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Improving Budget Preparation Capacity of Public Secondary Principals as Funding Measure for Schools Administration in Ebonyi State, Nigeria

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Abstract
The paper explored funding measures adopted by school principals in Administration of secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The population of the Study was 226 public secondary school principals while the entire population was used as sample for the study (total enumeration) method. Researcher Structured Questionnaire titled "Funding Measures of School Administrators' Questionnaire" was used as Instrument for data collection. The Questionnaire was made up of three sections, that is Sections A to C and it is modified in 4-point Likert type. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by two experts from the departments of Educational Administration and Planning as well as from Measurement & Evaluation Department in Ebonyi State University. The instrument was also subjected to a reliability test using Cronbach alpha statistical tool that yielded 'r' = 0.74. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to analyze the research questions and the grand mean for the research questions showed that: Section A -2.05; B-1.88 and C-1.80 in line with the analysis, the findings of the study revealed that budgeting by initiative, performance and responsibility were adopted by principals at a low extent in the administration of secondary schools. The paper recommends among others that state government should organize on the job training for financial administrators (Principals) to include initiative- based budget, performance-based budget and responsibility centered budgeting.
Keywords: *Funding Measures, School Administration, School Principals, State Owned Secondary Schools, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.*

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I. Introduction

Secondary education is established for the purpose of producing sound individuals and as well delivers quality service for sustainable development of individual and the entire nation. Federal Republic of Nigeria (NPE, 2004), asserted that secondary education is an education that creates avenues for achieving sustainable development in our country. In the context of this research, secondary education refers to state owned secondary schools in Ebonyi State of Nigeria as it concerns funding measures adopted in the various secondary institutions owned and funded by Ebonyi State government.

One of the most contentious issues in Nigeria secondary education involves finance and budgeting at state owned secondary schools. State funding in schools has declined significantly over the last several years. Weilman (2013), opined that the demand for accountability and the decline in state government funding requires that state owned secondary schools' administrators adopt new budgeting models. Curran (2019) observed that most state owned secondary schools have gone from "public funding" to "public supported" schools hence have become 'publicly endorsed' schools. Available research evidence by Heam, McLendon and Mokher (2019) supported this idea, when their study revealed that state government investment in secondary education has declined significantly in relation to various factors that includes enrolment increase. According to the study, it was explained that in some research –oriented flagship institutions, state revenue have declined significantly, thereby affecting the availability of both human and material resources.

Looking at the fact that financial investment for education varies by state, almost all state owned secondary institutions have to cope with the reality of dwindling support, especially in the recent economic recession in the country. Also, observation has shown that many public institutions are now taking on ventures similar to those of private institutions. These include fund raising campaigns, as well as increased fees for students especially in this period of free education. Privatization of entities such as dining service and book-stores are adopted.

In similar study, Serban (1998) observed that without state's government full support, state owned secondary schools never maximally achieve their goals and objectives. It is believed that the way or manner in which state owned secondary schools allocate state funds amid non tuition payment reflects the institutions' needs, mission and strategic priorities. So, budgeting becomes increasingly important as state government allocation to schools continues to decrease. It thereby follows that school administrators especially in state owned secondary schools need to understand various funding models, ranging from the most widely used models to the most recent trend in school education finance.

Considering the activities of administrators of most institutions of learning, it must be understood that though some administrators appear to be efficient in funding measures others appear to be inefficient. The forgoing shows that the argument put forward in Varlotta (2020), explained that funding measures adopted in various institutions could vary according to the financial manager's gender needs and perceptions. Such observations need to be on focus. The author further disclosed that the extent of realization of sustainable educational development in our country are to a large extent dependent upon funding measures exhibited in our institutions of learning. Lim (2017) argued that the use of initiative-based budgeting in our educational institutions might be necessary in the assessment of funding measures that enhance sustainable development. In a related view, Lim (2017), stressed that funding measures in education institutions will to a large extent x-ray various budgeting measures as they relate to performance-based budgeting and responsibility–centered budgeting. This will invariably showcase the extent to which funds are being raised and controlled towards a targeted goal.

Based on these views researchers in education avail that performance-based budgeting (PBB) which dates back to the 1940s but has reemerged as a response "to calls from stakeholders for greater accountability of funds provided and as well a way to bring together the strategic planning process with the budget creation process which other tools can easily separate (Lim, 2017:34). According to Weilman (2013), performance-based budgeting came about to address internal incentive structure. More so, as an outgrowth of program budgeting, performance-based budgeting addresses some of the concerns related to formula funding, incentive-based budgeting and incremental budgeting by linking performance with resource allocation. It thereby follows that linking performance with resources allocation makes funding dependent upon accomplishments hence, the actualization of desirable results (Onele & Aja-Okorie, 2016). Unlike other budgeting methods, PBB according to Onele and Aja-Okorie (2016) focuses on results rather than activity or processes. Onele and Aja-Okorie (2016) also mentioned that performance funding departs from traditional funding methods of education, which focus on inputs and processes and neglect outputs and outcome.

Zierdt (2019), noted that performance –based budgeting is a key advantage rooted in the fact that resources are allocated equitably to units that perform well. Although Zierdt (2019), Lim (2017), Weilman (2013), and Serban (2018) all noted that performance –based budgeting is used more often at the state level than at the institutional or unit level. Some of the tenets of this method are still applicable and might "correct some of the apparent flaws in traditional budgeting" than focusing on performance (Onele & Aja-Okorie, 2016). Again, Lim (2017) noted that initiative-based budgeting is commonly referred to as reallocation budgeting. It is an organized way of creating a pool of money for funding new initiatives. Unlike other budgeting methods, PBB is not a comprehensive system. Initiative-based budgeting contains many variations but according to Goldstein (2015), a typical model involves identification of resources that will be returned to central administration for redistribution in support of the priorities agreed upon during the institution's planning process. In other words, funding at the unit level for low –priority initiative is returned to a central pool, where money is then allocated to higher-priorities initiative (Varlotta, 2010). This approach indirectly connects funding and results because the money in the pool is used for awards that are used to execute program related to objectives and goals (Serban, 2018).

Varlotta (2010) maintained that institutions who use initiative-based budgeting often require an individual unit to submit a proposal that illustrates how it will use a portion of the pooled funds to directly support a specific priority or actualize an important education goal. It is believed that initiative-based budgeting can fuel creativity, as units think of unique program to offer that will support the institution's mission. Initiative budgeting also integrates budgeting with planning, and allows departments that are awarded funds to respond in timely and unique ways to a contemporary issue (Varlotta, 2010). Goldstein (2015) also asserts that initiative-based budgeting ensures that units remain productive by reviewing their current program and activities. Goldstein (2015) further maintained that initiative-based budgeting allows departments to achieve targets in various ways on an annual basis.

Another index performance-based budgeting is responsibility-centered budgeting (Zierdt, 2019), that originated at Harvard University and is known as cost-centered budgeting, value centered management, responsibility-centered management, profit-centered budgeting, incentive-based budget system and revenue responsibility budgeting. Responsibility based is common in the institutions established for profit making or by private institutions. Zierdt (2019), stressed that the decline in funding of public institutions makes responsibility-centered budgeting (RCB) to be observed publicly more than private institution phenomenon. Public institutions are increasingly taking steps to study and implement RCB models on daily basis (Zierdt, 2019). According to Hearn, Holdsworth, Jones, Kailsen and Lewis (2006), recent economic and political conditions have encouraged state owned institutions to begin to revise budgeting tools and management processes and to become more adaptable and efficient in the midst of having to make challenging financial decisions. As a result, more institutions are beginning to consider responsibility-centered budgeting.

More so, budgeting measures also emphasize Responsibility-centered Budgeting (RCB). This budgeting measure emphasize that every individual or unit(s) should be responsible for the revenue and such should be accountable for it. The overarching goal of responsibility-centered budgeting is guided by the statement, "every tub has its own bottom" (Zierdt, 2019). In this statement, the *tub* refers to academic units and the bottom refers to these units being responsible for their own revenue production. RCB shifts decision making and financial accountability to units, which the model refers to as, "revenue Centre," "Cost Center," or hybrid center," each of which is responsible for covering its own expenses (Varlotta, 2010). Haern *et' al* (2006) describe the goal of an RCB system: "to grant each unit a degree of financial autonomy for deciding how revenue will be acquired and spent and how expenditure will be chosen and managed," RCB systems shift authority and accountability to individual units (Hearn, *et' al* 2006). Goldstem (2005) compares the idea of shifting responsibility to units with the way in which decision making is treated in other models. In the context of this write-up, the units here refer to school levels.

Without RCB or one of its variants, many overhead costs are borne centrally and absorb institutional resources before allocations for other purposes are made. When costs are treated in this manner, school principals tend to lack an appreciation of the true cost of services being used on the school environment. On the other hand, when they have access to this information, it changes the demand for services and resources.

In recent times, unsuccessful execution or implementation of many school projects/programmes have shown the contrary that poor funding measures rather than inadequate funding are the bane of institutions inability to achieve sustainable development. In Ebonyi state, Nigeria, government has appreciated the fact that the major administrative and financial lapses in the secondary school institutions of learning ranges from fabricated financial report to poor budgetary system (Ebonyi State Ministry of Education, 2012). Looking at the government decline in financial allocation to schools, funding measures adopted in various institutions of learning need to be investigated. Also, considering the fact that administrators vary in their administrative acumen, the study becomes paramount if sustainable debt should be achieved in education. Therefore, the assessment of funding measures in the administration of state owned secondary schools for sustainable development becomes necessary.

Statement of the Problem

The incessant cases of poor adoption of funding measures symptomized by unsuccessful execution or implementation of education institutions projects/programmes has been an issue of concern, not only to the secondary institutions of learning but to the entire society. This ugly situation coupled with poor adoption of initiative-based budgeting tends to generate doubt as to whether secondary school administrators in Ebonyi State and other financial administrators in secondary institutions have learned their financial administrative functions effectively. Some researchers have argued that adoption of appropriate funding measures in administration of institutions is yet to be established in budgeting models or measures as they pertain to initiative-based budgeting, performance-based budgeting and responsibility-centered budgeting. It is suspected that these models could enhance the funding of secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

It is being suspected that gender of school principals could have some relationship with budgeting measures, extent to which these measures are adopted is yet to be established.

With the current decline of government full support to state owned secondary schools, it has become necessary that researchers in the field of Educational Management explore specific funding measures that could assist to implement educational programmes if sustainable development is to be achieved. Unfortunately, in Ebonyi State secondary schools, funding measures adopted in terms of budgeting are still based on theoretical speculations without empirical backing and as such, the template on which effective funding measures in secondary institutions could be transcribed is still lacking and so constitute a challenge to researchers in Educational Administration. This study is a response to the challenges and is faced with the problem of exploring the specific budgeting measures in the administration of secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

To what extent do secondary school principals adopt initiative-based budgeting in school administration for sustainable development?

To what extent do school principals adopt performance-based budgeting in administration of secondary institution for sustainable development?

To what extent do school principals adopt responsibility-centered budgeting in enhancing sustainable educational development in Ebonyi State secondary schools?

II. Methodology

This study employed descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised all the 226 principals in state owned secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The census (total enumeration) method was adopted to draw the sample for the study. Instrument for data collection was an 18-item researcher made (structured) questionnaire titled, "Funding Measures of School Administrators Questionnaire (FMSAQ)". The content validity of the instrument was determined by two experts in Educational Administration/Planning and expert in Measurement and Evaluation all from Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. The reliability of the instrument was established using the test-retest method and the results were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient that yielded 'r' = 0.74 indicating a high reliability status.

The instrument was administered with the help of three research assistant, one from each of the three educational zones of the state. This helped to reduce mortality rate on the instrument. Therefore, 100% of the questionnaire were recovered and analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation which was based on the research questions that guided the study.

III. Results and Findings

Research Question 1:

To what extent do Secondary School Principals adopt initiative-based budgeting measures for sustainable educational development in Ebonyi State secondary schools?

Table 1: Mean response of the principals on the extent they adopt initiative-based budgeting measures in administration of secondary schools for sustainable development?

S/N	Items	$\bar{X}$	S.D	Decision
1	Unit budgets are returned to central pool	1.65	0.61	Low Extent
2	Funding results are connected to goals accomplishment.	2.50	0.50	GE
3	Money in the pool are used to execute programs related to objective and goals.	2.32	0.60	LE
4	Requiring units to submit proposal showing how it will use some pool fund.	2.09	0.62	LE
5	Allowing units to think out unique programme that will offer support to institutions mission	2.31	0.49	LE
6	Ensuring that units remain productive by reviewing their current programs and activities	1.44	0.49	LE
	Grand Mean	**2.05**	**0.55**	

$\bar{X}$ = Mean; SD= Standard Deviation

The summary of results presented on table 1 above reveal that principals adopt initiative-based budgeting to a low extent. This is because items 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 show mean scores ranging between 1.65 to 2.32 except item 2 which shows a mean score of 2.50 by the respondents. More so the grand mean shows 2.05 while the Standard Deviation for all the items ranged between 0.49 and 0.62, showing that the respondents did not deviate much from the central mean. Hence, it is agreed that initiative-based budgeting approach was adopted to a low extent by the school administrators in state owned secondary schools, thereby inhibiting sustainable education development.

Research Question 2:
To what extent do Secondary School Principals adopt Performance-based budgeting in administration of secondary schools for sustainable educational development.

Table 2: Mean response of the principals on the extent they adopt Performance-based budgeting in administration of secondary schools for sustainable development.

S/N	Items	$\bar{X}$	S.D	Decision
7	Principals of secondary schools bring together the strategic planning process with the budget creation process.	2.20	0.47	Low Extent
8	They stress on addressing internal incentive structure.	1.86	0.64	LE
9	They emphasize on formula funding incentive based and incremental based funding	2.29	0.88	LE
10	Funding of secondary education is dependent upon accomplishments of desired results.	1.32	0.69	LE
11	Funding of secondary education does not focus on inputs and processes rather on inputs and outcomes.	2.18	0.88	LE
12	Resources are allocated equitably to units that perform well.	1.43	0.50	LE
	Grand Mean	**1.88**	**0.68**	

$\bar{X}$ = Mean; SD= Standard Deviation

The summary of result presented on the table 2 indicated that the respondents adopt the identified performance-based budget measures to a low extent. All the items in the table (7 to 12) show mean score ranging between 1.32 and 2.29. Also the grand mean shows 1.88 while the SD for all the items ranged between 0.47 and 0.88 indicating that the respondents did not deviate too far from the central mean. That is to show that performance-based measures are not fully adopted by principals of various secondary schools in the state.

Research Question 3:
To what extent do Principals adopt responsibility-centered budgeting in administration of secondary schools for sustainable educational development.

Table 3: Mean response of the principals on the extent they adopt responsibility-centered budgeting in administration of secondary schools for sustainable development.

S/N	Items	$\bar{X}$	S.D	Decision
13	Each unit (department) is granted a degree of fiscal autonomy.	1.73	0.49	Low Extent
14	Authority and accountability are shifted to individual units or department.	2.31	0.89	LE
15	Many overhead are borne centrally and before allocations for other purpose made.	2.03	0.64	LE
16	Each cost center use its share of the school's allocation to cover expenses.	1.83	0.61	LE
17	Units are given fiscal autonomy and the ability to make independent decisions.	1.38	0.49	LE
18	It is ensured that revenues include the institutional allocation to the unit as well as unit's endowments, grants and other gifts.	1.48	0.50	LE
	Grand Mean	**1.80**	**0.60**	

Mean; SD= Standard Deviation

The summary of result presented on table 3 shows that principals adopt the aforementioned responsibility-centered budgeting to a low extent. This is observed in all the item (13 to 18).

The grand mean stood at 1.80 which is below the criterion mean of 2.50 and the SD ranged from 0.49 to 0.89 which is quite close to the central mean. The implication is that responsibility-centered budgeting approach was adopted to a low extent thereby hampers the actualization of sustainable educational development.

IV. Discussion

The summary of findings from table one with respect to the extent of adoption of budgeting by initiative-based in administration of state owned secondary schools revealed that all the measures of initiative-based budgeting as enlisted on the tables are adopted to a low extent by secondary school principals. The grand mean indicated 2.05 for table one. It therefore showed that the initiative-based budgeting measures are adopted to a low extent in school administration. The measures of returning unit budget to central pool, connecting funds and results, using the money in the pool to execute programs related to objectives and goals, requiring individual unit to submit a proposal that illustrates how it will use a portion of pool funds, allowing units to think out unique program that will offer support to institutions mission etc. indicated low extent, meaning that the practices of initiative-based budgeting need to be emphasized in school administration if sustainable educational development is to be achieved. This is in line with the opinion of Varlotta (2020) when he asserts that initiative-based budgeting often require individual's unit to submit proposal that illustrate how it will use a portion of the pooled funds to directly support a specific priority or actualize an important institutional need.

In table two, the findings revealed that Performance-Based Budgeting are adopted to a low extent. The study shows that the Performance-Based Budgeting is not actually embraced by the principals of state owned secondary schools for sustainable development. This has to do with bringing together the strategic process with the budget creation process, addressing internal initiative structures, linking performance with resource allocation, ensuring that funding is dependent upon accomplishment of desired results etc. these yielded low extent looking at the grand mean which stood at 1.88, it therefore shows that the performance-based budgeting measures indicated to a low extent. The findings are in accordance with the findings of Lim (2017) when he observed that PBB serves a way of bringing together the strategic planning process with the budget creation process. Also, he went further to stress that it linked performance with resource allocation which most school principals fail to acknowledge.

Table three reveals information on Responsibility-Centered Budgeting which include granting units a degree of fiscal autonomy, shifting authority accountability to individual units, bearing overhead centrally before other expenses, cost centers use their share of allocation to cover expenses etc. The findings are in line with the ideas of Zierdt (2019) when he observed that RCB shift decision making and financial accountability to units, which the model refers to as "revenue Centers" etc. and describe the goal of RCB system to include granting each unit a degree of fiscal autonomy for deciding how revenue will be acquired and spent. In their own support Onele and Aja-Okorie (2016) observed that recent economic and political conditions have encouraged state owned institutions to begin to revise budgeting tools and management processes and to become more adaptable and efficient in the midst of having to make challenging financial decision, hence, begin to consider RCB most appropriate tool.

V. Conclusion

The paper centered on funding measures adopted in state owned secondary schools for sustainable development in Nigeria. Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

a. School principals adopt initiative-based budgeting, performance-based budgeting and responsibility-centered budgeting to a low extent, and this invariably hampers the actualization of sustainable educational development in state owned secondary schools of Ebonyi State.

b. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents as it relate to the extent to which funding approaches (budgeting Measures) are adopted in Ebonyi State secondary schools for realization of sustainable educational development in Nigeria.

VI. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

(1) State government should organize regular on-the-job training for school principals in state owned secondary schools in Ebonyi State to include initiative-based budgeting, performance-based and responsibility-centered budgeting. It will help the school principals to possess skills on funding measures as stated above.

(2) Gender should not constitute serious issues in the retraining of school administrators in budgeting measures in secondary educational level. It will enable them to make up their pre-training in the area of current funding measures.

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