

Budget Planning and Defense Practices adopted by Principals of Public Secondary Schools for Effective Financial Management in Delta State, Nigeria

Dr. Lucky Julius ALAVBARE
University of Delta, Agbor, Delta State

Corresponding author: luckshine1@yahoo.com

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Abstract

The study investigated the budget planning and defense practices adopted by principals of public secondary schools for effective financial management in Delta State, Nigeria. The study answered two research questions, and further tested two hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 485 principals of public secondary schools in Delta State. Instrument titled, 'budget planning and defense practices adopted by principals of public secondary schools for effective financial management Scale (BPDPPPSSEFMS)' was used for the data collection. The data obtained were subjected to test of internal consistency using Cronbach Alpha, and the reliability indices for the clusters B1 and B2 were 0.86 and 0.82, respectively, and considered suitable for the study. The researchers together with the help of six research assistants collected relevant data. Mean was used for answering the research questions, while z-test statistic was used to test the null hypotheses. The study found among other things that in planning the budget, principals are guided by such practices as: inclusion of unexpected expenditure in budget planning; sources of revenue; objectives and goals the budget is to achieve, etc. It was concluded that principals have common budgeting practices they adopt in pursuit of effective financial management in public secondary schools in Delta State. Delta State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education should regularly organized school budgeting related workshop and seminars for principals, in order to keep them abreast with latest practices and workable strategies for planning a school budget.

Keywords: *Budget Planning, Budget Defense Practices, Principals, Public Secondary School, Effective Financial Management*

Introduction

Education is the brain behind every element of development in both local and global communities. There is no indices of development anywhere in the world that is directly or indirectly traceable to education. This underscores the indispensability of education to humanity. It provides the experiences that liberate the mind, the knowledge and skills that empower man, and the values that bond and sustain human existence and development. It also helps to boost human skills, knowledge, aptitude, attitude, potentials and other good virtues enrich human attributes. In a similar view, it is through education that one's potentials, character, skills and knowledge are developed to empower man for self-reliance and nation building (Amaikwu & Ofojebe, 2020). The fundamental impact of education on man is a process that cuts across all levels of formal education, namely: primary, secondary and tertiary. The current study is focused on secondary education.

Secondary education is the intermediary level of education that experiences that enables learners to transit from the primary level to the tertiary level. Similarly, Nwogu and Moses (2020), stressed that senior secondary education is the second rung of the Nigerian education ladder received after the primary/basic education, but before the tertiary stage, aimed at preparing the individual for useful living in the society, and higher education. Supporting this view, Azubuike (2023), posited that secondary school education encompasses all the educational experiences that a basic school leaver is exposed to, to get him ready for survival in the society and or to be eligible for enrolment into tertiary education programmes. This shows that this level of education is critical, with clear objectives and goals. This level of education can be owned and operated by the government as public secondary schools or as private secondary schools. The interest of the current study on the former, and managing this level of education requires a knowledgeable and skills manager, and such a skilled and experienced manager is referred to as the principal.

The principal is the chief administrator, who is tasked with utilizing available means and strategies to ensure that educational objectives and goals for this level is attained. The principal deploys his experience, skills, attitude and knowledge in coordinating and utilizing the resources, human, financial, physical, time, etc., at his disposal in pursuit of the set educational targets. Among the categories of resources aforementioned, the finance or funding is critical, because it serves as a lubricant that keep others flourishing. Finance is needed to maintain and sustain the activeness of other school resources. In consonance with the foregoing position, Amaikwu and Ofojebe (2020), pointed out that in the pursuit of the aims and objectives of secondary education, availability, adequacy and functionality of other resources are invariably finance-driven. For instance, funds are required for recruitment and maintenance of staff for the school, developing physical infrastructure, procurement of instructional aids, library equipment, laboratory apparatuses, sporting facilities, etc., and organizing extra-curricular activities such as drama, debate, dancing and quiz competitions. This consolidates the claim that finance is critical in school management and operations, and a chief executive officer of the school has to be skilled in setting out budgets by planning the school's financial inflows and outflows for effective management of school related funds (Onuorah & Egbosi, 2020).

School budgeting according to Undie (2014), entails a systematic process of preparing and effecting a financial flow forecast of a school to achieve the objectives of the school within an

accounting or financial year. This means that school budgeting entail presentation of school programs and activities in monetary terms, as such programs and activities are directly and or indirectly money related. It can also be considered as the translation and quantification of school programmes using facts and figures in terms of expected income and expected expenditure within a fiscal year of a school. Budgeting helps principals to gain insight into what the school's financial can be for the fiscal year. By the insight, the principal tends to be conscious of reckless spending, and self-regulated by prioritizing expenditure. To achieve this, the principal is expected to utilize all budgeting practices at his disposal, but this study will examine principal's utilization of budget planning and budget defending practices for ensuring effective financial management.

Budget planning is considered as the process of identifying and deciding on the various aspects of the school operations that can aid in generation of fund and the aspect that will attract spending of funds, in line with set educational objectives and goals of the financial year. Identification and setting of development goals is to a great extent determined by financial estimates through market survey. In other to have a comprehensive view of the budget, the principal might need to make consultations and seek for collaborations with key stakeholders of the school. By this collaborative act of the principal, he gains a priori support, because stakeholders might being carried along, and this involvement in the financial planning stage might serve as encouragement to the stakeholders to see to the actualization of the content of the budget. Supporting the view, Mohamad and Mohamad, cited in Amaikwu and Ofojebe (2020), expressed optimism that stakeholder's participation in budget planning may contribute to their willingness and cooperation for the implementation of the budget. A planned budget is expected to be defended before the school board and or agency of government in charge of the secondary school in the State.

Budget defense is an official avenue that allows the principal to make the content of the budget clearer to the representatives of the government. It presents the principal an opportunity to discuss and explain in details the content of the budget, in order to convince and clear all doubts. It is at this stage that the principal explains the proposed sources of inflow of funds, as well as proposed items of expenditure over the duration of the budget (Uwaleke, Yakubu & Usman, 2021). During this stage, the principal clarifies to the authority how the budget will be implemented, the objectives and goals to be achieved when fully implanted, and how to evaluation if the targets are attained. This is the stage that precedes budget approval and submission, and once the budget pulls through, and the implementation effectively done, it can be said that the principal is effective in managing school funds.

Effective financial management is the result of principal's meticulous attitude is appropriate deployment and utilization school funds accordingly. All the budgeting practices if well put to use are elements of effective financial management for a school principal. But, the question is whether or not principals are actually doing the needful? Looking at how wayward and unmaintained some secondary schools look, one begins to have doubt on how well principals have deployed their financial management skills to getting funds to ensure the schools are looking good and appreciable. Eyebrows have been raised, questioning principals' sincerity and forthrightness in judiciously utilizing the meagre school funds available to them. There have been claims that

some principals in Delta State often times embezzle, misuse and misappropriate funds allocated for their school operations, without any serious sanction against them by the government, perhaps because the regulators are directly or indirectly encouraging such corrupt practices (Azubuike, 2023). It is also observed that public secondary schools in the state majorly depend on government funding, and do little or nothing to generate funds internally. These worrisome observations spurred the researcher into this investigation on budget planning and defense practices adopted by principals of public secondary schools for effective financial management in Delta State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

Generally, the purpose of the study was to investigate the budget planning and defense practices adopted by principals of public secondary schools for effective financial management in Delta State, Nigeria.. Specifically, the study sought to analytically compare the:

1. Budget planning practices adopted by principals of public secondary schools for effective financial management in Delta State.
2. Budget defense practices adopted by principals of public effective financial management in Delta State.

Research Questions

The following research question guided the study:

1. What are the budget planning practices adopted by principals of public secondary schools for effective financial management in Delta State?
2. What are the budget defense practices adopted by principals of public effective financial management in Delta State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses which further guided the study were tested at 0.05 levels of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in mean rating of responses with regard to budget planning practices adopted by principals of public secondary schools for effective financial management in Delta State based on gender.
2. There is no significant difference in mean rating of responses with regard to budget defense practices adopted by principals of public effective financial management in Delta State based on gender.

Method

Research Design

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Nworgu (2015), descriptive survey is the design which aims at collecting data on, and describing in a systematic manner the

characteristic features or facts about a given population. The descriptive survey design fits into this study because the researcher collected data from principals on matters regarding the budget planning and defense practices adopted by principals of public secondary schools for effective financial management in Delta State.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised 485 principals of public secondary schools in Delta State, out of which 96 were of the male gender and 389 were of the female gender. Composition of the population also showed that 190 principals are from Delta Central; 174 are from the Delta North, and 121 are from Delta South. Source: Delta State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Schools (2023). Principals were chosen as respondents to the study because they are the managers of secondary schools of their primary assignment, and are in pole position of supplying information on managerial and financial matters of the school. They draft and defend the school's budget for the fiscal year. Understandably, the entire population of principals in the State was adopted for the study, because the researcher considered the population moderate and manageable. Hence, sampling was not carried out.

Instrument for Data Collection

Instrument titled, 'budget planning and defense practices adopted by principals of public secondary schools for effective financial management Scale (BPDPPSSEFMS)', which was developed by the researcher was utilized in collecting data from principals of public secondary schools. The researcher developed the instrument through the knowledge gained from reviewed literature, as well as consultations and insights from experts in faculty of education. The BPDPPSSEFMS was structured in two sections, namely: A and B.

Section A had two items, school name and gender of the principal, as the basic demographic data needed of the schools. Section B on the other hand of BPDPPSSEFMS had two clusters, namely: B1-B2. The clusters were based on the two areas independent variables of the study, budget planning and budget defending practices. Cluster B1, which dealt with budget planning practices for effective financial management had 5 items; Cluster B2, which dealt with budget defense practices for effective financial management also had 5 items. This means the section B of the instrument contains a total of 10 items all of which are structured on a four point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D); Strongly Disagree (SD) weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

Validation of the Instrument

The instrument (BPDPPSSEFMS) was subjected to face validation by three experts in educational management and policy, and one in measurement and evaluation, all in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Their suggestions were used to produce the final edition questionnaire (BPDPPSSEFMS).

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument (BPDPPPSSEFMS) was ascertained using Cronbach alpha by administering copies of the questionnaire to 20 principals in 20 secondary schools in Edo State. The choice of Edo State was because both States share the same characteristics in school finance management, existing in the same geopolitical zone. The data obtained were subjected to test of internal consistency using Cronbach Alpha. The reliability indices for the clusters B1 and B2 were 0.86 and 0.82, respectively. The overall coefficient of BPDPPPSSEFMS was 0.84. Thus, the researcher considered the instrument to be reliable and fit for the research. This was in line with Downie and Heath, cited in Nworgu (2015), who posited that co-efficient values ranging from 0.80 and above, should be considered as high correlation for a research instrument.

Method of Data Collection

The researchers together with the help of six research assistants who were secondary school teachers in Delta State administered copies of the questionnaire on the principals, and were able to record a 100% retrieval rate. The data was then subjected for analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

Mean were used for answering the research questions, while z-test statistic was used to test the null hypotheses. An item with 2.50 and above mean rating was considered to be in agreement with the researcher's proposition, and vice versa. In testing the null hypotheses, if z-calculated is equal to or greater than z-critical at 0.05 level of significance at the degree of freedom, the null hypothesis was rejected and the difference taken to be statistically significant, but if otherwise, the null hypotheses was not rejected and the difference taken to be statistically not significant.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the budget planning practices adopted by principals of public secondary schools for effective financial management in Delta State?

Table 1: Mean ratings of responses of principals on budget planning practices for effective financial management.

S/N	Items	Male	Remark	Female	Remark
		N = 96		N = 389	
		Mean			Mean
1.	Including unexpected expenditure in budget planning	2.78	Agree	2.54	Agree
2.	Including all possible sources of revenue in during budget planning	2.62	Agree	2.55	Agree
3.	Incorporating the objectives and goals the budget is to achieve	2.58	Agree	2.56	Agree

4.	Collaborating with stakeholders of the school to plan for the school's budget	2.53	Agree	2.89	Agree
5.	Ensuring the budget is for one fiscal year	2.66	Agree	3.01	Agree
	Cluster Mean	2.63	Agree	2.71	Agree

Results presented on Table 1 showed that all the 5-items have mean ratings above 2.50, for both male and female principals. This implies all the items are accepted. This further implies that the budget planning practices adopted by principals for effective financial management are inclusion of unexpected expenditure in budget planning; inclusion of all possible sources of revenue in during budget planning; incorporation of the objectives and goals the budget is to achieve; striking collaborations with stakeholders of the school for planning of the school's budget, as well as ensuring that the budget is for one fiscal year.

Research Question 2: What are the budget defense practices adopted by principals of public effective financial management in Delta State?

Table 2: Mean ratings of responses of principals on budget defense practices for effective financial management.

S/N	Items	Male N = 96 Mean	Remark	Female N = 389 Mean	Remark
1.	Discussing all expenditure items in the budget plan	2.54	Agree	2.80	Agree
2.	Explaining the workability of the sources of revenue contained in the budget plan	2.51	Agree	2.73	Agree
3.	Discussing the indispensability of the budget goals	2.73	Agree	2.56	Agree
4.	Explaining how stakeholders were carried along in planning the budget	2.55	Agree	2.77	Agree
5.	Clarifying issues on the proposed budget monitoring strategies	2.67	Agree	2.52	Agree
	Cluster Mean	2.60	Agree	2.68	Agree

Table 2 revealed that the 5-items put forward by the researcher are accepted, because each of the mean rating of principals was above 2.50, irrespective of the gender. This shows that the budget defense practices adopted by principals for effective financial management include: discussion of all expenditure items in the budget plan; giving explanations on the workability of the sources of revenue contained in the budget plan; discussion of the indispensability of the budget goals; rendering explanations on how stakeholders were carried along in planning the budget, and clarifying issues on the proposed budget monitoring strategies.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in mean rating of responses with regard to budget planning practices adopted by principals of public secondary schools for effective financial management in Delta State based on gender.

Table 3: z-test for mean ratings of responses of male and female principals' with regard to budget planning practices for effective financial management.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	z-cal	z-crit	Df	Sig.	Decision
Male	96	2.63	1.03	-0.67	1.96	483	0.05	Not significant
Females	389	2.71	1.00					

The result of data analysed, as shown on Table 3, revealed that the z-calculated is -0.67, which is less than z-critical (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance and 483 degree of freedom. This indicates that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals with regard to budget planning practices for effective financial management. The null hypothesis is not rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in mean rating of responses with regard to budget defense practices adopted by principals of public effective financial management in Delta State based on gender.

Table 4: z-test for mean ratings of responses of male and female principals' with regard to budget defense practices for effective financial management.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	z-cal	z-crit	Df	Sig.	Decision
Male	96	2.60	1.07	-0.72	1.96	483	0.05	Not significant
Females	389	2.68	1.02					

Table 4, showed that the calculated z-value is -0.72, and this value is less than the z-critical (1.96), giving 0.05 is the value for the level of significance, and the degree of freedom is 483. This indicates that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals with regard to budget defense practices for effective financial management. This further implies that the null hypothesis is not rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Report from the study is that the budget planning practices adopted by principals for effective financial management in Delta State are inclusion of unexpected expenditure in budget planning; inclusion of all possible sources of revenue in during budget planning; incorporation of the objectives and goals the budget is to achieve; striking collaborations with stakeholders of the

school for planning of the school's budget, as well as ensuring that the budget is for one fiscal year. The finding is not different from that of Amaikwu and Ofojebe (2020), who had reported that principals' budget planning practices for enhancing financial management in secondary schools in Anambra State included giving priority to the most pressing needs of the school in budgeting planning, setting target to be achieved by the school budget, adhering to the official fiscal calendar in budget planning and forecasting the expected income in the school budget among others.

Further report of the study revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals with regard to budget planning practices for effective financial management. This means both gender are indifferent in the perception of the budget planning being deployed for effective financial management in public secondary schools in Delta State.

The study further reported that the budget defense practices adopted by principals for effective financial management include: discussion of all expenditure items in the budget plan; giving explanations on the workability of the sources of revenue contained in the budget plan; discussion of the indispensability of the budget goals; rendering explanations on how stakeholders were carried along in planning the budget, and clarifying issues on the proposed budget monitoring strategies. Similarly, Amaikwu and Ofojebe (2020), reported that principals' budget defense practices for enhancing financial management in secondary schools in Anambra State include; explaining the expected sources of income to relevant stakeholders, describing the proposed expenditure in the budget, submitting the school budget proposal for review by stakeholders and submitting the reviewed budget proposal for approval by relevant authority among others. Similarity in findings of both studied might be attributed the same level of education and time 3-years lag which might not have cause noticeable changes. It is also important to point out that while the current study reported that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals with regard to budget defense practices for effective financial management, the study carried out by Amaikwu and Ofojebe in 2020 considered years of experience of principals, rather than gender difference.

Conclusion

Financial management for principals of secondary schools in Delta State demands application of feasible budgeting practices, such as budget planning and budget defense. While budget planning helps principals to envision potential revenue sources and the expenditure items, budget defense presents them with veritable platform to explain and discuss content of the budget to a designated authority. In planning the budget, principals are guided by such practices as: inclusion of unexpected expenditure in budget planning; sources of revenue; objectives and goals the budget is to achieve, etc. In defending the budget, principals must remember to discuss all expenditure items in the budget plan; workability of the sources of revenue contained in the budget plan; indispensability of the budget goals, and the budget monitoring mechanism. Indeed, these are common budgeting practices adopted by principals in pursuit of effective financial management in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Recommendation

The following recommendations were made based on report of the study:

1. Delta State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education should regularly organized school budgeting related workshop and seminars for principals, in order to keep them abreast with latest practices and workable strategies for planning a school budget.
2. Delta State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education should liaise with principals to develop a harmonized budget defending guideline that will serve as a point of reference and hand book for all stakeholders in budget defense.

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