3.54 on a major point scale.

**Research Question 2**

How do principal manage the funds made available to them?

The data for providing answers to the above research question are presented in table 2 below;

**Table 2: Means Ratings of Secondary School Principals and Bursars on the Financial Management Practices of the Funds Made Available to Them.**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Principals		Bursars	
		X	Decision	X	Decision
7.	The principal spend the funds available in line with the planned objectives.	3.44	S.A	3.40	S.A
8.	The principals involve the sectional and departmental heads in budget preparation.	3.12	S.A	3.16	S.A
9.	College bursar ensures that expenditure is based on approved estimates for the year.	3.10	S.A	3.33	S.A
10.	Receipts are issued for all monies collected from students, parents and other agencies.	3.53	S.A	3.54	S.A
11.	Principals mismanage money meant for the development of the school.	1.58	S.A	1.56	S.A
12.	Records are carefully kept of all items of expenditure.	3.54	S.A	3.39	S.A

**Table 2:** represents the views of principals and bursars of secondary schools on how they manage the funds made available to them. Analysis of data as presented above (Table 2) in respect of research question two shows all items except one, met acceptance criterion mean of 2.55 on the four points rating scale. Accordingly therefore, regarding management of available funds, the respondents agreed that whether or not the principal has a bursar, he has the responsibility of seeing to it that adequate financial position is made in the budget for his school. It is often his responsibility to see that the allocation in the school budget are spent according to the

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directives of his employer and in accordance with the financial regulations and procedures.

The principals and bursars strongly agreed that receipts are issued for all monies collected from students, parents and other agencies and the records are carefully kept of all items of expenditure.

**Research Question 3:**

What are the major problems associated with financial management in secondary school?

The data for providing answers to the above research question are presented in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: The Mean Ratings of Secondary School Principals and Bursars on the Problems Associated With Financial Management in Secondary Schools.**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Principals		Bursars	
		X	Decision	X	Decision
13.	Inadequate funding of schools	3.37	S.A	3.08	S.A
14.	Management of available funds	1.58	S.D	1.42	S.D
15.	Inadequate financial management skills by principals and bursars.	2.08	D	1.89	S.D
16.	Principals do not take time to consider the likely problems to be encountered in procuring funds for financing projects.	2.32	D	2.12	D
17.	Hurried preparation of budget by finance officers	2.39	D	2.27	D
18.	Bursars neglecting their duties.	1.97	S.D	1.59	S.D

**Table 3** above presents the views of principals and staff of bursary department of secondary schools on what constitutes financial management problems of secondary schools. Looking at the table, it can be deduced that the mean scores of principals and bursars on problems associated with financial management range from 1.58 – 3.37 for the principals; while for the bursars it is 1.42 – 3.16 items 13 – 18 of principals have mean scores of 3.37, 1.58, 2.08, 2.32, 2.39 and 1.97 while for the bursar, items 13-18 have mean scores of 3.16, 1.41, 1.95, 2.12, 2.27 and 1.59 respectively.

It is therefore the opinion of principals and bursars of secondary schools in Cross River State that the major financial management problem of secondary schools in inadequate funding.

**Hypothesis One:**

There is no significant difference between the opinions of secondary school principals and bursars with regards to management of available funds.

**Table 4: Z-Test Analysis of the Differences Between the Mean Scores of Principals and Bursars on the Management Of Available Funds.**

**Summary of Z-Test for  $H_{01}$**

Variables	Mean	Sd	N	Prob Level	Df	Z-Cal	Z-Table	Result
Management of available funds.	3.13	0.80	100	0.05	198	0.77	1.96	$H_{01}$
Principals								
Bursars	3.04	0.85	100	0.05	198	0.77	1.96	Accepted

**Table 4:** Represents the z-test analysis of the difference between the means scores of principals and bursars on the management of available funds. The calculated z-value is 0.77 at 198 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of significance since the calculated value is less than the critical (table) value of 1.96, the null hypothesis was not rejected but

Accepted.

Therefore, there is no significant difference between opinions of secondary school principals and bursars with regard to the management of available fund Cross River State Education Zone.

**Summary of Findings**

The following constitute the summary of the findings:

1. The major sources of revenue for the bursars and principals comes from tuition fees, levies from PTA.
2. It was the opinion of secondary school principals and bursars in Cross River State that they are following the practices in managing the available funds; receipts are issued for every money collected; principals spend funds available in line with planned objectives, involve sectional heads and heads of departments in budget preparation; college bursars ensure that expenditure is based on approved estimates for the year and records are carefully kept for all items of expenditure. Also the respondents disagree that principals mismanage the available funds for the development of schools.
3. Secondary school principals and bursars agreed strongly that the problem associated with financial management in secondary schools include the following; inadequate funding of schools and delay in payment of salaries. The respondents all disagreed with items 14-18 being the cause of financial management problems.
4. There was no significant difference between the opinions of secondary school principals and bursars with regards to the problems that are associated with financial management in secondary schools in Cross River Education Zone.

## **Discussion**

The finding of this study revealed that the major source of funding is school fees. This study agrees with Ezeocha (2000) who upheld the importance of school fees in funding and identified the two types of budget necessary and the importance of prudent management.

It agrees with Ezra (2006) that funds should be committed and recommitted to new and ongoing uses. Morelus (2001) supported this by stating that the goals and objectives must generate new work, but in government, these must degenerate into fiscal plan of operation which is the budget. The study is in support of the importance of the budget, and that the principal involves the sectional heads and heads of departments in budget preparation.

The study revealed that principals and bursars of secondary schools in Cross River State have adequate skills for good financial management as receipts are issued for all monies collected, budgets prepared and expenditure based on approved estimate; for according to Maurice (2007) a good way to appreciate what financial management is all about is to relate it to economics, which concerns itself with scarce resources and skilful management of available resources. The major financial management problem as is evident in this study is inadequate funding.

## **Implication of the Study**

This study implies that adequate implementation of educational programmes, adequate funding and prudent management of available funds is needed for the achievement of educational objectives. It equally has implication for effective modern management concepts like Financial Regulation Approach (FRA), etc. The study is also considered useful for the promotion of prudent and efficient management of available funds in the secondary schools and all other financial institutions.

## **Recommendations**

Government should authorize principals of secondary schools to expend the source of funds for management of their schools by exploring other possible avenues.

The three arms of government, especially the State Government should provide adequate funds for the management of secondary schools in Cross River State. School fees should cease to be the major source of funds as it is in other states like Akwa Ibom State that funds secondary schools. Secondary school principals and bursars should continue to ensure that all monies collected are paid in promptly into the government's account, so as to minimize inadequate funding of secondary schools and delay in payment of teachers salaries.

Principals and bursars of secondary schools should continue to maintain good financial management practices in their schools, such as issuing receipts for all monies collected; involving the sectional heads and heads of departments in budget preparation and base expenditure on approved estimates for the year.

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