Comparative Analysis of Principals' Cost Management Practices for Administrative Effectiveness of Public and Private Secondary Schools in Awka Education Zone

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Abstract
The study compared cost management practices adopted by principals of public and private secondary schools for administrative effectiveness in Awka Education Zone. One research question and one null hypothesis guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 171 respondents made up of 64 principals of public secondary schools and 107 principals of private secondary schools in Awka Education Zone. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 85 respondents; 32 public and 53 private secondary school principals in Awka Education Zone. A researcher- developed instrument titled "Principals' Cost Management Practices Questionnaire (PCMPQ)" was used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to face validation by three experts, one in the Department of Educational Foundation and two in the Department of Educational Management and Policy both in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question and t-test was used to test the hypothesis at .05 alpha level. The findings of the study revealed among others that similar budgetary control practices are adopted by principals of public and private secondary schools for administrative effectiveness in Awka Education Zone. Further results showed that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school principals on budgetary control practices they adopt for administrative effectiveness in Awka Education Zone. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendation was made: Principals should establish internal audit unit to assist in periodic independent, unbiased, accurate and objective appraisals of financial transactions and activities within their respective schools.

Keywords: Principal, Cost Management, Administrative Effectiveness, public and private secondary schools.

Introduction
Administrative effectiveness is the positive response to administrative efforts and actions with the intention of accomplishing stated goals. These include administrative performance in decision making, delegation of duties and setting of examples. According to Adeniyi and Moteso (2014), school administrative effectiveness is the extent to which secondary school principals achieve the goals and objective of their schools. Chukwuogo and Obi (2023) noted that the principal is the chief executive officer who oversees, controls and ensures smooth functioning of the day-to-day activities of a secondary school. Principal's administrative effectiveness connotes efficiency, which means managing scarce resources prudently so as to achieve maximum output or production. Operationally, administrative effectiveness is the ability of the principal to get all members of the school community to work together and utilise the available resources toward the achievement of the set goals of the educational institutions. Administrative effectiveness in organisations follow some principles; not just about getting results, the "how" is also critical as it entails efficiency which means reaching a destination with minimal cost. There is no doubt that no administrative effectiveness could be attained in any school

system without incurring cost. The principal incurs some educational costs in running the daily affairs of a secondary school.

Educational costs are related to the resources used to offer the education service, being expressed in monetary values. Educational costs are of various types and examples include; private cost and institutional cost. Private cost of education is the expenditure incurred by individual students and their families in return for the education received. In an educational institution, costs are incurred by the supplier of education and by the consumer of education separately. This study focused on the cost incurred by the institution that supplies education. The educational costs incurred by school administrators are mostly from the budgetary allocation which is limited in supply, consequently makes cost management to be very imperative in handling daily expenditure in the school.

Cost management is the act of controlling the resources used in the process of attaining set objectives of an organization. Gartner (2023) defined cost management as the process of planning and controlling the expenses associated with running a business. Cost management has an impact on institutional effectiveness and efficiency, accountability and performance. Hitech (2023) defined cost management as the process of controlling financial transactions and efficient planning expenditure in business. Contextually, cost management is a process that involves controlling the expenditure of school. Cost management practices are the application of various techniques in controlling expenditure in school. Cost management practices are the processes of discovering the exact ways of ensuring judicious use of funds to avoid wastages. Cost management practices as outlined by Lukavich (n.d) includes; budgeting, cost estimation, auditing, and cost control. Ikram (2019) identified cost management practices to include; budgetary control, operational cost management, fixed cost management and auditing practices. School expenditure could be monitored through auditing of the school accounts.

Auditing is one of the major ways of cost management in institutions and business organisation. Auditing is a deliberate and careful way of accessing financial statements in the school. According to Okeke and Okaforcha (2020), auditing is an exhaustive examination of various financial transactions and records in order to determine the level of adherence to budgetary operational guideline. As a school manager, the principal directs the auditing processes. The principal should verify that costs are recorded consistently and in the right category. The bursars are therefore responsible to the principals in the course of auditing. Barasa (2015) stated that auditing provides control structures and governance practices in both private and public school by identifying potential financial crisis and incidents of fraud for redress. The audit report on a financial statement reflects a true and fair view of the school's affairs which may include school administrators spending habit and that of other staff delegated to do so. It is focused on profit and loss or income and expenditure of the school. Auditing is carried out to boost and encourage efficient resource utilisation. Auditing may reduce cost when its practice ensures and enforces adherence to budgetary provisions and operational guidelines, thus preventing wasteful utilisation of resources to improve administrative effectiveness. .

There has been a rise in the cost of providing the much needed infrastructure, equipment and so on to cope with the demand for secondary education. Maintaining a school is a huge challenge today for many administrators, especially with the high cost of maintenance and the costs needed to be undertaken when adopting new trends which can be very expensive. Cost management in accordance to the priorities of the school and available funds could aid the achievement of optimal educational goals. The applicability of auditing practices to manage school expenditures could depend on school types. Omenyi and Emegwa (2023) which revealed that there was no significant difference between the mean ratings of the managers of the public and private colleges of education on the extent of compliance with internal audit guidelines for payroll and expenses in South East, Nigeria. There are two main types of secondary schools: public secondary schools and private secondary schools. Public secondary schools are owned and managed by the government. They are directly administered and controlled by the Ministry of Education and maintained by its minister or in this case, its commissioner. Private secondary schools on the other hand, are owned by either individuals or private bodies or groups. In broad terms, private secondary schools do not depend on government's education administration and funding.

It is worrisome that some stakeholders in education sometimes accuse some public secondary school principals of not retiring appropriately and judiciously, the budgetary allocations to their schools. This alleged act of some of these principals could partly contribute to the poor condition of

infrastructural facilities like furniture, generating sets, motor vehicles, and maintenance of teaching/learning materials such as computer systems, science laboratory materials among others in some public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone. Meanwhile, those facilities were provided by the government, but they lack maintenance. Principals on their own part complain that government allocations to the schools do not come on time and are not enough to take care of school expenditure. Also, despite high fees charged by private secondary schools in Anambra State, they still lack qualified teachers and the necessary facilities needed for effective teaching and learning. The manner in which public and private secondary school administrators employ various cost management practices might vary or become even, coupled with the fact that the public secondary schools are under the control of the State government ownership while the private school are under the control of private individual(s) ownership (Ikediugwu and Ukeji, 2020). This has created a gap which needs to be filled by the present study and warranted the need to conduct an investigation towards comparing cost management practices adopted by principals of public and private secondary schools for administrative effectiveness in Awka Education Zone.

Research Question:

1. What are the auditing practices adopted by principals of public and private secondary schools for administrative effectiveness in Awka Education Zone?

Hypothesis:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school principals on the auditing practices they adopt for administrative effectiveness in Awka Education Zone.

Methods

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study was carried out in public and private secondary schools in Awka Education Zone. The population of the study comprised 171 respondents made up of 64 principals of public secondary schools and 107 private secondary school principals in Awka Education Zone. The sample for the study was 85 respondents made up of 32 public and 53private secondary school principals drawn from Awka Education Zone. A researcher-developed instrument titled "Principals' Cost Management Practices Questionnaire (PCMSQ)" was used for data collection. The instrument was developed by the researcher from literature review and consultation with experts in the fields. The instrument was subjected to face validation by three experts, one in the Department of Educational Foundation and two in the Department of Educational Management and Policy both in the Faculty of Education Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. The researcher personally distributed copies of PCMPQ to respondents with the aid of three research assistants who are secondary school teachers in Awka Education Zone.A total 85 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, 32 copies to public school principals and 53 copies to private school principals. At the end of the exercise, 82 copies of questionnaire of which 30 copies were from public school principals and 52 copies were from private school principals were properly filled and successfully retrieved, were used for data analysis. Data analysis was done using mean and standard deviation to answer research question and t-test to test the hypothesis. For decision on the research question, any mean rating below 2.50 and above was taken to indicate agreement, while mean rating of below 2.50 was taken to indicate disagreement. For hypothesis, t-test was used to test the hypotheses. If p-value was equal to or greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was accepted, however, if p-value was less than 0.05 level of significance, it was rejected.

Results

Research Question: What are the auditing practices adopted by principals of public and private secondary schools for administrative effectiveness in Awka Education Zone?

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation Scores on Auditing Practices adopted by Principals for Administrative Effectiveness

S/N	ITEMS	Principals in public secondary schools (n = 30)			Principals in private secondary schools (n =52)		
		$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark
1	Appraise records of income generated in the school	2.67	1.07	Agree	2.59	1.10	Agree
2	Scrutinize the expenditure incurred in the school	2.76	1.11	Agree	2.57	1.13	Agree
3	Monitor and supervise school financial records from time to time	2.83	1.07	Agree	2.56	1.15	Agree
4	Appropriately authorize financial transaction before execution	2.77	1.05	Agree	2.57	1.13	Agree
5	Verifies that costs are recorded in the right category	2.61	1.10	Agree	2.61	1.16	Agree
6	Assess procurement of materials in the school so as to dictate and consequently stop unnecessary expenditure	2.94	0.93	Agree	2.84	1.08	Agree
7	Compare actual financial transaction of the school with the budget estimation	2.70	1.12	Agree	2.62	1.11	Agree
	Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation	**2.75**	**1.06**	**Agree**	**2.62**	**1.12**	**Agree**

Data analysis presented in table 1 revealed that the mean ratings of public and private school principals for all items are above the cut off mean of 2.50 indicating agreement with the items as their auditing practices for administrative effectiveness. The cluster standard deviation scores which stood at 1.06 and 1.12 for public and private school principals respectively are closer to the mean indicating similarity in their responses. The clusters means of 2.75 and 2.62 for public and private school principals respectively which are above 2.50 indicated agreement with the most items and this showed that similar auditing practices are adopted by principals of public and private secondary schools for administrative effectiveness in Awka Education Zone.

Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school principals on the auditing practices they adopt for administrative effectiveness in Awka Education Zone.

Table 2: The Summary of t-test Analysis no Significant Difference in the Mean Ratings of principals on the auditing practices they adopt for administrative effectiveness (n =82)

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	p-value	Df	Alpha	Remark
Public Secondary Schools	30	2.75	1.06	0.29	403	0.05	Not Significant
Private Secondary Schools	52	2.62	1.12				

Table 2 revealed that the p-value of 0.29 is greater than 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school principals on the auditing practices they adopt for administrative effectiveness in Awka Education Zone.

Discussion of the Findings

The result of the study showed that there are similarities in the auditing practices adopted by principals of public and private secondary schools for administrative effectiveness in Awka Education Zone. This disagreed with the finding of Ikediugwu and Ukeji (2020) which showed that private secondary school administrators employed more financial auditing strategies than the public secondary school administrators for fund management. This also refuted the finding of Adetoso and Akinselure (2016) which showed that auditing standards are more complied by management of private universities than their public counterparts. The difference in time span of the studies could account for the disagreement with the findings. The similar auditing practices adopted by principals of public and private secondary schools for administrative effectiveness in Awka Education Zone were appraisal of records of income generated in the school, scrutinizing the expenditure incurred in the school, periodic

monitoring school financial records, authorization of financial transaction before execution, verification of that costs are recorded in the right category, assessment of procurement of materials in the school so as to dictate and consequently stop unnecessary expenditure and comparing actual financial transaction of the school with the budget estimation. The principals probably adopt auditing practices to enhance accountability and infuse self-confidence amongst the public and education stakeholders in the use of available funds in public and private secondary schools. Another explanation for this finding is that principals adopt auditing practices to always give a true and fair report of the financial statement whenever it is required in public and private secondary schools.

It was also shown that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school principals on the auditing practices they adopt for administrative effectiveness in Awka Education Zone. This agreed with the finding of Omenyi and Emegwa (2023) which revealed that there was no significant difference between the mean ratings of the managers of the public and private colleges of education on the extent of compliance with internal audit guidelines for payroll and expenses in South East, Nigeria. The similarity in time span of the studies could account for the agreement with the finding. This also disagreed with the finding of Adetoso and Akinselure (2016) which showed the same auditing standard practices are not significantly applied by management of both public and private universities. The time span difference of over seven years might be associated with changes which could be responsible for the disagreement with the finding. The principals recorded no significant difference in the mean ratings of their auditing practices probably due to the fact they engage in the practices to prevent and detects errors and frauds in public and private secondary schools.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that similar cost management practices are adopted by principals for the administrative effectiveness of public and private secondary schools in Awka Education Zone. This showed costs incurred in running the programmes of school are prudently managed by principals for the administrative effectiveness of public and private secondary schools in Awka Education Zone.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendation was made:
Principals should establish internal audit unit to assist in periodic independent, unbiased, accurate and objective appraisals of financial transactions and activities within their respective schools.

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