

Exploring the causes and implications of financial mismanagement in selected secondary schools in Lusaka District

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ABSTRACT

Financial management still remains a challenge in many schools because most school administrators lack proper training in financial management skills that enhance the effective use of finances in schools. The focus of the study was to explore on the causes and implications of financial mismanagement in selected secondary schools in Lusaka district. A narrative research design was employed for this study. The target population comprised of teachers, Head teachers, Provincial Education Officer, District Education Board Secretary and accountants in the selected secondary schools in Lusaka district. Purposive sampling technique was used to select a sample of 20 participants. Data was collected using interview guides. The study findings revealed that the causes of financial mismanagement in selected secondary schools in Lusaka district are lack of adequate training, lack of financial discipline, misapplication and misappropriation of funds, lack of adequate planning, lack of external and internal auditing, lack of transparency and lack of financials skills of Head teachers and accountants. The research also established that the implications of financial mismanagement in selected secondary schools include compromised quality of education, lack of adequate infrastructure and poor sanitation, lack of teaching and learning materials and failure to achieve set goals or planned activities. This study recommended that the Ministry of Education should train Head teachers in financial management so as to equip them with the needed knowledge to manage finances and should emphasize the use of financial management Act of 2018 as guide in the management of finances in secondary schools.

Keywords: Financial mismanagement, causes and implications, financial discipline, auditing

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Education is a fundamental human right and a key to sustainable development, and thus

an essential element for active participation in global economies. To achieve this goal, there is a need for accountable systems of educational governance and effective use of existing financial resources. However, all these efforts are hindered by universal trends of financial mismanagement, which is said to be prevalent in most of the developing countries, and that has an impact on school finances (Rangongo, 2016).

Overall, the quality of education in Zambia has been compromised by various factors at all levels of the education system. Currently, schools receive grants directly although the allocation and subsequent releases of these funds are low and often delayed. The overall responsibility for controlling school money and property lies with governing bodies that are fully accountable for the allocation of funds to reflect school priorities, control of school expenditure, and preparation and auditing of annual reports. This responsibility for the efficient financial control of the school, internally or externally is usually delegated to the school manager who is accountable to the school governing body (Ezra, 2013).

There are both internal and external factors, according to the literature, that contribute to the growth of financial misconduct in the education sector. Dossing and Weideman (2011) list internal and external factors such as lack of clear norms and regulations, lack of transparency at every level of the administrative hierarchy creates opportunities for financial mismanagement, lack of professional norms and poor financial management of teachers' and educational administrators' financial resources. Last but not least, a lack of oversight and control measures increases the possibility of financial mismanagement, including money theft or misappropriation.

According to Clarke (2012), efficient financial control is essential for an organisation to survive. In order to prevent fraud, projected overspending, and to maintain a current and accurate understanding of the state of the school's finances, managers and administrators must adopt rules and regulations. According to Rangongo (2011), in order to prevent fraud in school finances, the head teacher school must establish clear procedures and responsibilities. As an example, procurement procedures must clearly define staff responsibilities and grant authorization for purchases. The head teacher school must also exercise effective supervision

to make sure that all rules and procedures are followed.

According to Talane and Pillay (2013) school head teachers are expected to prepare the school budget to guide their spending in these areas after which the budget should be submitted to the ministry of education for consideration and approval. Ezra (2013) it is also the Head teachers' duty to raise funds from approved sources and ensure that funds are spent for what they originally budgeted for. Proper management of revenue and expenditure by school head teachers will likely to improve school facilities and in a case where there is financial mismanagement by head teachers, the status of school human and physical facilities will be such that educational objectives are hardly achieved.

Allyu (2018) suggested that the overall responsibility for controlling school money and property lies with head teachers and other school governing bodies that are fully accountable for the allocation of funds to reflect school priorities, control of school expenditure and preparation and auditing of annual reports. The school head teacher usually assists the school governing body in ensuring sound financial control, and the responsibility for the efficient financial control of the school, internally and externally is delegated to the school head teacher who is accountable to the teachers and head of departments (Van Rooyen, 2012).

According to Mgandi, Mathuva and Egondi (2017), there are significant issues with financial mismanagement, managerial incompetence, a lack of leadership, and low school-level competency in many secondary schools in developing nations. According to Mgandi, Mathuva and Egondi (2017), head teachers are the worst offenders when it comes to financial mismanagement, which includes misappropriating cash, failing to hold people accountable for their financial decisions, and failing to submit financial information to parents and the school governing body. All educational teaching initiatives at any school must be managed effectively in terms of finances. The main responsibility of educational administration is financial management, which entails making use of all available financial resources in an effort to accomplish the goals for which educational institutions were founded. In Zambia, a school's executive head is the head teacher. He is in charge of organising all school activities, including student enrollment, planning school timetables,

maintaining school records like class registers, log books, and visitors' books, updating his staff with information from the Ministry of Education, instructing students, creating budgetary and fiscal plans, locating funding for the school's operation, and managing the funding that has been made available for that purpose.

Financial mismanagement, on the other hand, refers to the process of improperly organising or managing money or other assets. There are numerous ways to practice financial mismanagement. For instance, poor financial management can result from improper responsibility allocation, noncompliance with payments, bills, and taxes, and neglect of responsibilities, financial difficulties, and economic position. This is usually caused by elements like inadequate information, reckless spending, poor leadership, and corruption, to name a few (Lisulo, 2009). Therefore, whether intentional or not, financial mismanagement in this circumstance will have a detrimental impact on a learning institution's financial situation and will interfere with its overall institutional goals.

Financial management practices of school authority in Zambia has become a sensitive issue over the years because of the growing public and government interest in the provision of funds for the implementation of school programs. School head teachers are expected to prepare the school budget to guide their spending in these areas after which the budget should be submitted to the Ministry of Education for consideration and approval. Notably, MOE (2005) suggests that it is also the Head teachers' duty to raise funds from approved sources for example, PTA funds and ensure that funds are spent for what they originally budgeted for.

Innumerable secondary school systems in developing nations like Zambia, according to Lisulo (2009), face significant obstacles due to financial mismanagement, a restricted ability to achieve the highest levels of efficiency and effectiveness, and managerial incompetence at the school level. Additionally, Lisulo (2009) hinted that head teachers are the worst culprits for financial mismanagement, which includes misappropriation of funds, lack of financial accountability, and lack of complete transparency, which includes financial reporting to both parents and the school governing body.

Statement of the problem

The present state of some secondary schools in developing countries specifically Zambia is quite deplorable. Due to financial mismanagement, most books in their libraries, equipment in the laboratories are outdated and school building crave for renovation (Lisulo, 2009). All these could be attributed to poor financial management by the school head teachers. A study done by Daka, Chipindi, Phiri, Mulenga, Mvula and Chirwa (2021)) established that some school administrators lack capabilities of developing other sources of funding the school. This being the case, improper financial management at school level is a very serious concern. Most studies that have been done have focused on the financial mismanagement and few studies have been done to look at mitigation measures. Therefore this study was conducted to establish the causes, implications and mitigation measures of financial mismanagement in selected secondary schools in Lusaka District.

Specific Objectives

1. To ascertain the causes of financial mismanagement in selected secondary schools in Lusaka District.
2. To explore the implications of financial mismanagement in selected secondary schools in Lusaka District.
3. To identify measures that can be put in place to ensure effective use of finances in selected secondary schools in Lusaka District.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

Theoretical framework

This paper was guided by the Theory of Accountability. This theory describes accountability as a means to ensure that internal policies and procedures are lawful and reflect the best interests of its stakeholders. VanRooyen (2012) views accountability as a means of holding individuals and organisations responsible for executing their powers appropriately and for paying particular attention to responsibility, participation and sanctioning of people for their corrupt acts. Accountability requires compliance with laws and regulations, record keeping, reporting, auditing and oversight as essential ingredients. Ezra (2013) states that accountability in a financial context means that if money is allocated it should be accounted for. When people or institutions handle funds that do not belong to them, they

are accountable for that money to the body that made the funds available to them. Most acts of financial mismanagement occur in educational institutions because of lack of accountability and transparency by the school administrators and the relevant staff members such as the accountants who have the responsibility of handling financial resources of that particular organisation.

Selected Literature

Causes of Financial Mismanagement

Financial mismanagement, according to Ololube (2016), is the willful misuse of money that is made available to a person in ways that are seen to be poorly or carelessly done. Kaguthi (2012) claims that there is a lot of financial mismanagement on the part of educational boards and that funds allocated for education are mismanaged to the point where Nigerian educational institutions have joined other public sector organizations in having a sizable number of unfinished or abandoned projects.

Based on a review of the literature, it is clear that financial resources are crucial in addressing educational needs (Abdulishev, 2000). Insufficient autonomy, however, prevents head teachers from effectively managing these resources. According to the research from Abdulishev's (2000) study on school financial management in Pakistan, giving head teachers management responsibility and power for such resources enables them to use those resources wisely to suit the needs of the school. This study aims to explore the causes and implications of financial mismanagement in selected secondary schools in the Lusaka District. The previous study attempted to explore and understand the current practices of managing financial resources in the context of a private school in Pakistan with a particular focus on the head teacher's role. However, this study did not produce crucial information regarding these issues.

Bua and Adzongo (2014) found a number of cases involving financial mismanagement at secondary school level by public officials, including the principals and teachers. These irregular activities included lack of internal audit process, disciplinary hearing for financial mismanagement cases are not promptly held when necessary, lack of openness and transparency in procedures and decision-making, unaudited financial statement and lack of proper bookkeeping.

Amirize & Ololube (2018) indicates that in South Africa, there are factors that have caused financial mismanagement at secondary school level and these are, the absence of norms and regulations in particular finance, lack of professional norms and lack of transparency at each level of the administration ladder generates opportunity for financial malpractices.

According to Akinfolarin (2017) failure in the proper and prudent management of funds can be attributed to unfriendly policy implementation, inability to access funds, inconsistency and complete lack of courage to implement policies and mismanaged of funds by institutional leaders. Thus, in spite of the inadequate funding of education in Nigeria, the little funds appropriated are mismanaged. Ololube (2016) stated that any country where financial mismanagement is experienced, its quality of education is bound to decline. However, the factor that because financial mismanagement at secondary school level in Nigeria are poor management of available resource, inadequate school fending by government, and lack of financial control practices.

Implications of Financial Mismanagement

The present state of some secondary schools in Zambia is quite deplorable (MOE, 2015). Due to financial mismanagement, most books in their libraries are outdated, there are outdated equipment in the laboratories if at all there exist and school building are craving for renovation. However, cases of mismanagement and misappropriation of funds are experienced in most secondary schools which affect the quality of education to be provided because finances play a vital role in the provision of quality education (MOE, 2015).

Therefore, majority of schools fall short of providing for the learning needs of their students, leading to poor academic performance (MOE, 2005). This will also reflect negatively upon the financial standing of a learning institution and will disrupt its overall institutional plans and objectives. According to MOE (2005) as a result of financial mismanagement, countless secondary school systems in developing countries like Zambia are stressed with severely limited in terms of capacity to achieve utmost efficiency and effectiveness as well as managerial incompetence at school level. Budgetary allocation as well as implementation according to set out plans will

be null and void due to financial mismanagement.

Mismanagement of financial resources entails that there will be no funds to conduct workshops, seminars, for continuous staff development. Workshops and seminars help in creating an effective learning environment, improve teaching learning situations and keep teachers updated on modern instructional devices and overall helps one become a better teacher. Teachers need to be trained on how to do their job better and these workshops and seminars can be used to motivate teachers and where there is no motivation, teachers tend to perform poorly and this affects how well they teach the pupils and if not taught in a proper way, learners are the ones who suffer the consequences as their academic performance will be greatly affected. This finding was similar to a study by Mobegi, Ondigi & Simatwa (2012) who discovered that human resources (teaching and non-teaching staff) had positive significant effect on students' academic performance.

In addition, mismanagement of financial resources will make it hard for the school to buy other necessary tools and equipment's that are needed for learners to carry out their examinations effectively. If the school is lacking equipment's for learners doing practical subjects like agricultural science, geometrical drawing and ICT. These students will be subjected to theoretical learning only and when it is time for the exams, these learners will be required to do even the practical's that they are not used to and this greatly affects how they will perform thereby compromising the quality of education acquired. This finding was similar to the study by Famurewa (2014) which found that financial resource available in the schools in Nigeria in the study area had significant effect on students' academic performance. It was discovered that students performed better in schools that were well funded than those that were poorly financed.

Furthermore, Usman (2014) postulates that financial mismanagement has a negative implication on the quality of classrooms that most schools have. This however, does not mean that all schools that have bad classrooms are a result of financial mismanagement. Unfortunately, this is the case for most schools in urban areas that have failed to channel the necessary funds into renovating classrooms or building new classrooms in a case where the school does not have enough. For example, a school

manager at one school in Lusaka instead of renovating classrooms or building new classrooms decided to renovate and extend the administration office. This was clearly a case of misplaced priorities and misappropriation of funds because the money was not used for its intended purpose. As a result of this mismanagement of funds, the school's classrooms are in a bad state as they lack window frames, the roofs leak during the rainy season and the floors are in a deplorable state and often very dusty. This makes it very difficult for both the teacher and pupils to work in such an environment. This results in the learners' academic performance being affected negatively.

More still, financial resource mismanagement has an effect on the quality of libraries in schools. Some schools don't have well stocked libraries and some don't even have a library at all. The quality of libraries and books a school has, shows how well finances are being spent. Where funds are not put into good use, the availability of such buildings, and books will be affected. Lack of rooms for storage of books impacts theft cases and reduction of the number of books in schools. This denies students and teachers a chance to access teaching and learning materials. This is likely to affect the learners' performance as they lack additional reading materials apart from what teachers give them. Teachers are unable to give bonus tasks to students and this also affects syllabus coverage. The fact that many schools function without libraries continues to mean disaster for so many of the secondary school learners because a library is an important factor in the teaching-learning process. However, most schools do not enjoy this luxury as school financial resources are awfully mismanaged and this affects the learners' performance (Yunas, 2014).

Measures to Mitigate Financial Mismanagement

The Ministry of Education in Zambia frequently conducts capacity building programs courses for head teachers on leadership in order to help improve their leadership skills. In spite of all these initiatives, it has been observed that most head teachers are not trained in financial management (Ministry of Education, 2005). For example, in Zambia, Parent Teacher Association (user fees) is meant for sports, stationery and expressive arts. However, some head teachers who had accountants and bursars in secondary schools were reported to

connive with accountants in misappropriating funds. There is therefore, need for increased capacity building for head teachers and teachers to participate and manage devolved funds effectively. MOE (2005) pointed out that head teachers need continued professional growth and development in order to be competent to handle changes. School head teachers have the responsibility of interpreting educational policies to parents and other stakeholders. They are also responsible for obtaining, directing and utilizing resources.

METHODOLOGY

This research used a narrative research design in order to arrive at a detailed understanding of what the causes and implications of financial mismanagement are in secondary schools from the respondents' perspectives. Cresswell (2013) notes that a narrative research design can be defined as the process of collecting and analyzing the accounts people tell to describe experiences and offer interpretation based on the respondents' perspectives. The purpose of using a narrative research design was to gain understanding into and produce the perception and personal experiences of respondents.

The target population comprised of head teachers, Ministry of Education senior officials like the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS), Provincial Education Officer (PEO), school accountants and class teachers. Head teachers were targeted because they are the ones who are in charge of day to day operation of the secondary schools. The researchers also targeted class teachers because they are in better position of knowing the number of text books available in a school and how financial mismanagements affects the schools' learning process and performance of pupils. Senior education officials were also targeted as they are responsible for managing of schools and developing policies for the day to day running of schools.

The respondents were sampled using purposive sampling as it allowed the researchers to identify respondents that were of importance to the study and would provide first-hand information that would help with obtaining information. An unstructured interview guide was used to collect data from respective respondents. In this research, qualitative data was subjected to thematic

analysis where themes were generated from the recordings and interview guides. Therefore, emerging themes from the causes and implications of financial mismanagement in public secondary schools were harmonized into main themes and sub-themes based on commonality. Lastly, all ethical issues were taken into consideration.

FINDINGS

The findings were presented using the objectives of the study and from the themes which emerged from the interviews with the respondents.

Causes of Financial mismanagement in Selected Secondary schools in Lusaka District

Themes which emerged from this objective included the following.

Lack of adequate planning

Respondents alluded to lack of adequate planning on the part of the school administration as one of the major cause of financial mismanagement in selected secondary schools in Lusaka District. In view of the foregoing, Teacher A added that; *"Some head teachers and the school committees fail to sit down and plan ahead on what the school needs, for example teaching and learning material and other supplements. He further added that this results in buying of things as the need arises, even when those things are not in the budget and this to a large extent results in misuse of funds"*.

Similarly, Teacher B also added that; *"Sometimes the school administration fails to adequately plan ahead on what the school might need and to stick to the budget which results in spending outside the budget"*.

Lack of External and Internal Auditing

Lack of external and internal auditing was cited by the majority of the respondents as one of the leading causes of financial mismanagement. This is because lack of auditing encourages misuse of funds because they know no one will hold them accountable for how the money is spent. To exemplify this, Head teacher A noted that;

"I think most schools do not consider much of the external forces such as auditors and they feel they can do it as a school but they forget that auditors are also stakeholders in the running of the school hence the misuse of money in schools".

Misapplication and Misappropriation of funds

During an interview with a Senior Education Officer, it was cited that one of the causes of financial mismanagement, often overlooked, is the misapplication and misappropriation of funds. In light of the foregoing, the respondent indicated that;

“Financial misapplication is not exactly a bad thing as misappropriation but it interferes with the budget and makes it impossible to accomplish the things that were budgeted for. For example, a head teacher can be given money by the government to buy teaching and learning materials but along the way he notices that the toilet is almost full and decides the build a toilet instead, this is not a criminal offence but it results into the actual objectives not being met and hence head teachers should use the money received for its intended use”.

Misappropriation on the other hand is theft of public resources by those entrusted with the authority to manage funds. He exemplified saying,

“Financial misappropriation occurs when head teachers abuse their powers to use government money for personal use. For example, when a head teacher channels money received from a fundraising venture to his personal account for acquiring land, or buying of a car”.

Lack of financial skills among Accountants and Head teachers

Some respondents attributed that financial mismanagement is caused by lack of financial skills by the administration which results in them failing to properly allocate finances. Due to this, head teachers can easily manipulate the accountant in the allocation of resources in a case where the accountant is new and lacks the needed experience and, in some cases, might not be able to refuse when the head teacher requires him to do certain things. In view of the foregoing,

Teacher C noted that:

“The reason why some schools experience financial mismanagement by the administration is because the accountant may be new and inexperienced and they can be manipulated by the head teacher to do what the head teacher wants and since those people do not know that they have the right to refuse certain things that the head teacher says if they are not in line with the school budget hence the need to have experienced accountants in schools who know what their powers are”.

Lack of Transparency

Lack of transparency was cited as one of the causes of financial mismanagement in schools which entails the inability to involve major stakeholders regarding the disbursement of funds. To exemplify this, Teacher D observed that:

“Head teachers are not open in how the money received through grants and donations is used in the school as they cannot even account for the things bought or what the money is spent on when being evaluated by the auditors from the ministry”.

Lack of financial discipline

In an interview with a senior official in Ministry of Education, lack of financial discipline on the part of head teachers and some senior teachers was observed to be one of the leading causes of financial mismanagement in schools. In view of the foregoing, the senior official further stated that:

“I have observed that even though secondary schools receive the same amount of grant, some put the grant to great use while others do not and I often ask myself as to why. The answer could be financial indiscipline, hence the reason of training head teachers on financial discipline was implemented”.

Implications of financial mismanagement in public secondary schools in Lusaka District.

On the part of implications of financial mismanagement in public secondary schools, different themes emerged. The major ones are discussed in this section.

Compromised quality of education

One of the outcomes of financial mismanagement in a few secondary schools in the Lusaka District, according to respondents, could be compromised standard of education. The study established that head teacher's incapacity to acquire necessary teaching and learning resources as a result of financial mismanagement leads to compromised educational quality. In this view, Teacher D observed that;

“Financial mismanagement results in failure to procure the needed learning and teaching materials such as lab equipment's and various text books. This results in a shortage and may compromise the quality of education that pupils receive for example, failure to conduct labs due to lack of instruments may result in pupils not

performing well in exams because they didn't carry out the necessary practical's."

Teacher A also remarked;

"That financial mismanagement compromises the quality of education received in a school because most of the times finances are not used for the intended purpose for example, instead of buying enough desks for learners to sit well during learning some pupils lack desks and write while standing".

In view of the foregoing, Teacher C noted that;

"As a result of this mismanagement of funds, the school's classrooms are in a bad state as they lack window frames, the roofs leak during the rainy season and the floors are in a deplorable state and often very dusty. This makes it very difficult for both the teacher to work in such an environment. This results in the learners' academic performance being affected negatively."

Lack of teaching and learning materials

The majority of the respondents observed that financial mismanagement has led to lack of teaching and learning materials in selected secondary schools in Lusaka district. Relevant teaching and learning resources like textbooks are not available for teaching and learning activities because financial resources that are supposed to procure these textbooks are poorly managed leaving nothing for text books. In view of the foregoing,

Teacher B commented that;

"Where funds are not put into good use, the availability of books, chalks, teaching aids and textbooks will be affected. This denies students and teachers a chance to access teaching and learning materials, hence affecting the learners' performance."

Teacher C who is a science teacher also added that;

"Financial mismanagement on the part of the head teacher and the administration has resulted in schools not being able to produce teaching aids and other materials needed to promote learner's effective learning. This can be seen from the lack of laboratory equipment's in our school's laboratory which has made the carrying out of experiments only to be done by the teacher, and learners just observe as a result when its examination time learners fail to perform well."

Failure to achieve set goals

During interviews, respondents reported that financial mismanagement on the part of the secondary school administration has resulted in them not meeting the set goal of providing

quality education. In view of this, one teacher C expounded that;

"Financial mismanagement on the school administration has resulted in unfinished projects because funds meant to finish the projects are used for other things. For example, classrooms blocks are left unfinished due to shortage in funding which is as a result of financial mismanagement in schools."

Measures put in place to ensure effective use of finances

After citing the implications of mismanagement of resources in secondary schools, the respondents were asked to propose measures which needed to put in place so that this act can be reduced. Some themes which emerged are discussed below.

Training of staff in effective financial management skills

In an interview with the a senior official in Ministry of Education, he mentioned training of the staff in financial management skills as one of the measures that should be put in place to ensure effective use of finances. In this view, he further stated that;

"As Ministry of Education, we take keen interest in how resources are managed by the school administration. And that is the reason why we try as much as possible to train Heads and their administration on how to prudently use finances by way of organizing workshops".

Head teacher A also agreed with the senior official's comment and stressed that;

"It is important for the Ministry of Education to increase workshops that train Head teachers and those that handle finances in schools in financial management skills, because personally as head teacher I have heard of such things happening and really ignorance should not be an excuse for head teachers to misappropriate finances, but to avoid such training is needed so that Head teachers can even be warned of the implications of engaging in such practice".

Internal and external auditing

In an interview with one senior official in the Ministry of Education, he cited internal and external auditing as one of the measures that can be put in place to ensure effective management of finances in school. In view of this, He remarked that;

"Internal and external auditing is important in schools as it helps with the proper management of funds which helps to improve the smooth running of the school. Establishing

of a school audit committee will help in the monitoring and auditing of how finances are effectively managed in secondary schools. I think the Ministry of Education should be sending external auditors in schools to make sure finances are well managed as external auditors are usually free from bias”.

Similarly, Teacher C also commented that;

“The Ministry of Education through the DEBS, can be monitoring the budgets that schools make and ensure that funds given to schools are used for the intended purpose, I think when budgets are monitored and controlled, the administration can account for all the monies spent and on what. This ensures that money is used for important things such as procurement of teaching and learning materials”.

Adequate funding and better salaries

In an interview with one teacher, he strongly recommended that if teachers or those responsible for handling financial resources are adequately paid, the chances of them stealing the money is reduced as they are satisfied with their salary. Teacher C indicated that;

“If head teachers are adequately paid and are given their allowances, the chances of them using school funds for them for their personal gain is limited. And I think by so doing, financial mismanagement will be a thing of the past.”

In the same vein, Teacher B added that;

“Proper pay motivates workers and will satisfy the survival needs of everyone in charge of handling financial resources thereby leaving them with no desire to use school funds for their personal gain hence curbing financial mismanagement.”

Strong disciplinary measures

Some respondents suggested that the government should put in place or revive the already existing policies such as the public financial management Act of 2018 which is an Act that provides an institutional and regulatory framework for management of public funds and stipulates how offenders would be dealt with. This should be implemented with the effectiveness and seriousness it requires.

Teacher A added that;

“If policies put in place are effectively implemented, the school administration will draw out regulations in line with the said policies to help in the management of funds and it will punish its offender before the Ministry of Education.”

To exemplify, Head teacher A suggested that; *“Punishment given to those found misusing funds should include revoking of their licenses as a control measure of reducing mismanagement of funds in secondary schools.”*

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The discussion of findings was based on the themes which emerged from the interviews in line with the objectives of the study. The first one focused on the causes of financial mismanagement.

Causes of Financial Mismanagement in selected Secondary Schools in Lusaka district

Lack of adequate planning

Findings indicated that lack of adequate planning was among the leading causes of financial mismanagement in selected secondary schools in Lusaka district. This is in line with MOE (2005) which noted that failure by head teachers to plan ahead in terms of obtaining, directing and utilizing resources leads to poor management of financial resources. In line with this view, head teachers that lack adequate planning skills end up misapplying and mismanaging funds as they tend to procure materials that were not initially budgeted for. A study by Silwamba and Daka (2021) in Nyimba District of Eastern also revealed that lack of planning on the part of school administrators affects the way schools are managed even in the way resources are utilized.

Lack of external and internal auditing

Lack of external and internal auditing was cited by the majority of the participants as another cause of financial mismanagement in selected secondary schools in Lusaka district. In this light, VanRooyen (2012) strongly suggested that accountability requires compliance with laws and regulation, record keeping, reporting, internal and external auditing as well as oversights as essential ingredients. In agreement with this, internal and external auditing is very important to ensure prudent use of resources in schools as school administrations are made accountable for the money spent and for what purposes. Lungu and Daka (2022) also did a study in Kabwe on the importance of monitoring schools and discovered that lack of monitoring

by the District and Provincial officers led to school head teachers to be so relaxed and mismanaged a lot of school resources. This means, a lack of both external and internal auditing encourages mismanagement of funds as they know no one will hold them accountable for how funds were spent.

Misapplication and misappropriation of funds

Misappropriation of funds refers to theft of public funds by those holding public office, meanwhile misapplication of funds entails channeling funds meant for a specified program to another. In this sense, De Bruin (2014) indicated that cases of financial misappropriation and misapplication are experienced in most secondary schools which affects the quality of education to be provided. To conquer with this, it can be safe to say that financial misapplication and misappropriation undermines the quality of education provision in the sense that funds meant to procure educational learning materials can instead be diverted to purchase other materials not meeting urgent learning educational needs of the learners.

Lack of financial skills of accountants and head teachers

Research findings have shown that most head teachers are not trained in financial management. However, some head teachers who had accountants and bursars in secondary schools were reported to connive with accountants in misappropriating funds. There is therefore need for increased capacity building for head teachers and teachers to participate and manage devolved funds effectively. MOE (2015) pointed out that head teachers need to be trained on how to handle finances and accountants need to be reminded of their powers with regards to finances to avoid being controlled by head teachers. In view of this, head teachers are not encouraged to be in direct contact with finances and they should only oversee the planning process as well as the managing the procurement process based on the budget.

Lack of transparency

The study established that some education administrators do not involve major stakeholders in the procurement process and disbursement of funds. This finding is in tandem with a study done in South Africa by Limpopo Department of Education. According to the Limpopo Department of Education

(2010) lack of transparency at each level of the administration ladder generates opportunity for financial malpractices and entails the inability to involve major stakeholders of disbursement of funds for example, the head teacher will request for money without the knowledge of the committee members, of what the purpose for the money is and end up using the money for personal business. In this regard transparency should be observed at all levels by engaging all stakeholders on how finances were spent and on what, to ensure proper management of finances in secondary schools.

Lack of financial discipline

Lack of financial discipline will result in the people handling finances to use the money for personal gain instead of the intended purpose which is to develop the secondary school. In line with Makhubela (2005) acknowledges that financial discipline enables the school to achieve its set goals faster and manage finances competently.

Implications of financial mismanagement in public secondary schools in Lusaka District

Compromised quality of education

The findings indicated that compromised quality of education will be as a result of financial mismanagement in secondary schools. This is in line with a similar study that was done by Oloolube (2016) which stated that any country where financial management is experienced, the educational quality is bound to decline. However, due to financial mismanagement schools are not able to procure necessary teaching and learning materials that can enhance the quality of education being delivered in the secondary schools. In addition, Usman (2014) stated that financial mismanagement has affected the lack of quality libraries in school and classrooms are in a bad state as they lack window frames, the roofs leak during the rainy season. In view of this lack of adequate infrastructure and poor sanitation has resulted in poor performance among learners in secondary schools which is due to financial mismanagement in secondary schools by administration. Daka, Chilala, Hamatanga, Chirwa, Mumba, Kaoma and Chikopela (2021) on their study about pupil absenteeism revealed that some pupils miss classes because of lack of desks in schools. Furthermore, this study is in agreement with

a study done by Daka (2019) in a medical school of the University of Zambia where it was discovered that the poor performance of the learners in some courses was due to inadequate laboratory facilities to use during their laboratory sessions.

Lack of teaching and learning materials

The study also revealed that lack of teaching and learning materials in some secondary schools is as a result of financial mismanagement by some education administrators. This is in line with Yunas (2014) he stated that financial mismanagement has resulted in schools not having enough teaching and learning materials which affect the learners' performance as they lack extra reading materials. A study by Carolyne and Daka (2021) also showed that lack of materials in special schools contribute to poor quality of education provided. Some of the resources which are supposed to be used to buy educational materials were found to have been mismanaged. Therefore, due to lack of teaching and learning materials, teachers are unable to give bonus tasks to learners hence affecting the syllabus coverage. In view of this lack of teaching and learning materials affect the quality of education being delivered in that they will be no enough text books to facilitate quality learning and teaching in secondary hence affecting the performance of learners negatively.

Failure to Achieve to Set Goals or Planned Activities

From the findings, it was established that some schools might not be able to achieve the set goals as the money might be channeled for personnel use or misallocated. This is in agreement with the corruption watch (2012) which stated that financial mismanagement in secondary schools lead to lack of achieving desired goals in the education sector. Due to financial mismanagement the conditions of secondary schools has worsened so much that the desired goals have received poor attention.

Measures to ensure effective use of finances

Training of staff in effective financial management skills

The respondents in the study emphasized that training of the staff in financial management skills as one of the measures that should be put in place to ensure effective use of finances.

This is in accordance with Kuria (2012) who commented that training of the school administration in financial management is key to enable schools become self-managing institutions that they can carry out their responsibilities as expected. This view is also supported by Lungu and Daka (2022) who pointed out that head teachers need continued professional growth and development in order to be competent to handle finances. A study by Chizyuka and Daka (2021) in the study on how organisational structure affect quality provision, also agree with this study that where administrators do not have expertise in administration, they mismanage a lot of school resources. From the findings, it is evident that the head teacher and the administration lack the necessary expertise in managing funds in the schools and this has increased the number of reported cases of financial mismanagement in secondary schools hence there is need for proper and adequate training of the administration and financial managers.

Internal and External auditing

The study found that auditing and good financial management in schools would guarantee that the demands and goals of the institution are met. This finding is in tandem with Makhubela (2005) who stipulates that the effective control of the school finances would ensure that the needs and objectives of the school are catered for. He also noted that the needs of the school would not be realized if the correct budgetary procedures are not followed. In line with this, effective monitoring of the budget will help in curbing financial mismanagement and help in meeting the set goals of the school. From these findings, it is evident that the budget should be drawn after consultation with all stakeholders and should be a working document that can be revisited regularly as funds are spent so as to ensure effective monitoring and control. The purpose of auditing is to ensure that the school is recording and controlling its finances in terms of its own financial policy. In this view, if schools are audited regularly, the respective people in charge of funds will handle them with caution as they know that auditors will want to know how the schools spend the finances well.

Adequate funding and better salaries

The study also established that if teachers or those responsible for handling financial

resources are adequately paid, the chances of them stealing the money is reduced as they are satisfied with their salary. Similarly, Dossing and Weideman (2011) added that low salaries and weak incentive system has led to mismanagement of both education administrators and teachers. In contrast to this, high salaries will make the education administrators and teachers to be less tempted to use school finances for their personal gain and by so doing financial mismanagement will be dealt with which will help improve the education system and running of secondary school. This is also in agreement with the study by Chiwoya and Daka (2022) on a study done in Monze on teacher satisfaction. The study revealed that teachers and schools administrators mismanage school resources due to low salaries and lack of motivation.

Strong disciplinary measures

Respondents suggested that the government should put in place or revive the already existing policies such as the public financial management Act of 2018 which is an Act that provides an institutional and regulatory framework for management of public funds and stipulates how offenders would be dealt with. This should be implemented with the effectiveness and seriousness it requires. According to Mestry (2004), in order for secondary schools to manage finances effectively and efficiently, a school finance policy must be developed and it must be adopted by all relevant stakeholders as well as implemented accordingly. A study by Kaponda , Mweemba, Mukalula-Kalumbi, Lisulo and Daka (2021) also agree with this study that indiscipline by staff in schools can lead to resource mismanagement. The study also recommends for implementation of policies so as to control the mismanagement of resources. This will help to eliminate the mismanagement of school funds. In this regard, it is worth noticing that finance policies can eliminate the mismanagement of funds because it requires that receipts are made available for all the expenditures in secondary schools.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of the study indicated that among the leading causes of financial mismanagement in schools included lack of adequate planning, lack of financial

skills on the part of the accountants and head teachers, misapplication and misappropriation of funds, lack of external and internal auditing, lack of transparency and lack of financial discipline. The findings revealed that the possible implications of financial mismanagement included lack of adequate infrastructure and poor sanitation, compromised quality of education, lack of adequate teaching and learning materials, and failure to achieve the set goals or planned activities. From the study, the suggested measures that can be put in place to ensure effective use of finances in schools, the findings of the study suggested that providing training of Head teachers and their administration with skills in finances would help in curbing financial mismanagement in secondary schools, along with monitoring and control of the schools budget, internal and external auditing ,adequate funding and better salaries and strong disciplinary measures against offenders so as to warn those who might want to indulge in financial mismanagement.

Recommendations

Following the research findings and in response to the conclusions drawn from the study the following recommendations have been made;

1. The Ministry of Education should intensify the training of Head teachers and their administration through workshops in financial management skills.
2. The Ministry of Education should implement policies that foster the use of the Financial Management Act of 2018 to act as a basis for which finances are managed and serve as a repellent for would be offenders.
3. There is need for regular auditing in schools so as to have check and balances and avoid financial mismanagement.

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