

APPRAISAL OF PREVENTIVE MEASURES FOR CONTROLLING FUND WASTAGES AND MISAPPROPRIATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

Omenyi A. S. PhD & Adaora C. Odumodu PhD
Department of Educational Management and Policy,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

Introduction

The acceptance of education as the means for upward social mobility has increased the demand for it. In the same manner, the role of education in national development has received considerable attention from government and private sector organizations or individuals. For education to contribute to national development, it obviously needs proper funding. The funding of public schools in Nigeria, is part of the responsibilities of the government. The underlying rationale for government funding of public schools is to provide the schools with the resources needed for training the students and the achievement of educational goals (Akangbuo, 2007). The ability of schools to achieve the stated goals depends, to a large extent, on the management measures adopted by the managers (Nelson, 2013). Management measures, according to Maciariello (2004) are the management tools for steering the organization towards a stated goal. Maciariello stated management measures to include fund management, resources allocation, motivation and performance management. Efforts in this work are focused on fund management with special emphasis on measures for controlling fund wastages and misappropriations. Accordingly, in order to properly manage funds in the school, fund control measures must therefore be adopted.

Fund control measures, according to Okon, Ukpong and Akpan (2011) are the management measures and procedures adopted to control mismanagement of cash and other assets of a school. Thus, the objectives of fund control measures, in this context, are to prevent fund wastage and misappropriation. Corroboratively, Romina (2014), conceptualizes fund wastage as the misallocation of funds which entails spending on outdated, unnecessary, undocumented, unbudgeted or duplicative items and this can be minimized or avoided by creating appropriate policies that will be translated into regulations to achieve policy goals. Thus, school administrators need to adopt the regulations fairly and consistently with the optimal co-operation of the bursars.

In the same vein, Mark (2016), viewed misappropriation of funds as the intentional misuse or illegal use of school funds for selfish purposes rather than the reason for which it is provided. According to Mark (2016) misappropriation and wastage of funds negatively affect an institution's reputation, and its ability to carry out its mission. Thus, costs of running the schools are increased and consequently, its ability to accomplish its mission and to attract additional funds is jeopardized.

According to Holmes (2000), the control function in any organization helps in regulating the spending of money and reveals losses, wastes and inefficiency, thus making it possible for corrections to be made promptly. Accordingly, Bratim, (2014:39) and Jokomba (n.d) categorized fund control measures into three namely: preventive; detective and corrective measures. Emphasis in this work is laid on the preventive control measures.

Preventive measures according to Nelson (2013), are the most effective types of fund controls that are put in place before errors or irregularities occur and are designed to keep flaws from happening. Examples of preventive measures according to him are budget implementation; adequate separation of duties, which implies not having the same person both as author and process transactions analyst; proper authorization of transactions, where a supervisor authorizes a purchase by reviewing and approving the purchase request, and; adequate documentation and control of assets when purchases are made. There should be an approved purchase request and an invoice and receiving documents to show delivery of the items.

Contributing on this, Ukpong (2006), has it that preventive control measures revolve around budget implementation, and that functions of preventive measures include spotting financial problems before they arise, making adjustments, preventing financial errors, omissions or malicious acts from occurring. To ensure that funds are properly managed and prevented from being wasted and mismanaged, the Financial Regulations (FR) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2009) provided preventive measures for controlling fund wastages and misappropriations. Financial Regulations provided for immediate report to the head of the unit using the fastest means if the irregularity originated from outside of the headquarters, or report to the police if fraud or theft is suspected and ensure that appropriate accounting entries are made. Some other preventive measures stated in the F.R. include use of budget; surcharging; formal reporting to the ministry; release of funds for project in stages; oversight functions; making report to the police; filling treasury form 146; crediting surcharged account, and; authorization and approval of funds before they are released.

From the above expositions, the researchers conceptualize preventive measures as activities aimed at deterring the instance of errors or fraud in an organization. These activities include thorough documentation and authorization practices, which prevent undesirable activities from happening. In Anambra State, it was observed by the researchers that most public secondary schools buildings are not in good shape. Onyechere (2005), observed that embezzlement of funds and infrastructural decays were recorded in some secondary schools in Anambra State. The embezzlement of funds in the state has resulted in financial problems. According to Omenyi, Nwankwo and Onuma (2015), in order to solve the financial problems in secondary schools in Anambra State, the State Government donated millions of naira and distributed buses, generators and computers to secondary schools in the State in 2014. Personal interactions of the researchers with relevant authorities in the Anambra State Government Secretariat, Awka, revealed that the current Governor of the state, has also made financial donations to secondary schools in the State. Despite these financial donations, most secondary schools in the State are still faced with financial problems as evidenced in dilapidated infrastructure and absence of current teaching facilities (Omenyi, Nwankwo & Onuma 2015).

In the light of the above, there is need to appraise the management measures for controlling fund wastages and misappropriations in the secondary school system. According to Adams (2006) appraisal is a control system that allows determination of progress at each step in an organization's programme. Appraisal in this context will help the researchers make value judgement on the management measures adopted for controlling fund wastages and misappropriation. In view of the above, this study is motivated by the need to appraise the management measures for controlling fund wastages and misappropriations in secondary schools in Anambra State.

The main purpose of the study is to appraise the management measures adopted for the control of fund wastages and misappropriation in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Specifically, the study appraised: Preventive measures adopted by financial supervisors in Ministry of Education and secondary school principals for the control of fund wastages and misappropriation in secondary schools in Anambra State.

One research question guided the study:

To what extent do financial supervisors in the Ministry of Education and secondary school principals adopt the preventive measures for controlling

fund wastages and misappropriation in Secondary Schools in Anambra State?

One hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance include:

Financial supervisors in the Ministry of Education and secondary school principals do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent of preventive measures adopted for controlling fund wastages and misappropriations in Secondary Schools in Anambra State.

Method

The area of this study is Anambra State. It is one of the 36 states of the federation and is located in the South-East zone of Nigeria. It shares boundaries with Delta State in the West, Imo and Abia States in the South, Enugu State in the East and Kogi state to the North. Anambra state comprises six education zones namely Aguata, Awka, Nnewi, Ogidi, Onitsha, and Otuocha education zones. The State Post Primary Schools Service Commission at Awka centrally controls public secondary schools in the state, while the State Ministry of Education supervises both public and private secondary schools in the state.

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. According to Uzoagulu (2011) a descriptive survey design is a design in which data are collected, organized, analyzed and then described as they exist (natural setting) without interfering with them. This design is deemed appropriate for this study because the researchers collected data from the respondents and described it as it is in order to appraise management measures for controlling fund wastages and misappropriation in secondary schools in Anambra State. The population for this study comprised 270 respondents made up of 14 financial supervisors in the Ministry of Education, Anambra State and 256 Anambra State secondary school principals. The data are as obtained from the Post Primary School Service Commission (PPSSC) Anambra State and Anambra State Ministry of Education, both in Awka in February, 2016.

A questionnaire developed by the researchers was used for data collection. The questionnaire was developed based on FRN (2009) financial regulations and the Anambra State (1991) revised education law. The instrument is titled "Fund Wastage and Misappropriation Control Questionnaire" (FWMCQ). The instrument contained 12 items and is made up of two parts; A and B. Part A contained two items designed to elicit response on the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Part B contained the instructions. The items are structured on a four point scale as Very Great Extent (VGE); Great Extent (GE); Low Extent (LE); and Very Low Extent

(VLE). The options in all the four sections are weighted 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively.

The validation of the instrument was determined by three experts: made up of one lecturer in the Department of Educational Management and Policy and one in Educational Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Educational Foundations, while the third one is in Financial Accounting, Department of Vocational Education. The reliability of the instrument was determined by administering copies of the questionnaire on 20 principals of secondary schools and 10 Financial Supervisors in the Ministry of Education, Enugu State. Enugu State was chosen for reliability test because the school fund management in both states are similar as the two states were formally under the same management before the former was carved out of the latter.

The scores obtained from the respondents were collated to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. This was done using Cronbach Alpha. The reliability coefficient of .75 was obtained. The researchers administered the instruments directly to the respondents with the help of six research assistants. The research assistants who are teachers in secondary schools were instructed on how to distribute and collect copies of the questionnaire from the respondents. Mean ratings were used to answer the research questions. In analyzing the data for the hypotheses, the z- test was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Extent of Adoption of Preventive Measures by Financial Supervisors and Principals for Controlling Fund Wastages and Misappropriation

S/N	Extent of Adoption of Preventive Measures by Financial Supervisors and Principals for Controlling Fund Wastages and Misappropriation	Fin. Sup (\bar{x})	Rm k	Princ . (\bar{x})	Rm k
1	I use well designed budgeting document to prevent loss of fund.	2.30	LE	1.52	LE
2	I surcharge officer responsible for loss of cash in the office.	2.52	GE	3.40	GE
3	I make immediate report to the ministry any time loss of cash occurs in the office.	2.54	GE	2.34	GE

4	I ensure that school projects reach a specified stage before releasing another fund.	1.39	VLE	1.45	VLE
5	I request account for funds released for school projects before releasing another.	1.21	VLE	1.38	VLE
6	I perform oversight functions in the schools based on control objectives.	1.09	VLE	1.48	VLE
7	I report to the police any suspected financial theft in the office.	1.05	VLE	1.31	VLE
8	I initiate immediate action by completing treasury form 146 whenever financial loss occurs in the office.	1.08	VLE	1.05	VLE
9	I credit any recovered amount from a declared loss to the non-personal advances account initially charged.	1.94	LE	1.78	LE
10	I credit surcharged amount to the miscellaneous revenue head of the current years estimate.	1.91	LE	1.62	LE
11	I ensure authorization and approval of school funds before they are spent.	2.55	GE	2.68	GE
12	I ensure conformity with budget stipulations.	1.51	LE	2.30	LE
Mean of Means		1.76	LE	1.02	VLE

Key:(x) = Mean

The results in table 1 indicated the mean ratings of financial supervisors in Ministry of Education and Principals on the extent of adoption of preventive measures for controlling fund wastages and misappropriation in secondary schools in Anambra State. Items 2, 3 and 11 were rated to a great extent by both the financial supervisors and principals. Items 1, 9, 10 and 12 were rated low extent by financial supervisors and principals. In the same manner, items 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 were rated very low extent by both respondents.

The mean of means for financial supervisors is 1.76 indicating low extent while the mean of means for principals is 1.02 indicating very low extent. This means that the financial supervisors adopted preventive measures to a low extent while the principals adopted the preventive measures to a very low extent.

Table 2: z-test summary of mean ratings of financial supervisors and principals on extent of preventive measures adopted for controlling fund wastages and misappropriations

Source of variation	Number	Mean	Sd	df	z-cal	z-crit	P	Decision
Fin. Supervisors	14	1.76	1.05	266	2.28	1.960	>.05	Not significant
Principals	254	1.02	1.02					

As shown in table 2, the calculated z –value of 2.28 is greater than the critical z –table value of 1.960 at 266 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. This hypothesis is therefore not significant. Thus, financial supervisors in the Ministry of Education and secondary school principals differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent of preventive measures adopted for controlling fund wastages and misappropriations in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Discussion

Data analysis for the research question revealed that financial supervisors in the ministry of education adopted, to a low extent, the preventive measures for controlling fund wastages and misappropriations while the principals adopted, to a very low extent the preventive measures for controlling fund wastages and misappropriations. The tested hypothesis for the preventive measures revealed that the mean ratings of the financial supervisors in the ministry of education and the secondary school principals on the extent of preventive measures adopted for controlling fund wastages and misappropriations in secondary schools in Anambra State are not significant.

The findings of this study are revealing. In schools or situations where preventive measures for controlling fund wastages and misappropriations are adopted to a low extent, it is most likely that a lot of funds might either be wasted or misappropriated. The result might be insufficient fund for the actual running of the schools. In Anambra State, most secondary schools seem not to have enough funds to take care of the day-to-day running of the schools. This does not mean that the state government has not provided the funds. The inference to be drawn here is that necessary preventive measures have not been adopted to check fund wastages and misappropriations in the secondary schools. This affirms earlier findings by Onyechere (2005) that most secondary schools in Anambra State were characterized by embezzlement of funds and infrastructural decays.

The findings of this study are in agreement with Alagbu (2004) who found that funds allocated for secondary education in Anambra State were wasted through questionable means such as inflation of contracts to benefit some officials in the Ministry of Education. This was allowed to happen probably because adequate preventive measures were not taken to control fund wastages and misappropriations in the state. In the same manner, Kalu (2013) found significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and account supervisors on measures adopted to prevent fund wastages and embezzlement in secondary schools in South-East, Nigeria.

The findings of this study have implications for principals, Anambra State Ministry of Education, financial supervisors, and the State Government. The implications are discussed below.

The first implication is for the school principals. Findings of this study revealed the low extent of management control measures for controlling fund wastages and misappropriations in secondary schools in Anambra State. The implication is that the absence of effective or adequate management control measures may likely create avenues for corrupt financial managers in the school system to misappropriate or waste school funds. This can hamper its ability to accomplish its mission and to attract additional funds from either the government or private sector organizations or individuals. Thus, if the principals adopt the measures to a low extent, educational objectives will be difficult to achieve.

Another implication of the findings is for the Ministry of Education, Anambra State. This study found out that financial supervisors in the Ministry of Education adopted the management measures for controlling fund wastages and misappropriations to a low extent. The implication is that the efforts of the Ministry to ensure proper management of funds in secondary schools in the State can be sabotaged by corrupt financial supervisors who may collude with corrupt school principals to mismanage school funds.

The last implication of the findings is for the state government. The Anambra State government has spent a lot of money on secondary schools in the state, yet most of the schools are still characterized by infrastructural decays. If adequate measures such as effective monitoring and auditing are not put in place and enforced by the government to check fund wastages and misappropriations, it is most likely that funds given to the schools might be wasted or misappropriated by corrupt financial managers.

Conclusion

From the interpretation of data and discussion of the findings of this study, the following conclusions are made:

Financial supervisors in the Ministry of Education and the secondary school principals in Anambra State adopted to a low extent, management measures for controlling fund wastages and misappropriations. Financial supervisors and principals differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent of preventive measures adopted for controlling fund wastages and misappropriations in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this research, the following recommendations are made:

1. Secondary school principals and the financial supervisors in the Ministry of Education should adopt to high extent the preventive, detective and corrective measures for controlling fund wastages and misappropriations.
2. The state government should mandate ministries of finance and education in the state to organize workshops and seminars for school principals and financial supervisors on the preventive, detective and corrective measures for controlling fund wastages and misappropriations.
3. Before a teacher will be made a principal of a school, he/ she should undergo a special training on financial management practices with the basic emphasis on preventive measures for controlling fund in the school for the attainment of the educational objectives.
4. The Ministry of Education should investigate and prosecute any case of fund wastage or misappropriation in secondary schools in the state. This will serve as a deterrent to principals and financial supervisors that are yet to adopt the management measures to a high extent.

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