

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE
NZEMA-EAST DISTRICT – THE DILEMMA OF HEADMASTERS

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BY

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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this University or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature:..... Date.....

Name: Victor Kablan Nyianyi

Supervisor's Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the dissertation were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Supervisor's Signature..... Date.....

Name: Dr. A. L. Dare

ABSTRACT

Financial management in schools is bedevilled with challenges and so are rated low in terms of the administrative functions of headmasters in the district. This is a diagnostic study of the dilemmas that heads of schools face in financial management in secondary schools of the Nzema-East District.

One hundred respondents expressed their views on the subject. Four sets of questionnaire and an interview guide were adopted as the main instruments for the study. Nine major questions were spread across all the four sets of questionnaire. The interview guide contained 13 major questions. The researcher applied Cronbach's Alpha to ascertain the reliability of the 9 main items of the questionnaires and the result was .743.

The study analysed levels of exposure to capacity-building training in financial management by heads, effective use of regulations and the perception of heads' management of school funds among others. Evidence from the study suggests that dilemmas were rife in financial management for heads. Heads' inability to train, poor payment and embezzlement of fees, stalled information on finances to school personnel especially the financial standing of the schools, audit reports, poor payment of fees and unsound practices in financial management were predominant.

With money still very difficult to come by and in order to maintain the confidence of stakeholders and well-wishers to commit funds to teaching and learning as well as infrastructural development, it is recommended that the Ghana Education Service should intensify the training of headmasters to enable them adopt good practices in financial management in the schools.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved wife. Madam Efua Quainoo and all our children for their invaluable support during the development of this work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION		ii
ABSTRACT		iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS		iv
DEDICATION		v
LIST OF TABLES		vi
CHAPTER		
ONE	INTRODUCTION	1
	Background to the Study	1
	Statement of the Problem	11
	Objectives of the Study	12
	Research Questions	13
	Significance of the Study	13
	Delimitation	14
	Limitations	15
	Organisation of the Study	15
TWO	LITERATURE REVIEW	15
	Concept of Financial Management	17
	The Causes of Headmasters' Dilemmas in their	
	Practice of Financial Management	20

	Page
Functional Relationships among Headmasters and Supervisory Personnel in School Financial Decisions	26
Empirical Proof of Predicaments Entangling Headmasters	32
Summary	37
THREE METHODOLOGY	39
Research Design	39
Population	39
Sample and Sampling Procedure	39
Research Instruments	40
Pilot-Testing of Instruments	42
Data Collection Procedure	42
Data Analysis	43
FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	45
Characteristics of Respondents	45
Answers to Research Questions	45
Research Question 1: How Adequate is the Exposure of Headmasters' in Financial Mangement Training?	45
Research Question 2: What Contributions Do Accountants	52
Officers make towards Financial Management in the School?	52

	Page
Research Question 3: What is the Level of Access to Adequate Information on School Finances within the Schools in the Study?	55
Research Question 4: How effectively are Financial Regulations Applied in the Management of Financial Activities?	59
Research Question 5: What is the Perception of those Associated with the Schools about Headmasters’ Management of Financial Resources?	61
FIVE: SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	65
Overview	65
Summary	66
Conclusions	68
Recommendations	69
Suggestions for Further Research	71
REFERENCES	73
APPENDICES	76
A Questionnaire for Heads	76
B Questionnaire for Accountants	80
C Questionnaire for School Personnel	82

	Page
D Questionnaire for GES Internal Audit Staff	85
E Interview Guide	88
F Letter of Introduction	90
G Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Result	91

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Distribution of the Sample by School	41
2	Adequacy of Headmasters' Preparation in Financial Management	46
3	Heads' Reasons for their Need for Financial Administration Background	49
4	Problems Associated with Inadequate Training in Financial Management for Heads as Identified by Heads	50
5	Contributions of Accounts Staff to Financial Management as Reported by Heads	53
6	Heads Suggestions for Improving Financial Management in Schools	54
7	Level of Communication amongst School Personnel on Specific Financial Activities	56
8	Reasons for Poor Payment of Fees as Provided by Respondents	58
9	Effective Application of Financial Administration Regulations for Financial Activities	59
10	Perception about Headmasters Management of Financial Resources	61
11	GES Auditors Suggestions for Improving Financial Management in Secondary Schools in the District	63

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Funding education in Ghana after independence has been problematic. Enrolments increased at all levels of the educational system. The number of secondary schools rose from 38 in 1959 to 59 in 1960 because new ones were established by Government under the Ghana Education Trust in 1957 with the support of Ghana Cocoa Marketing Board. Meanwhile, the Educational Act of 1961 provided a legal framework for free and compulsory primary and middle school education for children of school-going age in the country.

The impact of the Education Act of 1961 was indeed overwhelming on school enrolment. There was a sudden increase in enrolment that resulted in a cascading expansion in infrastructure and teaching staff in middle schools, secondary schools and the universities. From 1969 through to the 1980's and specifically by 1995 the signals were clearly written on the wall that successive governments could ill-afford the provision of a completely free education at all levels of the educational system, thereby calling for cost-sharing in current and subsequent reforms.

The 1987 Education Reform and Educational Funding had among its three basic aims: increasing cost-effectiveness and cost recovery within the educational setting. Arko-Boham and Oduro (2000) stated that:

A major aspect of the reforms was to phase out all residential and feeding subsidies at the secondary and tertiary levels and to increase book-user fees at both levels. The reform also re-introduced Busia's student loan scheme and made provision for scholarship systems for poorer students all aimed at promoting cost effectiveness and cost recovery at the tertiary level (p. 29).

The intended free education at all levels was therefore threatened by the cut in educational expenditure and its replacement with the students' loan scheme for tertiary students. At the moment, only the basic level, that is primary and J.S.S. continue to enjoy "free" education. The constitutional provision; Article 38 (2) of the 1992 constitution of the 4th Republic of Ghana, enshrines free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (fCUBE) which started in earnest in 1995. The writers however expressed pessimism as to whether the fCUBE objective of fee-free provision of basic education would be achievable. The success or failure of the fCUBE was something they could not tell until the year 2005. Indeed in 2005/2006 Government introduced the capitation grant of ₵30,000.00 per pupil nation-wide in all public schools

Government's signals to stop funding education have made stakeholders accept cost-sharing devices as the best alternative to settle all anxieties in that regard. At the secondary school level, students pay textbook user-fee, maintenance fee, boarding fee among others.

The cost-sharing policy implies that the scarce resources provided by government, parents and other benefactors are stretched thin over the numerous needs of schools in their struggle to realise set objectives. The heads of institutions are exposed to the Herculean tasks of sourcing for funds, recognising or respecting regulations and practices governing the receiving, keeping and spending of funds. Owusu (1993) stated in this regard that of all the functions that are performed by the head, his role in financial administration is the most crucial, critical and perhaps, the most important. The head's entire operation as an administrator is hinged on an adequate provision of funds and their effective disbursement to cater for the work programme of the school.

It is worth defining at this stage the concept of management and how it is related to administering school finances so as to bring into perspective the idea of financial management by the head of school. Management and administration tend to be viewed and used interchangeably though there might be some fine nuances between the two. For example in Kochhar (2002) one finds the following definition for administration which has elements of management:

Comprehensive efforts to direct, guide and integrate associating human striving which are focused towards some specific ends or aims (p.3).

On the other hand, the term management can be used in a variety of ways. First it is used in allusion to members of an organisation who are charged with making important decisions regarding how and what services or products are to be produced. Management could also be described as a discipline of knowledge that

has been accumulated through applied research and observation of managers practising in the field. In other words, management is akin to the collective wisdom that has developed from scientific study now applicable to specific managerial or administrative situations. Aldage and Stearns (1987) define management in the following words:

A process of planning, organising, staffing, directing and controlling activities in an organisation in a systematic way in order to achieve a common goal (p.11).

Financial management in school by the head entails receiving, keeping, spending and reporting accurately on school funds. By directing and guiding financial activities the head of school is helped to obtain the best results leading to the attainment of overall school goals. The role of the headmaster in financial management is a crucial issue. Yet his efforts are dogged by an avalanche of dilemmas that is identified from observation into that aspect of the headmaster's job.

A dilemma is a situation in which one has to make a difficult decision or choose between two unpleasant possibilities. The unpleasant situation poses a predicament or a quandary, making uncertain what decision to take about something or a problem-solving condition. The headmaster, who is found in a state of dilemma has difficulty in deciding what to do about financial choices when the school is without adequate financial resources for school activities.

The school like any other organisation cannot do much without financial resources. Money buys everything; food, equipment, office supplies and settles

bills. The dilemmas of the headmaster stand out when he has to make crucial choices or decisions to be able to solve indebtedness and pressure to clean up the school finances. The dilemmas of the headmasters imply that they have to take the best decisions among the numerous hard choices. We shall therefore examine the concept of problem-solving at this stage.

Cregg and Campbell (1957) as well as Peretomode (1992) shared the view that decision-making is crucial in management because decisions have to be made about problems affecting all services including finance. Cregg and Campbell (1957) defined decision-making as a process of choosing from among alternative ways of achieving an objective or providing a solution to a problem. It means that deliberate and systematic steps are considered one preceding the other. The headmaster therefore is required to conceptualise the problem on hand clearly in order to make decisions that are fairly easy to reach.

Two decision-making theories applied in problem-solving are descriptive and prescriptive. The Prescriptive Classical decision-making theory (also called the Rational Decision-Making Model) involves six definite steps as follows: Problem identification, statement of desired state of affairs, generation of alternative course of action, formulation and selection of the preferred course of action, decision implementation, and decision control or evaluation.

The second approach in decision-making is based on the Descriptive Lindblom's Theory of Muddling Through. In the face of constraint or dilemmas, managers and for that matter headmasters more realistically settle for decisions that seem to serve their purpose under the second approach in stead of optimal

option. March and Simon paraphrased in Aldage and Stearns (1987) discussed the descriptive theory in the following manner:

Choosing the acceptable alternative rather than looking for the best. So, instead of trying to find the sharpest needle in a haystack, we may stop searching once we have located the first needle (p 589).

It must be emphasised that real world situations are far from the idyllic ones. We will therefore examine some factors that influence decision-making such as information inputs, perceptual processes, cognitive processes, group influence, organisational influence, time, cost constraints and stress. Administrators are obliged to act on less perfect information. Information helping in decision-making may be late, not complete or distorted. Information input may be simply wrong. To a large extent, perceptual processes in decision-making are a factor that can result in distortions. During information interpretation for instance individuals are liable to perceptual defence, halo error and other troublesome influences. Similarly many cognitive predicaments affect decision-making. Humans are endowed with short-term memories with a capacity for only a few pieces of information. Human beings are mindful of decision outcomes. Consequently they doubt the correctness of their decisions.

Groups influence problem-solvers by exerting pressure to conform to group norms. Also, problem-solvers act within the context of organisations. If an organisation rewards taking chances, administrators will take risks. Rewards for creativity stimulate creative decision-making. More importantly too, time and cost influences limit the possibility of getting good and detailed information. Time

constraints can push administrators to alter the nature of decisions. Finally, stress is a factor that influences decision-makers and problem-solvers. Decision-makers act under psychological stress especially under hot decision situations. Janis and Mann (1977) argued that:

Psychological stress in hot decision situation can result in errors in scanning of alternatives. When a hot situation such as major decision, an impending attack or major surgery-occurs and it looks like important goals cannot be met, stress increases (p.593).

Psychologically stressful situations such as has been described by Janis and Mann (1977) bring to the fore part of the administrators predicament. The predicaments stifle the administrator's effort to manage the financial activities of the school. When the management of financial activities is at an impasse it becomes apparent that important school goals cannot be attained.

As mentioned earlier on in this chapter, without financial resources the school like any other organisation, cannot do much. Money buys food, books equipment, projects and office supplies. In the Ghanaian public schools situation, before a headmaster can spend money he must have funds at his disposal. Four important sources of financing secondary school programmes are the Government of Ghana, Parents, Students, Non-Governmental Organisations and the community. Government finances secondary education directly by funding school buildings, laboratories, constructions and rehabilitation, grants, textbooks and other subventions. Indirect financing takes the form of assisting schools to establish income generation activities, technical assistance and student

scholarship schemes. Parents' sources of funding secondary schools is packaged in user fees, sports fees, furniture, exercise books and PTA project fees and dues.

Students pay Students Representatives Council (SRC) fees, cost of feeding, health, entertainment and examination fees. The community through the PTA, District Assemblies Common Fund, MP's Scholarship Scheme, spend a lot of money on infrastructure, rehabilitation and other school items. NGO's such as USAID, DFID, UNESCO, UNICEF, CIDA contribute food aid, construction of infrastructure, library books, computer and other accessories.

The Ministry of Education through the GES confers on headmasters of secondary schools in Ghana responsibility to Boards of Governors for the financial business of those institutions. Consequently, the headmasters are required to supervise the bursar and accounts clerks; make sure books of accounts are properly kept; ensure that quarterly and annual accounts are prepared, ensure that income is collected and expenditure is made in accordance with approved estimates and that debts owed by the school or to the school are properly dealt with.

From the foregoing, the headmaster's duties with regard to financial management are clearly defined. Consequently financial management should be carried out with ease and fluidity once the source of funding has been identified and put at the disposal of the head according to the public. The unpleasant realisation by stakeholders, the general public, parents, students and the media is that headmasters of SSS in the Nzema-East District of the Western Region are caught in a quandary in the exercise of their financial management roles. The dilemmas of the headmasters of secondary schools in the Nzema-East District

cannot be swept under the carpet. Since the last decade or so it has been established that government's quarterly grants to these rural schools have been unduly irregular. For the government, education is one area that receives the highest expenditure, competing with other areas of public funding such as health-care, infrastructure, economic interventions, communications, defence and diplomacy among others. The undue delay in releasing funds to these headmasters deepens their woes in carrying out major financial decisions on school programmes.

Regular and prompt payment of fees such as tuition, user fees, examination and PTA project fees and other levies are seriously defaulted. Parents and guardians display financial acrobatics over the payment of such fees for their wards. For a smooth financial management these worst-case scenarios are alarming and worrisome. Headmasters in the mentioned district are faced with the dilemma of either ordering many defaulting students to be sent home for their fees or keeping them in school. Another alternative is for heads to allow students to pay the fees by installment but at snail pace. By and large, such prevailing conditions cripple school financial resources for academic activities.

When hard choices have to be made, school administrators recognise that certain expenses are simply unavoidable. Headmasters cannot wait for two months into the academic term without setting bills and buying pressing needs. When they do not easily find any answers to these challenges, that is where they bump their head most of the time. Financial insolvency of secondary schools in the Nzema-East District is a matter of great concern. Headmasters appreciate to a large extent the importance of this fact. They make efforts to improve finance

operating effectiveness in their schools yet their efforts fizzle out into frustrations. A pertinent setback is the alarming dimension of verbal conflicts, of mistrust, suspicion and general disagreement over the administration of schools finances between the head and the bursar. Some such conflicts have tended to affect discipline in the school. Uncontrolled behaviours have more often culminated in students' agitation, demonstration and strife among staff.

Finally, some heads themselves have little knowledge and experience in accounting practices. Those who are inexperienced lend themselves to the absolute control and dictates of some bursars and other accounting staff. The accounting staff assisting the headmasters with financial management is perceived to be applying laid down rules and regulations for expending and reporting on school funds. These facts notwithstanding there are still cases of inadequacies of financial management in the schools. Service providers and suppliers lament over the non-payment of their goods and services. Nkroful Agricultural Secondary School (NASS) in particular has been at the centre stage of financial probe by the GES and a section of the media of late.

These pertinent issues discussed above constitute the predicaments or dilemmas that are facing the headmasters in the area. These thought-provoking issues were the subject of this research. The research was intended to study the dilemmas scientifically, establish their magnitude and propose how the heads of these target schools could be helped out of these administrative quandaries.

Statement of Problem

Every school administrator, headmaster or headmistress must spend a good deal of time on the school's finances. Even where financial responsibility is delegated to an accounts committee, decisions to build a shed, buy anything or install any facility in the school, especially major changes in expenditures, programmes or services would also go to him or her. The financial conditions of schools have some impact on their activities. An indebted school or one that does not maintain stringent financial management practices is much more prone to conflicts, discomfort and embarrassment.

Secondary schools in the Nzema-East District of the Western Region receive their share of government quarterly and other grants such as funds from the GETFund. They also charge and collect all approved fees and levies by central and local government. Sometimes too, they benefit from NGO's financial support and local community, towards the realisation of school objectives. These schools routinely apply Ghana Education Service rules and regulations for better financial management practices.

In spite of the above conditions, heads of secondary schools in the district under review are faced with serious predicaments in financial management. In the eyes and general perception of students, parents, communities, government and a section of the media, much needs to be done. The schools have been managing their finances ever since they were established. Nevertheless, fluid financial management practices pose serious challenges especially to the headmasters.

Financial management continues to reveal lapses that affect the overall efforts to achieve objectives set by schools in the area. In the 'Weekend Crusading Guide' of 20th -26th January 2006, Aremeyaw (2006) reported on a special audit report about the accounts of NASS from July 2003 to December 2003 in which the former headmaster of NASS, the Assistant headmaster of NASS and some teachers of the school were exposed. The headmaster could not account for ₦64 million difference in school fees. The former assistant headmaster could not account for ₦64, 999,000 being fees and 5.3 million worth of mono desks that could not be sighted. The two officers were interdicted and made to face disciplinary action. Within public second cycle schools, that case is the tip of the ice-berg.

The alarm bell has sounded already and much concern continues to be expressed by the school districts, concerned citizens and communities, at District Assembly meetings and by a section of the media who have all added their voices to the clarion call for remediation in that regard.

Purpose of the Study

This study intended to investigate into the nature of dilemmas headmasters are plunged into while exercising the financial management aspect of their duties as school administrators. The study sought to find answers to:

- (i) the dilemmas of headmasters with regard to financial management.
- (ii) what interventions could be introduced to mitigate or eradicate them for good practices and better administration of the schools in the area.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following pertinent questions:

1. How adequate is the exposure of headmasters to financial management training?
2. What contributions do accounting officers make towards financial management in the school?
3. What is the level of access to adequate information on school finances within the school involved in the study?
4. How effectively are financial regulations applied in the management of financial activities?
5. What is the perception of those associated with the schools about headmasters' management of school financial resources?

Significance of the Study

This study is expected to untie any knots associated with financial management by headmasters of secondary schools in the Nzema-East District. The findings of this study has offered stakeholders of education at the district level, a deeper understanding of the challenges that confront heads in their effort to manage school financial resources and thereby lend their active support in that regard.

PTA's , NGO's, donors and other local support groups may use the findings of this study as basis to be positively involved in the management of the schools' finances. Headmasters may be motivated by the findings of this study to actively and democratically involve supporting school personnel in financial decisions of their schools.

More importantly, the District Directorate of Education (Ghana Education Service) may be motivated by the findings of this study to consider inculcating into its capacity building training programmes the knowledge and competency gaps of heads and their supporting staff.

Delimitation

The geographical setting of the study is the Nzema-East district. The study involved secondary schools in the district totaling four. One hundred respondents were altogether engaged. There were four heads, eight assistant heads, 28 heads of academic department, four P.E tutors and Guidance co-ordinators respectively. Other respondents included the four bursars in the schools, five accounts clerks, two domestic bursars and four storekeepers. There were 12 PTA executives and 16 SRC executives, who represented the parents and the students in each case. Finally two GES internal auditors were made part of the respondents. The respondents were directly involved in financial activities and decisions of the four schools.

The researcher has been teaching in the district for the past seven years. This district over the years has been caught in the web of poor financial management as far as secondary schools are concerned. During the period that the researcher has taught in the district the issue of financial management challenges facing headmasters has persisted. Though there are various aspects of financial management, the ones that were of interest to the study were the timeliness of the disbursement of funds, payment of school fees and readiness of heads to manage the finances. The researcher has undertaken this study in those aspects in order to

help find solution to the thorny challenges crippling effective financial management by the headmasters of secondary schools in the area.

Limitation

Much effort was directed at reaching out to previous headmasters who had served in the school to elicit their opinions on dilemmas in financial management of their time. This thought was intended to produce a more profound understanding of the syndrome from past and present experiences of headmasters. However, some past headmasters had retired or passed away and others were scattered nationwide. Thus, only two could be reached. Such a situation meant that the researcher probably missed out on some information that would have enriched the study.

The researcher has seven years teaching experience in the district. Having known the system all these years, it is possible for the researcher to have exaggerated some weak spots while down playing some strengths of the heads. Although much effort was made through the comparison of views with others, there may still have been few cases where the researcher's biases may be hidden.

Organisation of the Dissertation

The report on this study is organised into five main chapters, references and appendices. Chapter One presents the introduction to the study. The chapter captures the background and a short history of funding secondary education in the district. Chapter Two examines the concept of financial management and Chapter Three outlines and explains methods used in the study. Important elements including the target population, sample and sampling technique, the instruments and their modes of design, the pilot-testing, methods of assembling and analysing

data collected. Chapter Four presents and discusses the results. Chapter Five provides a summary of the report and makes recommendations based on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter scrutinises relevant literature relating to the purpose of the study as provided by some writers. The chapter is divided under the following sub-headings:

- a) The concept of financial management.
- b) Causes of dilemmas of headmasters in financial management in secondary schools.
- c) Relationship among headmasters and supervisory personnel in financial management in secondary schools.
- d) Empirical evidence of headmaster's predicaments in financial management in secondary schools.

The Concept of Financial Management

The concept of financial management according to Financial Administration Regulations (1979) [SMCD 221] is about providing clearly defined powers and responsibilities for the fluid and efficient working of the financial machinery of government. The concept as defined in (SMCD 221) provided relevant and specific rules and regulations within an organisation. The rules and regulations which are provided seek to strengthen and assist administrative agencies to make prudent decisions on their financial activities.

Decisions are thereby to be taken within the framework of effective regulatory mechanisms for public expenditure. To Duodu (2003) the concept of

financial administration, among other things, entwines granting and respecting powers, regulations and practices pertaining to receiving, keeping, spending and accounting for funds. He underscored three important aspects of financial administration in schools. These entail receiving the funds from the Ministry of Education, PTA project levies or donations.

Other sources of funds for schools include student user fee, scholarship and other educational related grants. Duodu (2003) explained that keeping the funds implied lodging monies in the accountant's office. He contended that for all the three aspects of financial management, laid down regulations must be applied and given the highest level of adherence.

Parallel to the best application of financial regulations and good practices in financial administration opined by Duodu (2003), the GES trumpeted in its Financial and Accounting Instructions, the regulations on receiving, keeping, spending and accounting for funds.

The GES Financial and Accounting Instructions (1968) stipulated that all funds received by an institution ought to be supported by an original counterfoil receipt (form 10) issued to the payer. The Financial and Accounting Instructions (1968) further reiterated that the head of an institution must make adequate provision for the safe custody of cash. The Instructions recommended a concrete safe or one that is built into an inner wall. It also recommended that money in excess of immediate requirement was to be kept in a bank. Finally the GES financial instructions stated that a trial balance should be prepared and signed by the bursar at the end of each term. That process was to be repeated whenever the bursar handed over his duties to another officer.

The purview of financial administration in secondary school according to Duodu (2003) seeks to ensure that the financial resources of the school, support teaching and learning in an efficient and effective manner. Commonwealth Secretariat (1993) asserted that financial administration is a major responsibility of the headmasters. It contended that the successful management of financial inputs and good practices are a recipe for overall good performance in schools.

The Commonwealth Secretariat (1993) expressed concern that financial administration is one of the grey areas of the heads' administrative functions. It lamented that headmasters are least exposed to pre-service and in-service training in financial administration. It concluded that the lack of adequate exposure has resulted in failures within many schools.

Asiedu-Akrofi (1978) bemoaned the consequences of the training gap in financial administration for school heads. According to him, it is a pity that the lack of requisite training has resulted in misappropriation, uneconomical spending, poor budgeting and unintelligent planning, overspending, and control of scarce resources. Asiedu Akrofi (1978) reiterated that all the educational reforms and aims of the nation are desirable but the funds for their successful implementation are limited. In his opinion, the basis of financial management is with good keeping of record and the respect for the Ministry of Finance (MOF) Ministry of Education (MOE) and GES Financial and Accounting Instructions.

Bhatia (1995) and Scott (2003) pointed out that Public Service Organisations, (Ministries, Departments and Agencies) must enter upon administrative expenditure that are necessary for the efficient running of government business. They both affirmed that government expenditure incurred

through planning and implementation of policies is meant to achieve national development and peace. They agreed in their respective studies that financial administration remains the best option for handling public funds.

Causes of Headmasters' Dilemmas in their Practice of Financial Management

Many committees, ad-hoc and standing, have often been charged with the responsibility to investigate and get to the bottom of very pertinent issues so as to identify the agents and sources of the issues under consideration. Certainly, every effect emanates from a cause. A dilemma is a state of difficulty or a problem. The dilemmas of headmasters evoke situations of predicament during which they are not certain what decision to take about school financial activities. Such situations impose making a difficult choice between unpleasant possibilities on the heads.

This sub-heading on causes of dilemmas of headmasters of this study examines some of the agents and mainspring of their predicaments. A major predicament faced by headmasters is the bureaucratic channels followed in respect of the allocation of funds to schools and the untimely release of government grants. Educational Policy and Planning UNESCO Module II Section I, has the following stated about government's source of funding education:

Spending on education is generally distributed amongst the various levels (national, regional and local) of government. The distribution pattern may be clean, for example, where all spending for higher education is done at the national level, but usually things are more intricate, for historical reasons and because of a succession of minor decisions which blur the clarity of the initial

distribution. The respective weights of the various levels depend mainly on the resources at their disposal (p. 5).

As mentioned above, some grants from governments are disbursed at the national level. Others are routed through the region and the district depending on the weight of the grant. Decentralisation and regionalisation burden finances reaching heads in secondary schools. It so happens that the district headquarters in order to prompt the region or national headquarters which are normally responsible for a task in action and to be responsive, must undertake expenditures. Until the district is able to accomplish primary demands, headquarters will not release adequate funds for use in secondary schools.

Where power has not been completely devolved to the districts there is a blurred issue of clearly identifying where certain resources of schools should come from, who release them and how soon they do reach the headmaster. The headmaster has to run helter-skelter knocking at the doors of various authorities who with no formal knowledge refer headmasters to go to the region or the national headquarters, all that contributing in no small way to entangling the heads dilemma in financial management. The financial power of a school head cannot be effectively exercised except in negotiation with other levels of government. Government grant is the biggest source of income to secondary schools in Ghana.

Asiedu-Akrofi (1978) opined that;

These grants are subsidies which come from the Ministry of Education, Scholarship Secretariat, firms, foreign governments

and different Boards in the country, for example, the Cocoa Marketing Board in Ghana (p.10).

From all indications government grants cover bursaries and scholarships for brilliant but needy students. Part of the grant is also needed for recruitment expenditure, (personal emoluments, administrative activities, service activities, general expenditure). This is the new recommendation under the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) introduced in January 1999. The dilemma of the headmaster is attributed to delay in the preparation and submission of budget summaries to the Minister in charge of Education and consequently delay in their defence in Parliament. Secondary schools are obliged in the circumstance to operate basically on provisional estimates a month or two into the fiscal year or the academic term.

For families, many crucial factors determine cost. Expenses such as enrollment, tuition fees, school supplies, transport and lodging paid on behalf of the student who has to stay in school put pressure on them. Their inability to soak such pressure constitutes a major problem for the headmaster's ability to manage the financial activities of schools.

Duodu (2003) listed various contributions by parents towards the education of their wards in the following order:

Paying official tuition fees, paying PTA contributions, paying a specific fee for a building project such as house for teachers, paying teachers for additional lesson and couching special duties, general welfare (p.136).

More remarkably many parents are unable to pay the services, not even the government approved school fees because of their low income levels. The resultant financial dilemma is felt weightily by the headmaster when there is scant money to embark on projects and activities envisaged in the schools.

In a similar vein, the payment of tuition fees, enrolment fees and other related payments are described as earmarked taxes, the proceeds of which are used partly or entirely to finance expenditure on education. Forojalla (1993) in the discussion of funding for education observed that public tuition fees and proceeds from locally instituted taxes used to finance education are good examples of earmarked taxes. In the Ghanaian secondary schools, PTA Project levies, Anniversary levies among others fall within earmarked taxes described above by Forojalla. The direct benefit of such levies is tremendous. Tax payers are more likely to accept earmarked taxes than additional taxes for general purpose because of the overlap between tax payers and beneficiaries. These taxes are more reliable since they are freed from the vagaries of the annual budgetary process.

Finally, in the opinion of Sirkin paraphrased in Forojalla {1993} the coincidence between tax payers and recipients of the education service financed by their paid taxes is assuring. Both tax payers and recipients are convinced in the circumstance that the action would produce quality education that responds to their needs and desires.

The writers agreed that guardians, parents and students willingly accept to pay tuition fees and enrollment fees because they benefit directly. The other observation that the parents are not more disposed to paying general purpose

financing might also be true to some extent. It is this ill-will or tacit disagreement to pay these taxes readily that brings the headmasters state of dilemma to the fore.

The financial acrobatics displayed by parents and guardians on the payment of their wards' fees and other levies meant for school programmes have become alarming and worrisome. Where parents have given cash to their wards instead of effecting payment by themselves through the banks, unscrupulous wards have used the monies on other frivolities. The GNA (2004), reported in the *Daily Graphic* on 4th March 2004, that:

23 final year students of Kumasi High School were sacked. The students misappropriated their Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE) registration fees and could not register to write the said examination (p.8).

Many headmasters apparently facing such pecuniary losses either send defaulting students home for the fees or allow them to pay the fees by installment unfortunately at a snail pace. By and large, financial resource reaching the head for academic activities and other school projects are crippled to the utter embarrassment of the headmasters.

Another cause of the headmasters' dilemma is traced to role conflict between the headmaster and the bursar or the accounting staff. Just as headmasters are uneasy about bursar controlled financial management in secondary schools, bursars are also suspicious of heads usurping the accountants role as the technocrat and financial advisor in the financial decisions on the management of the schools. Gyasi (1998) re-affirmed that the roles of the head and the bursar have been clearly demarcated at various orientation courses. In

each instance the heads are described as the spending officers or financial managers and accountants are experts, giving advice on financial decisions.

However, there have been violent clashes between the two on the implementation of budget authorised by the heads. Bursars have vehemently resisted the headmasters' authority, claiming the former must decide on school expenditure. This reveals the state of uneasiness and conflict between them over who controls school funds. In many instances bursars have refused to sign cheques, throwing school programmes out of gear and into jeopardy.

According to Turkson (1970), accountants have grossly abused the provisions in the Financial Administration Regulations (1979). They have done purchases single-handedly, taking advantage of the ignorance of the membership of the board of governors and the 'laissez faire' attitude of some heads. The resulting underhand dealings of over and under invoicing have worked adversely towards the rapid depletion of already meagre school funds to the fretfulness of the head.

In examining the suspicion the accountant harbours against the headmaster Kwofie (1999) remarked that most heads arbitrarily fix school fees with teachers groping in the dark and unable to explain end-of-term bills to parents who might express concern about the bills. Over these issues bordering on transparency in school financial management Kuzagbe (1997) declared that:

That the headmaster is the financial and business manager does not mean he alone decides on the direction of the utilisation of his school's funds. At least, he has his financial advisor, that is the accountant and his lieutenants,

I mean his various heads of department to consult and decide on what is satisfactory to all in order to minimise if possible eliminate apprehensions and suspicions (p. 6).

From the foregoing, all who matter such as frontline officers ought to be involved in financial decision processes. The situation where headmasters submit receipts to bursars and heads of department are made to collect items for their department gives room for suspicion and little co-operation and support. These volatile conditions of mistrust and suspicion give lee way to student strife, staff apathy, poor feeding, falling standards of academic performance and predicaments for the head. In conclusion, only democratic principles based on mutual trust among all parties including the head will lead to successful, stress-free financial decisions and management on the part of the headmasters.

Functional Relationships among Headmasters and Supervisory

Personnel in School Financial Decisions

It is true that the chief responsibility of financial administration lies with the headmaster. Yet, as the school exists and the actors of the educational drama live in a climate of democratic opinion, they ought to give their lieutenants and collaborators in financial decisions some positive say. Duodu (2003) identified the personnel directly involved in financial decisions along with the headmaster. They included the bursar and other accounting staff. Others are the board of governors, the assistant heads, senior house staff, the heads of department, academic board and special fundraising committees. With regard to the supervisory personnel, Kochhar (2002) reaffirmed that the head plays the role of a

co-ordinator linking up with the rest and ensuring the smooth implementation of decisions taken with supervisory personnel at each level.

In connection with his duties as the financial and business manager, [SMCD 221] and Duodu (2003) both stipulated that the head provides and disburses funds for the attainment of established goals and objectives of the school. The headmaster through the board of governors, is responsible for the financial business of the school. He implements financial decisions taken at board meetings regarding provision and disbursement of funds. Asiedu-Akrofi (1978) concluded that at the school level, the headmaster works in close collaboration with the bursar who is the chief financial advisor, keeping good record of the income and expenditure and banking all monies received on behalf of the school. As Duodu (2003) explained:

The head and the accountant are supposed to prepare school budget at the local school level, collect school fees and levies, keep required financial records and account for use of stationery and supplies (p.87).

The working relationship between the head and the supervisory personnel is supposed to be very cordial. The head vets estimates and instructs the accountant to release funds. Towards the end of the fiscal year the head ensures that annual budget estimates are prepared from all departments. He instructs the accountant to prepare the annual budget for the school. Commonwealth Secretariat (1993) while discussing effective use of school budget revealed that the accountant scrutinises estimates, takes action by writing cheques based on the head's approved figures and signs his portion of the cheque.

Commonwealth Secretariat further revealed that on receiving instruction from the head, the accountant prepares the budget, advising and ensuring that estimates are not exceeded in the budget preparation. The two are supposed to relate closely in everything from internal examination financing, workshops, feeding students in the boarding house, preparing annual budget, fuelling vehicles and generators, payment of utilities, entertainment, health and hospitalisation of students to buying things for the dispensary. In each of the above transactions, the bursar releases the funds to the committee, the assistant headmaster, or to the supplier or service provider in each case.

Duodu (2003) once again catalogued some roles of school personnel involved in financial management. The assistant headmaster in charge of academic affairs sees to the day-by-day teaching and learning in the classroom. He sees to it that tables, chairs, books are provided. The assistant headmaster in charge of administration sees to boarding and lodging issues in the school. He works jointly with the senior house staff. He supervises, the kitchen, dining hall and the dormitories. The head of department reports to the assistant headmaster (academic), allocates subjects and classes to tutors and makes inputs for departmental budget estimates.

The senior house staff supervises sanitation, minor repairs and provision of sports equipment and general welfare. They take house dues and buy sanitation equipment for distribution to the houses. The various personnel of the school mentioned above including the teaching staff, kitchen and others; estate and plantations are responsible to the head and so the latter is supposed to maintain a cordial and healthy working relationship with them. Kochhar (2002) shared this

same sentiment over the maintenance of a good working relationship between the head and the other supervisory personnel in financial decisions.

The writer opined that:

It is important for the administration to realise and to act upon the realisation that principals are head teachers, *primus inter pares* that many teachers are as well qualified, as experienced and as capable as their principals are and hence they must be given a positive say in matters of school policy. The principal should remember the wise statement of Ronald Gould; “No quality education is possible without good personal relationships. When teachers are treated as allies to the heads and when colleagues are consulted and given responsibility, they respond positively and better teaching results. (p.139).

In the various relationships that we have established in the school organisation among supervisory personnel, it is important to mention that decisions are constantly being taken at all levels of the structural relationships. Assistants, the board of governors, heads of department, the domestic bursar, chief labourer and other middle level supervisors consider motivational tools and financial controls among others. These decisions end up being concretised before the headmaster.

For the democratic relationships among supervisory personnel to grow stronger based on good financial decisions at all levels, it implies that school administrators must now be conversant with some rudiments of financial management. Asiedu-Akrofi (1978) admonished administrators that training must

go beyond the limit of subject knowledge and techniques for teaching them. Administrators need to know sources of revenue (national, regional and local) budgeting and how funds are expended. They must also have demographic information for forecasting on school needs. A general knowledge of these helps administrators or supervisory personnel to economically manage the meagre funds at their disposal in the schools.

Contrary to the ideals expressed above, in the opinion of Kochhar (2002), dictatorial tendencies are manifest as Kochhar alludes to an axiom by Adlai Stevenson that: "Power corrupts but lack of power corrupts absolutely". Relationships among supervisory personnel and the headmaster must be democratic. Democratic relationships mean that conflict situations such as inciting a section of the staff against another, divide and rule tactics and ostracisation among others could be possibly avoided. The avoidance of conflict situations could be realised alongside possible attendant financial mismanagement and falling standards at all levels of the administrative structure of secondary schools.

Ahwoi (1986) explained that standards at all levels of education have fallen due to lack of adequate funds to provide the requisite textbooks, equipment and other inputs in our educational institutions. Poor feeding, overcrowding in boarding institutions due to lack of improvement in the infrastructure of institutions as well as frustration of qualified and dedicated teachers have been some of the evil effects of corruption in the education service.

Ahwoi (1986) observed that falling standards and poor infrastructure are the result of corruption. Corruption breeds when good supervisory relationships built on esprit de corps breaks down, when the head sidelines dedicated officers

and plunges financial decisions and programmes into corrupt manoeuvres. Standards certainly fall because honest officers are frustrated under the yoke of absolute power of the dishonest and corrupt officers. The frustrated are not motivated to speak any longer about the over crowded dormitories, deteriorating infrastructure and poor meals.

Headmasters as the principal administrators could have serious problems where they fail to respect the opinions of many staff members and their decisions. Where supervisory staff realise that meetings are only formalities to impose ideas and that no collective decisions are implemented then student personnel may resort to undisciplined acts.

For example, the discovery of financial mismanagement through the connivance of a section of supervisory personnel triggers a total break-down in financial management and all forms of financial indiscipline. This is the import of the special audit report on Nkroful Agricultural Secondary published in *The Week End Crusading Guide* by Aremeyaw (2006). The report stated that financial administration practised in the school was contrary to laid down financial regulations. The school had a substantive accountant yet the head authorized the assistant headmaster to collect and disburse fees without any supervision. The auditors report described the act as incredible, absurd and contrary to [FAI] Part 1 Section (3) that stated thus:

In the pursuance of the above tasks the head shall have the assistance of his Chief Technical Officer the Bursar/Treasurer in financial and accounting matters (p.4).

The above finding extracted from the audit report reveals a cause of shortage of funds to run secondary schools successfully. In ensuing cases of embezzlement and other financial malpractices in schools one doubts the truth of inadequate funds to run schools by the headmasters. As to whether financial malfeasance of all sorts is the cause of a break-down in financial management, is an issue that could be reversed for the better through the establishment of sustainable good relationships among the staff especially those serving in supervisory capacities. Impartial and dishonest tendencies on the part of headmasters may make it difficult for them to secure staff co-operation. A democratic climate on the other hand will link officers to the head and consequently remove all chances of conflict situations culminating in dilemmas for the latter.

Empirical Proof of Predicaments Entangling Headmasters

Forojalla (1993) in a study on sources of funds in educational financing in Africa brought out the advantages of school fees which he described as earmarked taxes. Forojalla (1993) agreed that earmarked taxes (approved school fees) are advantageous because they are not subjected to the uncertainties of annual budgeting processes. This viewpoint shared by Forojalla presupposes that the prompt payment of school fees could help make a good start in the school district before as it were, government grants could be handed in.

The observation that many parents and students are continuously in arrears or in serious default of payment of both school fees and Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) dues is a clue to the predicaments entangling heads in financial decisions. The disturbing caption: '23 Final Year Students Sacked' which

appeared in the Daily Graphic of March 4, 2004 by Ghana News Agency GNA (2004) is the tip of the iceberg in the volume of findings via à vis misappropriation of school fees. GNA (2004) reported that the suspected students were final year students of Kumasi High School, who allegedly misappropriated their Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE) registration fees and could not register to participate in the examination and were consequently sacked from the school. Under dim scenarios such as the one revealed in the GNA report above, headmasters become crippled and the advantages of earmarked taxes (school fees) postulated by Forojalla (1993) become wobbly, putting heads in a state of dilemma.

The January 20, 2000 *Daily Graphic* carried an article titled: ‘The Right to Education and the Issue of Expulsion’. The writer, Appiah (2000) drew attention to stakeholders on children’s rights to education. The writer extensively used quoted excerpts of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26 of the 4th Republic Constitution of Ghana, Children’s Act (Act 560) of 1998. Appiah based his argument on the premise of section 8 of the Act of Parliament which states that ‘No person shall deprive a child access to education or any other things required of his development. Thus, he decried expulsion and stigmatised all forms of deprivation to students defaulting in payment of fees as violations of their right to education.

Parallel to his discussion on establishing the advantage of payment of school fees, Forojalla (1993) cautioned that funds realised from earmarked taxes could not be spent in another sector (misapplied), neither could expenditures based on such fees be deferred too long after the payment of such taxes. The

writer intimated however, that if more money is realised than can be effectively spent on the sector, administrators are tempted to spend those funds lavishly or make unnecessary spending on low priority areas. The assertion by the writer brings to the fore an inherent inefficiency with the use of school fees by some headmasters.

In retrospect, student demonstrations have shot up to alarming heights in public boarding secondary schools in Ghana. Most violent student strikes in secondary schools are linked with poor feeding and financial mismanagement of school funds by headmasters and the frontline school administrators. A circular released by the Director General of the GES (1983) confirmed that:

All the disturbances appear to have assumed some common disturbing features with students demanding the unconditional removal of heads and rampant resort to criminal behaviour (p.1).

Many fact finding committees have been set up by successive governments resulting in the mass transfer, demotion and or expulsion of many headmasters. This happens because of headmasters or bursars lavish spending on low priority areas at the expense of more pressing needs of students and other school activities.

Nkrumah (1995) in his study on financial administration in schools alluded to a good number of workshops on financial administration organised periodically for the benefit of sitting heads and to newly appointed ones, during induction courses held for the latter group. He declared that seminars, workshops and induction courses continue to be organised for heads at the instance of the

Ghana Education Service [GES] and other development partners. He also recalled that in 1993, substantive and newly appointed heads underwent training in financial management at the Ghana Education Staff Development Institute [GESDI] at Ajumako.

It appears to be the case that no remarkable impact has so far been felt on these interventions intended to equip school administrators to increase performance in financial management. A good number of headmasters manage school finances with little regard to prescribed regulations on financial administration for schools. Another publication in the 'Daily Graphic', credited to the GNA (2006) captioned: 'GES cautions heads of public schools' stated the following:

The [then] acting Director General of the Ghana Education Service, (GES) Mr. Michael Nsowah, has warned heads of public secondary schools running hostel facilities without due regard to laid down regulations to put an end to the practice immediately or face sanctions (p.40).

The caution above reveals the wanton indifference on the part of some headmasters to good practices prescribed in laid down regulations in matters affecting financial decisions such as the supply of text books and other facilities including hostel accommodation. For example, Nkrumah (1995) concluded from his study on financial management in schools that about 85% of auditors queries to headmasters on school accounts were blamed on improper financial management practices.

The Ghana National Association of Teachers GNAT (2001) revealed the findings of a survey the outfit undertook on the distribution of headmasters by their professional specialisations. The findings revealed that just an abysmal figure of 2.2% of personnel heading second cycle institutions nationwide are Business trained. In an ascending order the following is the distribution established by (GNAT, 2001, p.7):

Business Education	-	2.2%
Science Education	-	6.9%
Language Education	-	22.3%
Social Science Education	-	68.6%
Total	-	100%

From the above distribution the least that could be said is that the age-old practice of appointing headmasters based on seniority or long service in the Ghana Education Service other than on professional competence in business or accountancy or financial management as a requirement is a scary thing handcuffing headmasters in the field.

Appointment to the position of headmaster of a secondary school requires a prospective candidate to be an assistant director within the GES, who shall have served a minimum of three years on that rank and a minimum of three years in the capacity of assistant headmaster, head of department, senior housemaster and co-ordinator of guidance and counseling. The revelation from the GNAT survey is that only the above requirements are predominantly used in the selection of candidates into the position of headmaster in Ghanaian Secondary Schools

regardless of the one's background in financial management or field of specialisation.

Secondly, schools have expanded in numbers and in enrolment amidst many of these predicaments. To increase guarantees in good practices and positive change, public school funds should be handled, with observance of well demarcated roles for spending officers and taking collective decisions at every stage with the headmaster acting in unison with the relevant supervisory personnel.

Summary

The concept of financial management implies granting powers and respecting regulations and practices in respect of receiving, keeping, spending and accounting for public or private funds. More importantly, it is providing information to people within the school district to assist them make informed decisions on the school's finances.

Financial management in secondary schools is threatened by late disbursement of government grants. A substantial proportion of funds needed to meet schools capital and recurrent expenditures are provided by the Government of Ghana. Other threats are traced to the gross default in payment of school fees. There are wide disparities in income levels of parents, which incomes are generally below the poverty line. Students' misappropriation of school fees is a common phenomenon too. Besides, many headmasters are appointed with no or very little background in accountancy or financial administration. Post-appointment training for these heads has not impacted positively on their jobs. Headmasters must adopt democratic approaches, consensus-building, sincere

esprit de corps to get all relevant school personnel on board financial management.

The review established that the strong pursuit of personal interest and comfort at the expense of school interest in many cases is part of the sore-spots working towards the break-down in financial management regulations in many schools. The yardstick is borne by the numerous unanswered queries raised after audit sessions by auditors. The principal observation is that much needs to be done to fine-tune financial management in the schools.

The review of literature reveals that some in-depth studies have taken place in financial management in education earlier on. This coverage notwithstanding, the exclusive topic of this study: Financial management in secondary schools, the dilemmas of headmasters: late disbursement of government grants, poor payment of fees, heads inadequate training in financial management, has not been adequately explored.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the design of the study, the sampling procedure, the instruments that were used as well as the data collection procedure.

Research Design

This study is a descriptive survey. It surveyed heads of schools in the Nzema - East district on how they managed school finances. Data were collected on existing conditions and were used to answer questions about the predicaments of headmasters in the performance of their roles in managing the school finances.

Preference was given to survey design over other designs because the survey design describes and documents aspects of the situation and/or conditions in their spontaneous occurrences. Opoku (2002) opined that, “More than just asking questions and recording answers, survey research interprets and describes relations among the variables of the study” (p.17).

Population

The research population comprised all the officers involved in the management or disbursement of school funds in the four senior secondary schools in the Nzema-East district. All the four institutions are co-educational. The school personnel involved in the study are categorised into two: teaching and non-

teaching. Identified under the teaching category are headmasters, assistant headmasters, senior house staff and heads of academic department. The non-teaching category comprises accounts staff, domestic bursars, storekeepers, SRC executives, PTA executives and the GES Internal Audit staff.

Headmasters by their functional status as spending officers and that of the bursars, as technical advisers, are indispensable for the financial management of secondary schools. The two however, work in close collaboration with other personnel who are involved in activities utilising school funds. The inclusion of those other school personnel is therefore justified. Their justification is by the various financial activities or actions they are made to perform or take on behalf of the headmaster, towards the smooth running of the schools.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

Table 1. Provides details of the sample.

As Table 1 shows, the sample size was 100, comprising headmasters, bursars, among others. All the 100 respondents were purposively determined because they were directly involved in making expenses on behalf of the schools concerned, controlling expenditure and ensuring that all expenditure was made in accordance with the financial regulations of the GES.

Table 1**Distribution of the Sample by School**

Personnel	Nkroful Sec. Sch.	Esiamā Sec. Sch.	Bonzo-Kaku Sec. Sch.	Nsein Sec. Sch.	Total
Head	1	1	1	1	4
Bursar	1	1	1	1	4
A/C Clerk	2	-	1	2	5
Domestic Bursar	1	-	-	1	2
Storekeeper	1	1	1	1	4
Assistant Head	2	1	2	3	8
Guidance Co-ordinator	1	1	1	1	4
Snr. House Staff	2	2	2	2	8
P.E. Tutors	1	1	1	1	4
Heads of Dept.	7	7	7	7	28
Table 1 continued:					
PTA Executive	3	3	3	3	12
SRC Executive	4	4	4	4	16
GES Internal Auditors	-	-	-	-	2
Total	26	21	24	27	100

Research Instruments

The researcher used questionnaire and an interview guide (see Appendices) in the collection of data. Four sets of questionnaire were administered to respondents. Set 1 was designed for heads of school; set 2 for school accountants (bursars) the third set was designed for school personnel while the fourth and last part was designed for internal auditors of the Ghana Education Service Office of Nzema-East District, Axim.

In all a miscellany of closed and open-ended questions numbering 27 in all was contained in the four sets of questionnaire. Additionally, interviewing was adopted to clarify and confirm some responses to some items in the sets of questionnaire as provided by the respondents. The level of co-operation from many of the respondents was encouraging.

Pilot-testing of Instruments

The questionnaire was pilot-tested at Half-Assini Secondary School and Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was computed. The result was .734 (see Appendix G), indicating that the questionnaire was reliable.

Respondents consisted of the headmaster, the bursar, two accounts clerks, four SRC members, the seven heads of academic department, the domestic bursar, three executive members of the PTA, the storekeeper, the assistant headmaster and one internal auditor of the GES at Half-Assini.

Four sets of questionnaire were accordingly designed for heads, accountants, school personnel, GES internal audit staff and an interview guide for heads all intended to capture the optimum information needed.

Data Collection Procedure

Four days were used to administer the questionnaire. A day was set aside for the distribution in each school. Distances between the schools and transportation hiccups in the area were taken into consideration and so a whole day was devoted to each school during the distribution of the questionnaire. Respondents were contacted individually.

The return of the questionnaire was also negotiated with individual respondents. Agreement was reached to return completed questionnaire a week after their first meeting. This approach was adopted to guard against possible misplacement or outright loss of questionnaire by respondents. It took a total of three weeks to be able to retrieve all the 100 pieces of questionnaire and grant interview to heads and the other respondents. The interview was meant to ascertain and confirm written answers to the questionnaire. The interview lasted for an hour in many cases. Notes were taken and developed soon after the interview session. This helped to forestall losing trends of details of information and answers provided by respondents.

Data Analysis

Interview data were compiled into short listed responses and tallied on the appropriate questionnaire response lists. Tables were constructed to show variety of responses and the number of respondents involved. Data were predominantly analysed by the use of figures especially percentage score to test research

questions statistically. For the most part, tables were built up to support the analysis. The findings that are recorded in the tables are used to expatiate on the research questions.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter the findings of the study are presented and discussed. The presentation follows the order of the research questions.

Characteristics of Respondents

One hundred respondents altogether provided answers to the four sets of questionnaire designed to collect data. Seventy-five males were involved while females numbered twenty five. The highest number of 65 male respondents came from the school personnel category. The least number made up of two males were GES internal audit staff.

Six respondents were aged 50 years and above, 28 were between 41 and 50 years; 20 were between 36 and 40 years and eight were also between 31 and 35 years old. Those below 30 years numbered 81, 16 of whom were students. With regard to educational background, 70 respondents had received tertiary education, 27 had received second cycle education and three had received basic education while 16 were students. The above information based on gender, age and education helps throw light on the calibre of respondents with whom the researcher interacted in the course of data collection for this study.

Answers to Research Questions

Research Question 1: How adequate is the exposure of headmasters to financial management training?

This research question was meant to find out whether heads of school had been adequately prepared to manage school finances. Table 2 shows what heads stated about the adequacy of their preparation.

Table 2

Needs Assessment of Headmasters Regarding Financial Management

Headmasters Statements	Frequency	Percentage
a) Need for knowledge in Financial Management	4	100
b) Need to attend Workshops on Financial Management.	4	100
b) Authentic Manuals needed for financial management.	4	25
c) Need by heads to have an Accounting Background	3	75

Table 2 shows that all the four heads representing 100 percent expressed a felt need for knowledge in financial management. The expressed need by the heads highlights financial management as an important aspect of the headmasters' role in the overall management of the schools. Three out of the four representing 75 percent expressed the necessity for them to have some level of knowledge in Accounting.

Another finding was that none of the heads of schools had attended any workshop on financial management. Finally Table 2 reveals that no head of school had access to all the authentic manuals recommended for financial

administration. There are four of these manuals and each head contacted had access to only one of the four manuals.

The results showed in Table 2 supports the admonition by Asiedu-Akrofi (1978) that the training of administrators must transcend the limit of subject knowledge and methods of teaching. Heads must be conversant with sources of revenue (national, regional and local) budgeting and how funds are expended. The expressed need for knowledge in financial administration by the heads justified the assertion by the Commonwealth Secretariat (1993) that financial administration is a major responsibility of the headmaster. Financial management is a recipe for successful administration and enhanced outcomes in the financial activities of the school.

Another finding was that non-attendance at workshops by the heads stood at hundred percent (100%). This confirmation by the heads is quite unusual. The upshot of the investigation into the non-participation of heads is striking. The researcher finds the result extremely unusual, considering the fact that three of the heads had been administrators for over five years. One headmaster however, had assumed office for less than six months into his first appointment at the time the researcher was collecting data.

The finding is a remarkable departure from what Nkrumah (1995) stipulated that a good number of workshops on financial administration are organised periodically for substantive heads and newly appointed ones. He contended that seminars, workshops and induction courses continue to be organised for heads at the instance of the GES and other development partners. This confirmation by the heads is quite unusual. The researcher found the result

extremely unusual considering the fact that three of the heads had been administrators over five years. One headmaster, however had assumed office for less than six months into his first appointment at the time the researcher was collecting data. .

The results in Table 2 give a negative signal that heads were probably not working with requisite efficiency. Nkrumah concluded that about 85% of queries to heads after audit sessions is attributed to improper financial management practices. Eventually, for lack of expert knowledge the heads may show disregard for and non-compliance with fundamental regulations and their enforcement. The researcher's belief is that where training exist for heads and they do not avail themselves of it, they surely become the one legged dancers who destroy their own selves as far as good practices in financial management are concerned.

In Table 2, one head stated that each of them had a copy of approved literature prescribed for financial administration. It is also plausible that heads cannot give these prescribed regulations the deserved attention. This confirms that the level of preparation for heads to efficiently manage the school finances does not measure up to acceptable standards.

In Table 2 three out of the four heads stated the necessity for them to have some level of knowledge in accounting. The finding confirmed the statistics published by GNAT (2001) on a survey about distribution of headmasters by their professional specialisation. The GNAT survey revealed that only 2.2% of headmasters nationwide are Business trained and by extension have knowledge of Accounting. The traditional mode of appointing heads based on long service than on professional competence in Accounting or financial management as one of the

requirements, puts many heads at risk in financial reporting and underhand deals by some unscrupulous accountants. This is in keeping with the work of Kuzagbe (1997) who warned that accountants might manipulate school finances for the lack of heads working knowledge in accounting.

On the adequacy of preparation by the heads, the researcher found out why the heads expressed the felt need for knowledge in financial administration. The heads stated the reasons captured in Table 3.

Table 3

Reasons for which Heads think they need Financial Administration

Background		
Heads Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
Confidence	1	20.00
Efficiency	1	20.00
Accountability	1	20.00
Proper Disbursement / Supervision of School Account	2	40.00
Total	5	100.00

Table 3 shows that all the reasons assigned by the heads are tenable. The reasons tend to confirm the concept of financial administration reverberated by Duodu (2003). He stipulated that financial administration entwines abiding by regulations and practices in respect of receiving, keeping, expending and accounting for funds.

The Commonwealth Secretariat (1993) lamented that financial administration is one of the grey areas of the head's administrative functions. The result further reveals that heads believed that they need a good knowledge in financial administration. This is relevant and crucial today than ever before because proper disbursement, internal verification of accounts and supervision of procurement procedures promote efficiency in financial management. The enhanced efficiency raises the confidence level of heads to account for budget implementation activities during the academic term and fiscal year.

The researcher was also interested in finding out problems that heads of school felt might arise because of their inadequate training in financial administration. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Problems Associated with Inadequate Training in Financial Management for Heads as Identified by the Heads

Weakness/ problem	Number of Heads	Percentage
Embarrassment by Accountants	2	50
Fraud / Malfeasance	1	25
Over Dependence on Bursars' Advice	1	25
Total	4	100

Two heads out of the four respondents stated that inadequate training in financial administration for heads might result in their suffering embarrassment at the hands of accountants. One head identified fraud and/or financial malfeasance as an inevitable outcome of heads' mediocre training in the discipline. Again one of

the heads also stated that the problem of headmasters' over-dependence on bursars' advice is a major weakness identified with inadequate training for heads. Over-dependence creates uneasiness in heads and gives lee way to the bursar to control financial management in the school.

Every school is a multi-million cedi organisation. The operating budget runs into millions of cedis. With operations of that size knowledge of financial administration is very crucial and requires professional expertise or adequate training especially at workshops for spending officers like the headmasters. Gyasi (1998) re-affirmed that the roles of the headmaster and the accountant are clearly defined at various workshops. The head is the spending officer or financial manager and the accountant is a technocrat who offers expert advice on financial decision options. He intimated, however, that violent clashes have characterised the relationship between the two over budget implementation.

The finding from Table 4 that heads are prone to embarrassment created for them by the accountants is endorsed by Gyasi (1998). He stipulated that bursars have impetuously resisted headmasters' authority, refused to sign cheques and held school activities hostage.

Another problem associated with inadequate levels of training for heads as revealed in the findings is fraud or financial malfeasance. When malfeasance and other deals pointing to fraud are embarked on, the school certainly becomes the loser. It could operate at a deficit. Grants and other subsidies to the school, GETFund and scholarship to the school tend to grow in figures but in actual fact their reserves and impact dwindle to insignificant levels. Turkson (1970) asserted that accountants have grossly abused financial administration regulations. They

have resorted to underhand dealings single-handedly, taking advantage of the ignorance of heads. This problem fast depletes the already wobbly financial positions of schools.

The findings suggest that heads were aware that fraud and financial malfeasance are red flags in school financial administration. The inherent danger can be gleaned from an audit report story written by Aremeyaw (2006) on Nkroful Agricultural Secondary School. The report stated that financial administration had collapsed in the school. The head authorised the assistant headmaster to collect and disburse school fees without supervision. That practice was described as absurd, incredible and contrary to financial administration instructions. Ahwoi (1986) confirmed the danger of malfeasance. He observed that malfeasance results in falling standards and poor infrastructure in the schools.

Research question 2: What contributions do accounts officers make towards financial management in the school?

Research Question 2 sought to determine the contribution of accounts staff to financial (administration) management in the schools. This was intended to establish the headmasters' assessment of the contributions and work performance of the accounts staff in their schools. The results of the findings are presented in Table 5.

Table 5
Contributions of Accounts Staff to Financial Management as
Reported by Heads

Area of Assessment	Mean Rating	Percentage
Performance in specific		
Financial tasks	3.69	80
Service duration of one		
Year and above	4.00	100
Heads reservations/fears about		
accounts officers contributions	4.00	100

The evidence from the findings in Table 5 is that the accountants are seen to be doing good work. The researcher believes that the accountants have stepped up their efforts following incidents of financial impropriety investigated in Nkroful Agricultural Secondary in July 2006, and the sanctions imposed accordingly. Aremeyaw (2006) described the audit report on the school as one that revealed a total break-down in financial management regulations. In Table 5, performance in specific financial tasks was rated with a frequency of 3.69 at a percentage rate of 80.

Table 5 also reveals that all heads confirmed the fact that the accountants had stayed for a year or more at their current duty posts. The heads further revealed that the officers had previously worked as accountants in some other schools. There is no doubt that the professional acumen of the accountants is well

sharpened for them to prove equal to quality service delivery, in financial management in their respective schools.

Table 5 further indicates that all the four heads who were involved in the study had no fears or reservations about the duty performance and contributions of the accountants. The finding also confirmed the performance of accountants on specific activities pertaining to financial management in the schools. It is believed that the recent corrective action by the GES after a special audit service in Nkroful Agricultural Secondary School has put everyone on the alert.

The researcher considered it relevant to elicit suggestions from heads on ways of ameliorating financial management in their schools. Table 6 provides the findings of the investigation.

Table 6

Heads' Suggestions for Improving Financial Management in Schools

Suggestions	Relative Frequency	Percentage
Heads should attend Seminars	0.2	20
Attend Refresher Courses	0.4	40
Heads should follow Financial Administration Regulations	0.2	20
Some Financial Administration Duties should be given to Assistant Heads in charge of Administration	0.2	20
Total	1.0	100

Table 6 shows that 40 percent of the responses suggested refresher courses as a solution to any envisaged improvement. That finding supports the claim by Nkrumah (1995) that a good number of workshops on financial administration periodically organised for substantive and newly appointed heads are very necessary. The call for strict adherence to financial administration regulations is in the right direction. This is vindicated by the then Director of GES in a story attributed to GNA (2006) in the *Daily Graphic* of August 22, 2006, who warned that heads in public secondary schools running hostel facilities with scant regard to laid down regulations would face sanctions if the practice went on unabated.

Research Question 3: What is the level of access to adequate information on school finances within the schools in the study?

Research Question 3 sought to determine the level of information flow among school personnel over school financial activities. The researcher consequently explored school personnel access to relevant and adequate information on specific financial activities. This was meant to get an insight into any circumstances of aloofness or information black-out in the schools vis-à-vis financial decisions and undertakings.

Table 7

Views of Respondents Regarding Communication among School Personnel on Specific Financial Activities

Views	Frequency	Percentage
(a) Information flow on specific	68	75.5
(b) There is Need for Improved Communication	59	65.6
(c) School Fees Charged in the Schools are manageable	64	71.1
Note :	N=90	

In Table 7 the researcher took an inventory of specific financial activities (see Appendix C.) The finding from the table shows that 68 out of 90 respondents corresponding to 76% of the respondents indicated that information flow is not free flowing. The interpretation is that information flow and for that matter access to information is frail and shrunk. The researcher shares in the conviction that living as we do in a radical democratic climate, school personnel should be given bigger share in participating in the day-to-day management of the school's financial activities.

The financial administrators ought to establish a genuine rapport among the staff through individual and group consultations be it formal or informal for successful outcomes. The writer's conviction is substantiated by Kochhar (2002) that teachers are equally qualified, experienced and are as capable as heads. That

is why they must be given a positive say in matters concerning school policy including financial issues. Accordingly, Kochhar concluded by admonishing that when teachers (school personnel) are given responsibility and consulted, they respond better and positive outcomes are achieved.

Table 7 also indicates that 59 respondents constituting 65.6% out of a total of 90 respondents expressed the need that information should be made to flow to the other school personnel. The finding from the survey is that other school personnel ought to be informed and consulted adequately on financial activities. This finding supports the stance of Duodu (2003) and Kochher (2002) that the head and the supervisory personnel must maintain cordial and healthy working relationships among one another.

The result on the size of school fees paid was 'average'. The outcome was concluded by 64 respondents representing 71.1%. The logical conclusion from the finding in Table 7 ought to have been that payment of school fees should have been without any difficulties. This is because fees charged are average. The common perception however, is that there are pockets of challenges encountered in the payment of fees.

The researcher consequently delved into finding reasons for poor payment of fees in the schools. The various responses given by the respondents are shown in Table 8.

Table 8**Reasons for Poor Payment of Fees as Provided by Respondent's**

Respondents Reasons	Relative Frequency	Percentage
a. Low Incomes/Poverty among Parents/Guardians	55	61.1
b. Unemployment	21	23.3
c. Misplaced Priorities	19	21.1
d. Students Embezzlement of Fees	23	25.6
e. NGO's Delay in Payment of Grant/Scholarship	3	3.3

Note: N=90

The survey results in Table 8 indicate that a poverty/low income is the most outstanding course of poor parents of fees in the schools. Fifty-five respondents from a total of 90 constituting 61.1 percent attributed poor payment of fees to poverty/low incomes among parents in the catchments area. This result confirmed the headmasters' lamentation that payment of school fees poses a great challenge to their role as financial managers. According to the finding, headmasters are faced with a serious challenge in financial management. This is because though the schools charge average fees as depicted in the survey, fears are that paradoxically the incidence of default in payment of school fees is very high.

Research Question 4: How effectively are financial regulations applied in the management of financial activities?

Research Question 4 was designed for accountants and was intended to collect information to determine the extent to which financial administration regulations are effectively applied in the management of financial activities. Table 9 presents the accountants' assessment of adherence to the application of financial regulations to specific activities in the schools.

Table 9

Effective Application of Financial Administration Regulations in Financial Activities

Financial Activities	Mean Rating	Comment
a. Tender board / purchasing Body is strictly used for bidding	3.5	Frequent
b. Any interested persons are allowed to supply goods / service to the school	2.0	Rare
c. Systematically keeps records of accounting on budget implementation	4.8	Very frequent
d. Prepares reliable financial statements	4.8	Very frequent
e. User approved internal mechanism to ensure efficiency	4.8	Very frequent
Grand Mean	3.98	Frequent

Table 9 tabulates findings on how financial administration regulations were applied in the schools under this study. Going by the grand mean value, indications are that financial administration regulations were frequently applied. The finding is in keeping with the purpose of financial administration regulations defined in (SMCD 221) which is to provide relevant and specific rules and regulations to strengthen and assist agencies make judicious and prudent decisions on their financial activities.

The researcher felt the need to investigate into audit services extended to the schools especially queries received through auditing and the nature of queries. Two of the four respondents gave no responses, saying their schools had not been audited during their term of office. Three different responses were recorded indicating that queries were about default in payment of school fees, irregular purchases and failure to effect tax deduction on items sold to the school.

The audit queries are an indictment on the heads in the affected schools vis-à-vis acceptable levels of compliance with financial regulations. The shortcomings confirm the concern expressed by the Commonwealth Secretariat (1993) that financial administration is one of the gray areas of the heads administrative functions. Asiedu-Akrofi (1978) also bemoaned the consequences of the training gap in financial administration suffered by school heads. This training gap has resulted in misappropriation, uneconomic, spending and poor control of scarce resources.

Research Question 5: What is the perception of those associated with the schools about headmasters' management of school financial resources?

Research Question 5 was intended to explore and ascertain the perception of some school associates about heads' management of school financial resources. In the context of this study, the researcher limited respondents described as associates to GES internal auditors of the district directorate. This was to affirm their view point in their capacity as officers policing good practices and playing an oversight role on school budget implementations. Their ratings on specific financial activities are tabulated in Table 9.

Table 10

Perception about Headmasters' Management of Financial Resources

Notable Tasks	Mean perception rating	Comment
a. Collection of approved school fees	3.5	Good
b. collection of financial estimates		
grants from treasury office	4.5	Very Good
c. Collection of monies other than		
approved school fees	3.5	Good
d. School budget estimates (preparations)	3.5	Good
e. Proposals for cash incentives to school		
personnel	3.0	Average
f. Determining imprest for errand staff	4.0	Good
g. Keeping proper records of Accounts books		
(invoice, receipts, cheques etc)	3.5	Good

Table 10 Continued

Notable Tasks	Mean perception rating	Comment
(Trial balance, balance sheet)	4.0	Good
i. Preparation of comprehensive financial reports	3.5	Good
j. Procurement of books, school equipment, farm equipment and food items for the kitchen	4.0	Good
k. Payment of fees /money in cash or cheque to bank	3.0	Average
l. Payment of goods/ services procured by the school	3.5	Good
m. Payment of utilities (water, electricity)	4.0	Good
n. Determining budget estimates	3.0	Average
o. Involving staff other than the accountants in planning /preparing budget estimates	2.0	Poor
p. Writing cheques	4.5	Very good
q. Fixing (IOU) to staff	4.0	Good
r. Responding to audit queries	3.0	Average
s. Communicating audit report to staff	1.0	Very Poor
Grand mean	3.42	Average

Table 10 represents 19 notable tasks under the supervision of the heads. The researcher used a frequency distribution to determine the mean rating of perception on each task. The mean ratings calculated are recorded against each task and the value assigned to each of the five categories of response recorded

under ‘comment’. Table 10 shows the grand mean 3.42 which is equivalent to “Average” on the five response categories. The average perception finding confirmed the vilifying stance of the Commonwealth Secretariat (1993) and Owusu (1993) that financial administration is another weak spot in the heads’ administrative role. This is because the heads are least exposed to pre-service and post-appointment training in that field. The revelation is not too far either from the perception of the public, students, the community and a section of the media that though the schools have continued to be in existence since their establishments, fluid financial management practices pose a challenge.

The researcher agreed with the Commonwealth Secretariat (2003) that financial administration is a major responsibility of the head. Heads must therefore strive to improve performance in the field to support teaching and learning.

Table 11

GES Auditors’ Suggestions for Improving Financial Management in Secondary Schools in the District

Suggestions for improvement	Number of Auditors
a. Critical observation of payment touches attachments	2
b. Heads registration of all signed cheques	1
c. Monthly reconciliation of signed cheques with bank statements	1
d. Strict adherence to procurement Act 663	1
e. Strengthening Internal control mechanism in accounts office	2

Note : N= 2

The researcher deemed it necessary to elicit suggestions for enhancing financial management in secondary schools. Internal auditors of the GES were considered the appropriate respondents to give the suggestions. This is because they have the official mandate to monitor, evaluate and assess financial management in the public secondary schools in the district.

From Table 11 all two respondents called for strengthening internal control mechanisms in the schools by heads. They also recommended critical perusal of attachments to payment vouchers. One respondent suggested precautionary measures. The head must register all cheques signed by him and reconcile his registration with bank statements periodically. One also suggested that Procurement Act 663 must be strictly complied with.

The suggested findings are in consonance with the concept and purpose of financial administration established per (SMCD 221) in FAR (1979) which sought to provide relevant rules and regulations to strengthen public agencies to make prudent financial decisions. Similarly, the findings support Doudu's (2003) recommendation that for all aspects of financial administration: receiving, keeping, spending and accounting for funds, laid down regulations must be applied and given the highest level of adherence. The head is accountable for any financial activity in his capacity as the spending officer. He must know, authorise and direct all financial transactions at the instance of the school.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

Many reforms in the education sector have taken place in Ghana since independence. These reforms have seen significant shifts in educational policy paradigm including funding of education at various levels. The Government's kitty dwindled over the years and could not realistically support free education. Other equally competing sectors such as defence, health, energy, employee emolument among others had to be given the much needed attention in the national economy. Cost sharing became the most logical alternative to tackling funding of education in the ensuing circumstance.

Cost sharing removed the total burden from the government of Ghana. Parents, development partners and NGOs came on board. Educational institutions especially secondary schools and tertiary institutions felt the pinch most. Invariably, they could not operate efficiently without adequate financial resources.

Since the inception of the cost sharing policy in the funding of education, the need for prudent financial management by heads has been felt more than ever before on the part of stakeholders in the service of education. The crux of the matter is that money is needed to procure all the material and human resources that are required to achieve educational goals. The predicaments of headmasters

pop up bell-wise when they have to make critical decisions on the schools inadequate finances. Critical decisions mostly have to do with solving indebtedness and pressure to mop up the school finances.

This study was therefore, undertaken to look into the woes of headmasters in carrying out their mandate as spending officers on programmes in secondary schools. The study delved into financial management - dilemmas of headmasters, what causes their woes and the impact on overall attainment of goals in the schools. The study involved four secondary schools in the Nzema-East District. It basically used information obtained from questionnaire and interviews. Four categories of closed-ended and open-ended questions were purposefully designed to elicit information from heads, accountants, school personnel and GES internal audit staff. A back-up interview was granted to the respondents to confirm their responses. Data obtained from both the questionnaire and the interviews were analysed to provide answers to the research questions. Finally conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made.

Summary

The study revealed that respondents were unanimous about the headmasters' need for some knowledge of financial management and accounting. The findings further revealed in Table 2 that none of the heads had ever attended any workshop on financial management although three had been heads for over six years and only one was about six months into his first appointment. The study also disclosed that a number of workshops had been organised periodically for heads. The dilemmas of heads are attributed to their refusal to avail themselves of such exposure through training at seminars and workshops.

The study revealed that the lack of adequate exposure tended to result in bursar-controlled financial management, fraud and financial malfeasance in the schools. However, the study revealed that accountants' contributions to financial management were generally good. This was based on an assessment of their performance in specific tasks they undertook as a routine. It could be said that the remarkable improvements in performance is the result of a major shake-up within the schools after the exposure of some financial disaster in Nkroful Agricultural Secondary School in 2005.

According to the study, heads have no reservations about the performance of accountants but they were quick to prescribe refresher courses and good practices for accountants. A stark revelation from the study is that information flow and by extension, access to information on school finances was inadequate. This implies that the other school personnel did not enjoy any significant participation in the day-to-day management for improved outcomes in financial activities.

Another important finding is that fees charged in the schools were average. Unfortunately, default in payment of fees was high. Contributory factors to non-payment of fees were poverty, high unemployment rate among parents, student embezzlement of fees and inability to explore other sources of financial assistance by students and parents.

From the study, it came out that some audit queries were visited on two schools. The queries were about charges against poor compliance with prescribed financial regulations. Queries constitute an indictment on the headmasters'

oversight role and therefore, suggest a flaw or a predicament in financial management.

Heads were rated 'average' in prominent tasks that they supervised or directly participated in. The average ranking is attributable to their wanton disregard for capacity-building at refresher courses for both headmasters and accounting staff. The heads are least exposed to pre-service and post-appointment capacity-building though it is a major responsibility. Performance must generally be improved for effective teaching and learning in the schools.

Conclusions

The findings emanating from the study adequately show that school heads face dilemmas in financial management. The heads' refusal to attend capacity-training workshops since their appointments is a fundamental flaw. This flaw makes them susceptible to managerial predicaments. Bursars are likely to exploit any such short-comings to their advantage. Bursars appear to be doing good work in the field. Behind the scenes, however, they adopt unorthodox and fraudulent means to sustain the showy lifestyles many have cultivated. The vainglory lifestyles of many bursars impact negatively on the schools finances. Headmasters are caught in the web because they do not have the requisite skills to detect any underhand deals by the bursars.

The study brings to the fore one other unhealthy practice. Apart from the heads and accountants, school personnel like the academic staff, assistant headmasters among others are not informed of financial activities in the schools. They do not have access to information on the financial standing and audit reports on the schools either. Consequently, that category of school personnel tends to

lend very little support to school activities since their efforts are not recognised. The absence of co-operation in financial management ends up creating serious challenges to effective teaching and learning. The head stands to be affected most in the event of any slur being cast on the financial management environment that excludes other school personnel.

The study discloses a finding where two schools were queried over defaults in payment of school fees, irregular purchases and failure to effect tax deductions on items sold to the school. These disclosures justify the presence of unsound practices in the financial management that could hardly speed up the attainment of goals set for the schools.

The collective suggestions by the audit staff are a clarion call in the right direction. There is evidence that headmasters need to extricate themselves and religiously comply with all financial administration regulations in use. This is because good practices inspire confidence in stakeholders, school personnel and development partners inside and outside the country, to contribute benevolently towards the overall best possible development of the school.

Recommendations from the Study

Efficient and effective financial management speed up the attainment of educational goals in secondary schools. To reduce the dilemmas of headmasters in financial administration, the researcher makes the recommendations that follow.

- 1 It should be mandatory for headmasters to attend pre-service and post-appointment training in financial management in order for them to sharpen their acumen, knowledge and skills in that field.

- 2 Some level of competence in financial administration should be imposed as a requirement for personnel seeking promotion to the position of headship in the Ghana Education Service.
- 3 A budget-committee including an academic board member, and a member of the Business department should be formed in schools. The committee must examine revenue projections, the school budget and the overall financial picture of the school. The budget committee could exercise oversight function so as to make financial administration more democratic and collegial.
- 4 School-based internal auditors should be put in place by GES, to ensure that financial reports reflect the reality of budget implementation. School-based auditors would detect inadequately prepared book keeping, as well as embezzlement by unscrupulous individuals. This effort should complement regular auditing conducted by GES internal and external auditors.
- 5 Headmasters must spend good deal of time on the finances of the schools. They must take responsibility for all financial decisions including major changes in expenditures for programmes or services.
- 6 Public secondary schools as public agencies must disclose their budget information, budget implementation and statements of accounts to the publics and the press. This way, budget disclosure will induce maximum transparency and accountability.
- 7 The GES should make available to school heads authentic documents guiding the administration of public funds such as Medium Term

Expenditure Framework (MTEF), GES financial accounting instructions for secondary schools, training colleges and educational units. School heads should make these documents their companions and consult them so as to make informed decisions on financial activities and safeguard heads slipping too far away from tolerable levels.

- 8 Payment of school fees strictly by parents through the banks ought to be adopted. This practice will curb embezzlement and misuse of fees by some reckless students.

Suggestions for Further Research

The suggestions below are worth considering for further studies, aimed at enhancing financial management in secondary schools.

- 1 Peculiar areas such as poor payment of fees and approved levies, late disbursement of GETFund, GOG feeding subsidy, government scholarship and similar schemes from corporate bodies could be studied. Studies into those topics are relevant because improvements in timely cash-flows into the schools coffers would ease predicaments in financial management. More importantly, teaching and learning outcomes could be raised to a higher pedestal when cash inflows are at appreciable levels.
- 2 Disagreements and mistrust among school personnel culminating in suspicion and conflicts and their general impact on financial management in schools could be investigated.
- 3 Monitoring financial management effectiveness through capacity-building for school administrative personnel.

- 4 Effective and efficient management of school income and expenditure in line with approved school budgets.

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APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HEADS ON FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT
IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

You are requested to provide information to this questionnaire about the dilemmas of headmasters in financial management in secondary schools. You are assured that the information provided is needed for an academic project only and every piece of information given by you will be treated in strict confidence.

SECTION A: PART 1

1. Sex: Male [] Female []
2. Age: a. Below 30 years []
 b. 31-35 years []
 c. 36-40 years []
 d. 41-50 years []
 e. 51 and above []
3. Present position: Headmaster [] ESTS
4. Educational level: Basic [] Second Cycle [] Tertiary []
5. Present form/class (Student Only)

SECTION A:

6. (a) Do headmasters in Ghanaian Secondary schools need some level of knowledge in financial administration?
- Yes [] No Need [] Not Certain []

(b) Why is there a need
.....
.....

7. (a) Is it necessary for headmasters to have some knowledge of Accounting?
Yes [] Not Necessary []

(b) Give your reasons, please
.....
.....

8. How often, do you, in your capacity as a head, attend workshops on financial administration?

Zero time [] Once in 2 years [] 3 times in four years []
5 times and above []

9. List any problems or weaknesses associated with inadequate financial administration training for headmasters.

.....
.....
.....

SECTION B

Accounts staff contribution to financial (administration) management.

10. How long has the accounts officer been in your school? years.

11. Please, give your assessment of the accounts official work by indicating with a circle.

1	Very poor	2	Poor
3	Fairly good	4	Good
5	Very good		

a). Physical fitness	1	2	3	4	5
b) Mental or emotional disposition	1	2	3	4	5
c) Initiative in the collection of approved fees	1	2	3	4	5
d) Collection of financial estimates/ grants from Treasury office.	1	2	3	4	5
e) Collection of monies owed to the school	1	2	3	4	5
f) Planning school budget estimates	1	2	3	4	5
g) Planning cash incentives for school personnel	1	2	3	4	5
h) Determining imprest for errand staff	1	2	3	4	5
j) Payment of goods/services for the school	1	2	3	4	5
k) Payment of fuel/gas for school vehicle(s) engines/generators	1	2	3	4	5
I) Involvement in other school expenditure (kitchen equipment, books, etc).	1	2	3	4	5
m) Involvement in fundraising ventures for the school	1	2	3	4	5
n) Proper keeping of accounts books	1	2	3	4	5
o) Proper reporting on school finances	1	2	3	4	5
p) Response to audit queries	1	2	3	4	5

12. (a) Do you have any fears/reservations about the duty performance of the accounts staff in the financial management of the school?

Yes [] No [] Uncertain []

Please, give/list any suggestions for improving financial management in your school.
.....

SECTION C:

Effective application of financial administration regulations

1 – Never,

2 – Rare

3 – Occasional

4 – Frequent

5 – Very frequent

6. Circle a number to indicate level of effective application of financial administration regulations.

a) Teacher board/purchasing body is strictly used for bidding 1 2 3 4 5

b) Any interested persons are allowed to supply goods/services to the school 1 2 3 4 5

c) Systematically keeps records of accounting on budget implementation 1 2 3 4 5

d) Prepares reliable financial statement 1 2 3 4 5

e) Uses approved internal mechanisms to ensure efficiency 1 2 3 4 5

8. Has the school been queried through auditing?

Yes [] No []

9. What was the kind of queries?

10. Any reservations about the proper use of approved regulations in financial administration? Yes [] No []

11. State the nature of reservations and suggestions to improve them

SECTION B:

Level of communication of (access to adequate) information on school finances within the school .

1 = Very open

2 = Open

3 = Fairly open

4 = Quite closed

5 = Close

7. Circle the appropriate number that corresponds with the level of access to adequate information on the finances of the school.

- | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| a) Preparation of budget estimates for approval by | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| the GES/Ministry of education and MOF | | | | | |
| b) Approved budget estimates by | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| GES/MOE & MOF | | | | | |
| c) School revenue and expenditure(s) with requisite | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d) Nominal list of students for grants/claims | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e) List of students indicating payment of monies | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| to the school | | | | | |
| f) Report on stores, cash etc | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| g) Inventory of school property and custodian(s) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| i) Auditors report and queries | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

8. Should information on financial administration be communicated to other school personnel than only the headmaster and the accountant?

a) Yes [] b) No []

9. Schools fees charged in the school could be described as

1. Very high

2. High

3. Average

4. Low

5. Very low

10. Please give reasons for poor or prompt payment of fees.

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SECTION B:

Perception about headmasters' management of school financial resources

1- Very Poor

2- Poor

3- Average

4- Good

5- Very good

7. Tick against your choice of opinion

a) Collection of approved schools fees	5	4	3	2	1
b) Collection of financial estimates/grants from Treasury office	5	4	3	2	1
c) Collection of monies other than approved school fees	5	4	3	2	1
d) School budget estimates (preparation)	5	4	3	2	1
e) Proposals for cash incentives to school personnel	5	4	3	2	1
f) Determining imprest for errand staff	5	4	3	2	1
g) Keeping proper records of accounts books (invoice, receipts, cheques, etc)	5	4	3	2	1
h) Preparation of financial statement (Trial balance, balance sheet)	5	4	3	2	1
i) Preparation of comprehensive financial report(s)	5	4	3	2	1
j) Procurment of (books, school equipment, sports equipment, farm equipment and food items for the kitchen)	5	4	3	2	1

k) Payment of fees/money by cash or cheque into bank	5	4	3	2	1
l) Payment of goods/services procured by the School	5	4	3	2	1
m) Payment of utilities (water, electricity etc)	5	4	3	2	1
n) Determining budget estimates	5	4	3	2	1
o) Involving staff other than the accountant in planning/preparing budgets estimates	5	4	3	2	1
p) Writing cheques	5	4	3	2	1
q) Fixing (IOU) to stag	5	4	3	2	1
r) Responding to audit queries	5	4	3	2	1
s) Communicating audit report to staff	5	4	3	2	1

Please give suggestions for improving financial management in secondary schools in the district.

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APPENDIX E

**INTERVIEW GUIDE ON THE DILEMMAS OF HEADMASTERS IN
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS WITHIN
THE NZEMA-EAST, DISTRICT**

This interview guide intends to elicit information from headmasters because they may have other facts than those demanded in the questionnaire. Information provided by the head will be captured through written notes by the researcher.

The questions below will guide the interviewer.

- a) How many years have you held the position of headmaster?
- b) How many courses/workshops on financial administration organized by GES or other agencies have you participated in?
- c) If yes, what extent has the workshop(s) impacted on the financial management of your school.
- d) How many authentic documents/books on financial administration supplied by the GES or Ministry of Finance have you?
- e) What aspect(s) of your role in financial administration pose(s) the greatest challenge? (payment of school fees, sourcing for Grants and subsidies etc.).
- f) What can you say about the present responsibilities in financial administration in practice in your school? (Satisfied or dissatisfied).
- g) Of your staff, which will you grade as good, average and poor on financial management?
- h) Is there any of your accounts staff whom you are suspicious of his credentials?

- i) Enumerate any suspicions and empirical facts for poor financial administration by the school personnel.
- j) How often is the school audited each year?
- k) Has your school been ever queried after an auditing session?
- l) What has the nature of the audit query (ies)/and what was your response to the query?
- m) What ought to have been done to succeed in your financial management role?

APPENDIX G

CRONBACH'S ALPHA RELIABILITY TEST RESULT

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.734	9

Item statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Level of communication of (access to adequate) information on school finances within the school district	4.1765	1.09191	68
Preparation of budget estimates for approval by the GES/Ministry of education and MOF	4.1618	1.10102	68
Approved budget estimate by GES/MOE & MOF	3.9706	1.15862	68
School revenue and expenditure (s) with requisite accompanying documents	3.7059	1.36107	68
Nominal list of students for grants/claims	3.0441	1.43967	68
List of students indicating payment of monies to the school	3.8088	1.3131872	68
Report on stores, cash etc	3.6324	1.28021	68
Inventory of school property and custodians (s)	4.1324	1.23269	68
Please give reasons for poor or prompt payment of fees	3.5441	2.18839	68