

AN ANALYSIS OF BASIC MANAGEMENT AND FINANCIAL SKILLS BY SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES (SDC) IN SELECTED HARARE SCHOOLS

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Abstract -- *The study explored the level of participation of School Development Committees members in financial management decision making in schools. Specifically, it sought to identify the financial management systems used by schools, establish the financial literacy of both headmasters and school development committee members and also identify the challenges facing the school governing bodies on the implementation of the finance policies on the management of school funds. To answer the research objectives, a quantitative research approach was used and survey questionnaires were used for data collection in selected schools in Harare. The study participants included School Development Committee members, and headmasters from schools in central Harare. The study findings showed that both school development committee members and the school heads lacked financial management literacy. In particular, the School Development Committee lacked the basic financial knowledge. Thus, the lack of financial skills is the potential challenges for the promotion of community participation. On the basis of the findings the study recommended for the government to ensure that it provides training in financial management for both members of the school development committee as well as school heads. In addition, The Ministry of Primary and Secondary education through its supervisory team should ensure that the School Development Committees understand policy circulars from the ministry through some training before the implementation of the policies. The study also recommends that School Development Committees should work as clusters and Learning Organisations which share ideas at same level of difficulties and strategize development. Furthermore, the study recommends for community awareness and empowerment as this would help in strengthening community-school relationship and surrendering local decision-making power to the community. The study was limited to parents' participation; thus, research on the involvement of other stakeholders such as community figures, NGOs, and industry associations, would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of SDC mechanisms.*

Key Words: *School Development Committee, Financial Management, Skills Development, Capacity Building.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is of paramount importance for the political, economic and social development of any study (Hill, 2009). Extant literature from both developed and developing countries concur that education is the taproot for the development of literacy, communication skills, numeracy as well as the transmission of the culture to the younger generation (Salim et al. 2009 and Osabuohien and Efobi, 2012). In particular, education is important in unfettering and empowering people to economic and social freedom as well as transforming human capital for economic development. However, there have been gaps in the ability to deliver sound education quality in most African countries.

In Zimbabwe, the education system was centralised following the political independence in 1980 (Zvobgo (1997). During this time the government directly provided education from pre-school up to adult education (Chikoko, 2008). At the same time, free and centralised education was seen as very important regarded as important. Paradoxically, the beneficiaries of the education system such as parents and teachers could not make decisions as to what they rightly wanted for their children (Nziramasanga, 1999). Consequently, the decentralisation of education in Zimbabwe began in 1991. Since then the decentralisation reform policies have been promoted by the government of Zimbabwe especially those that received complete government support. This was because the government had an urgent need to reduce expenditure because of pressure from Bretton Woods's institutions such as the World Bank and The International Monetary Fund (IMF Report, 2004).

Indeed, the advent of economic liberalisation through the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in the early 1990s was the final nail for coffin of centralised education system (Zvobgo, 1997). At the end of the first decade of independence, the government began to experience ballooning expenses on education. That became unsustainable largely due to donor fatigue as well as an ailing economy in the late 1980s (Reynolds, 2008). According to Coltart (2009), funding of primary schools decreased in total terms due to the rise in inflation. According to Chikoko (2008), the challenges had been reflected in the tumbling pass rates in primary schools as well as poor education. The government then introduced a cost recovery measure on the community through the Education Amendment Act of 1991. Zvobgo (1997) elucidates that this was a means of off-loading the burden to the parents as they would be taking full responsibility over their children's education. The change to decentralisation showed itself through the Statutory Instrument 87 of 1992 whereby the government legally created the School Development Committees for government-aided public schools as well as the School Development Associations for government public schools (Chivore, 1995). As stated by the Statutory Instrument, the School Development

Committees would consist of 5 individuals elected by the parents and guardians of pupils at the school, the headmaster and deputy of the school, a teacher at the school and a councillor appointed by the local authority. The statutory instrument also vividly stated the duties and responsibilities of the school Development Committees as inter-alia, the management of funds in terms of collecting and the use of the funds for the benefit of the schools. According to Zvobgo (1997), the instrument was important for transparency, accountability and accuracy in the uses of the funds. In summary, the Statutory Instruments gave powers to communities through SDAs to run schools under their jurisdiction in consultation with the Secretary for Education (Rukanda and Mukurazhizha, 2008).

However, the management of school funds by both the headmasters and School Development Committees has been a challenge. Despite their significance in the management of schools, there had been no formal training offered by the ministry of education (Caldwell, 2004). As posited by Chikoko (2008), the management of school finances in both primary and secondary school has been poor. For instance, studies by Mestry (2004) do show that most headmasters had been wielding power on School Development Committee members who will be either illiterate or have insufficient knowledge in school financial matters. Without formal training, headmasters and their school development committee have found themselves with challenges in managing school finance.

As noted by Chatiza (2011), Mashonaland East province alone had ten misconduct hearings for headmasters of which eight of them related to misuse of funds. Furthermore, between 2010 and 2011 a total of 96 school heads were arrested countrywide following reports of abuse of teacher incentives (Sergiovanni, 2012). In Manicaland, some “zero percent” pass rate at grade seven in primary schools were seen as a reflection of sour relations between the school administrators and other school development committee members due to mismanagement of funds.

According to Bush and West-Burnham (1994), financial administration in a school situation requires not only detailed planning but also monitoring of the activities of the members of the school governing body and the structures that control the finances. It is against this background that this research seeks to investigate how schools heads and school development committee manage school finances.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The lack of knowledge in finance by both school heads and school development committee members has led to financial malpractices such as signing cheques in advance, paying with hard cash, making loans from school funds, signing hiring contracts, and accepting money without the issuing of receipts (Chivore, 2009). As a result, school heads became victims of mismanagement for misappropriation of funds belonging to the schools. Cases of mismanagement of school funds by the heads of schools and School Development Committees have not been uncommon (Chikoko, 2008).

AIMS

The study sought to investigate the challenges faced by school heads in the management of school finances. More specifically, the research wanted to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify the financial management systems used by schools.
2. To establish the financial literacy of both headmasters and school development committee members.
3. To identify the challenges facing the school governing bodies on the implementation of the finance policies on the management of school fund.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Headmasters and members of school development committees play a major role in the management of all school financial activities, which involve the disbursement of money (Summers, 200). The money is obtained through various sources including fees. As such, financial management is important to determine whether or not the school will meet its objectives (Orlosky, 2004). Thus, they are responsible for budgeting, accounting and auditing functions of financial management. Some schools get some funding from the government while parents are required to meet various other costs such as school development projects and boarding fees (Summers 2005).

In Zimbabwe headmasters serve as ex-officio members of the School Development Committee may not chair the meetings of this body. Karlsson (2002) shows that head masters still play a dominant role in meetings and decision-making. This is attributed to the headmaster’s position of power within the school, level of education in contrast to members of the school development committee, first access to information issuing from education authorities. In addition, it is the headmaster who executes the decisions taken (Van Wyk 2004). The headmaster therefore serves as a resource person for the effective functioning of the school development committee.

According to Parker and Leithwood (2000), the dual nature of the role played by the headmaster is controversial and problematic. On the one hand, headmasters are expected to account to school development committee as accounting officers; on the other, they are accountable to the education department as the employee (Van Wyk, 2004). In essence, school

headmasters have a remarkable capacity to derail decentralized governance structures by retaining control for themselves or to ensure the success and effectiveness of these structures.

The challenge in many schools is that both school headmasters and members of the school development committees do lack financial administration. According to Chikoko (2008) the management of finance in many secondary and primary schools has been poor especially in rural areas. Consequently, this has affected the quality of education. According to Mestry (2004), the headmasters have been wielding power on school development committee members who will be either illiterate or have insufficient knowledge when dealing with school financial matters.

According to McAlister and Cotlnolly (1990) planning in financial terms involves expressing the school plan. In the process of skill planning include the mission and general aims of the school as a framework, determining outcomes according to the needs of the school, measuring the cost of the programmes and establish school fees and other revenue and evaluating the output of each programme. According to Rehman (2002), usually the school headmaster and the financial committee make the projection for the coming year from assumption based on reliable data of expected incomes, which form the basis for the projected expenditure. Jordan et al. (1995) posit that school budgets serve as guides to financial planning and program management to permit orderly operation for a stated period of time. Therefore, the basic function of a budget is to serve as an instrument for planning so that educational program will not be interrupted or restricted because of insufficient funds or depleted accounts. Thus, the effective control of the school finances would ensure that the needs and objectives of the school are catered for. According to Van Der Westhuizen (1991), the needs of the school would not be realized if the correct budgetary procedures were not followed.

Potgieter et al (1997), Davidoff and Lazarus (1997) concur that principals and school development committees do have a major role to play in the management of resources. Coleman and Anderson (2000) believe that there are basic budgeting tasks, which the headmaster and the finance committee of the school should pay attention when drawing up the budget. These include accounting procedures which reflect the true financial status of the school and provide room for internal and external control, adequate safety mechanism to protect financial data from being lost or altered and accounting procedures which are in compliance with the financial policy. Coleman and Anderson (2000) also maintain that for the effective implementation of budgetary decisions, the headmaster of the institution remains the key decision-maker when a budget is drawn up.

An organization like a school defines the way in which financial management decision is made. In most countries headmasters serve as ex-officio members of the School Development Committee may not chair the meetings of this body. Karlsson (2002) shows that head masters still play a dominant role in meetings and decision-making. This is attributed to the headmaster's position of power within the school, level of education in contrast to members of the school development committee, first access to information issuing from education authorities. In addition, it is the headmaster who executes the decisions taken (Van Wyk 2004). The headmaster therefore serves as a resource person for the effective functioning of the school development committee.

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According to Fullan (1991) the delegation of financial management to the level of school development committees is a progressive step. Clark etal (2003) also concur that exceptional performance of schools can be attained through the involvement of parents in school development. In fact there is a positive correlation between the involvement of parents in school development activities and student performance (Coleman, 2003). However, a majority of schools do not have the skills and necessary practices for financial management and some have floundered. In countries such as Tanzania some primary schools have deteriorated through ineffective finance management practices. As noted by Pampalis (2002), the main stumbling blocks have been limited financial and human skills as well as extreme poverty. In South Africa, studies by Lumby (2003) found that many principals in Kwa-Zulu Natal region lacked financial knowledge as well as other resources in the schools. As result, these schools do not perform to the expected standards.

According to Chung (2004) and Chivore (2003) planning and control of funds are important in the financial management and this should contain information on sources of funds, accounting procedure, auditing and projects to be funded. Studies by Chikoko (2008) in Gutu district showed that members of the school development committees lacked financial management abilities. As postulated by Sergiovanni, (2000) many members of the school development committees do lack financial management skills to account for funds in their custody. Studies by Chikoko revealed that lack of competency to carryout financial management was a stumbling block to most school development committees. This is also supported by Zvobgo

(1997) who concedes that the decentralisation process by the government of the education system did not provide personnel training. Thus, school development committees in Zimbabwe were only given legal power and not expert power (McLennan et al., 2003).

Beck and Murphy, (2005) propounds for the need for capacity building for all stakeholders for the schools to realise their goals. This would mean that the government would embark on capacity building programmes to update stakeholder's knowledge on financial management. According to Lewis and Naidoo (2004), the training of SDCs would contribute to accountability and greater transparency in schools and there is a positive correlation between capacity building and school community relationships.

As noted by Wohlsetter and Mohrman (2012) running a business and schools are not different since both offer services to clients who subsequently pay. It is paramount to note that managing a school like a business ensures that all the finances are kept in order and the school will be efficiently run. At the same time that would also create positive environment for both teachers and pupils thereby ensuring a better standard of education is reached. Just like a business entity, there is the need to develop business plans for the future viability of the institution and this should include all facets of the organisation such as capital expenditure, marketing, training and human resources (Sayed, 2009). Thus, the school development committees should be able to attract good teachers and offer competitive monetary and non monetary incentives for the staff.

To a greater extent most SDCs do not understand the financial and asset management regulations in their schools (Wohlsetter and Mohrman, 2004). As a result, school fees are not used for enhancing teaching and learning and that funds raised are embezzled. For instance, Mumbengegwi (1995) suggests that it important that SDC do have proper finance sub committees so as to ensure adequate checks and balances to prevent financial transactions are not made for the wrong reasons. This is also corroborated by studies by Saito and Kato (2008) in India which revealed that localization of decision making at primary schools in Karnataka did not yield the intended results because the school development committee members lacked skilled personnel to formulate the plans. Furthermore, in Indonesia, studies by Ayele (2009) showed that decentralization of the educational system to school development committee was a costly reform which exceeded their technical capacity.

Likewise, in many Africa countries educational decentralization failed to yield the intended outcomes due to absence of real decision-making power and resource at the local levels (Winkler, 2005). Studies in Ethiopia showed the devolution of the educational system did not produce intended results because most of the members of had people with no basic knowledge and experience to perform effectively (Garcia and Rajkumar, 2008). Tikson (2008) observes that some parents were illiterate and that affected the level of their participation in decision making. Other similar studies by Tadesse (2007) revealed an acute shortage of skilled manpower as the most challenge for local community participation. In Nigeria, the decentralisation of the education system to the local school development associations did not produce the intended goals because it led to the concentration of functions to the locals (Galshberg and Winkler 2003).

Much like a business, innovation is also necessary for a school, in order to create unique selling points to attract more pupils. The school development committee plays the most important role in ensuring that there is school effectiveness and performance. However, without the necessary skills and competencies they become overwhelmed. According to Lewis and Naidoo (2004) many members of the school development committees in developing countries hardly have any managerial or leadership training. In addition, Gershberg and Winkler (2004) elucidate that even the school heads also lack leadership skills as many of them are appointed on the basis of their teaching record other than their leadership potential. In addition to poor managerial skills, the school heads do work in poorly equipped public schools with also inadequately trained subordinate staff in finance department such as bursars and /or accounts clerks (Kanyongo, 2005).

METHODOLOGY

TARGET POPULATION AND SAMPLE SIZE

The target population of the study included school development committees schools in Harare and the results were generalised to the whole population (Romano, 2004). The target population consisted of school development committee members and school administration staff. Thus, the accessible population was limited to members of the School Development Committee and headmasters. A total of ten primary and secondary schools were selected with a total of 60 respondents. These were viewed as key figures in school management issues.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

In this study, stratified random sampling procedure was chosen. It involved the streamlining of 10 schools according to population sizes. Stratified random sampling ensured that no subpopulations were omitted and that there was no overload in certain subpopulations (Wiersma, 1995). The schools were then named from A to J. The 10 schools were quite a good representation because in a descriptive survey a research sample of 10% to 20 % was often used (Van Dalen, 1991). The researcher followed the tradition taken by Chikoko (2005) who studied a cluster of only 10 schools in the whole of Gutu District in Masvingo Province. The method was free of bias and the researchers could generalize the results with great confidence.

INSTRUMENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

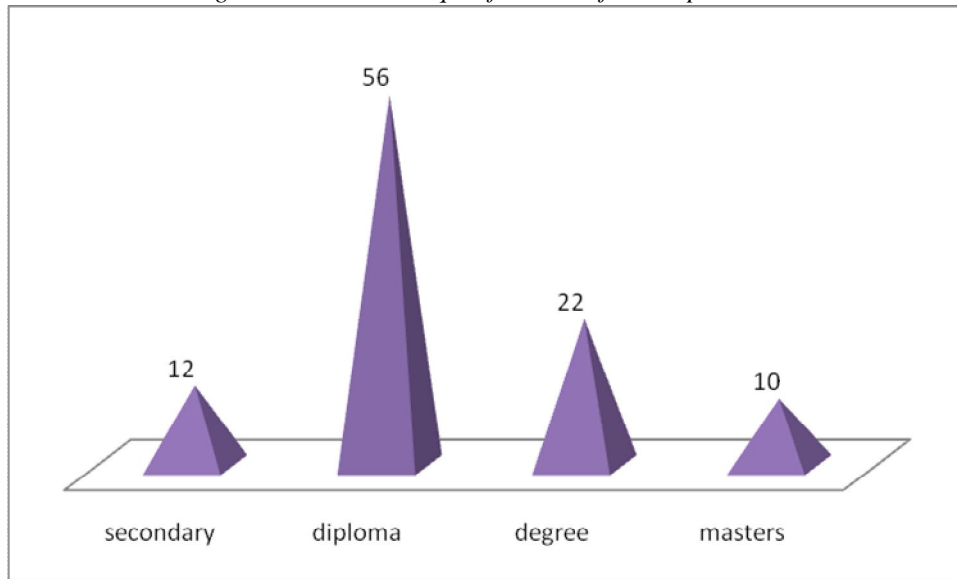
Questionnaires were used as main research instruments. The questionnaire was used as the research instrument because it provided significant advantages in the administration. It also offered an even stimulus potentially to large numbers of people simultaneously and provides the investigation with an easy accumulation of data. This was also in line with Gay (1992) who

maintains that questionnaires do offer respondents the opportunity to express their own views. Furthermore, questionnaires offered anonymity which helped to produce more candid answers than is possible in an interview. After all data was collected, the researcher conducted data cleaning, which involved identification of incomplete or inaccurate responses, which were corrected to improve the quality of the responses. All the data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. As Martin and Acuna (2002) observe, SPSS Version is able to handle large amount of data, and given its wide spectrum of statistical procedures purposefully designed for social sciences, it is also quite efficient.

Findings and Discussions

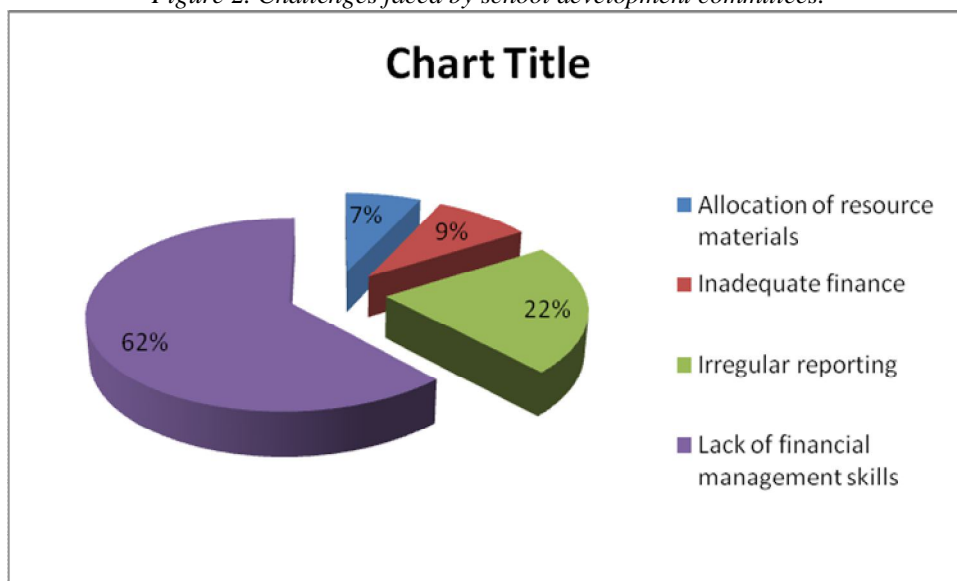
From the findings, it was revealed that the majority of the respondents (56%) had diplomas whilst 22% had degrees and 12% had secondary education. however, only 10% of the respondents hold a masters degree. The findings are shown below:

Figure 1. Educational qualifications of the respondents



From the above findings, it can conclude that most of the respondents had at least a diploma. However, most of the qualifications were mostly non business qualifications and did not have an element of project management and budgeting. Regarding challenges faced by the school development committee and school administration in the administration of school finances, the findings revealed that lack of financial management skills (62%), followed by irregular reporting (22%) and inadequate finances. However, allocation of resources was seen as the least of the challenges. The findings are shown below:

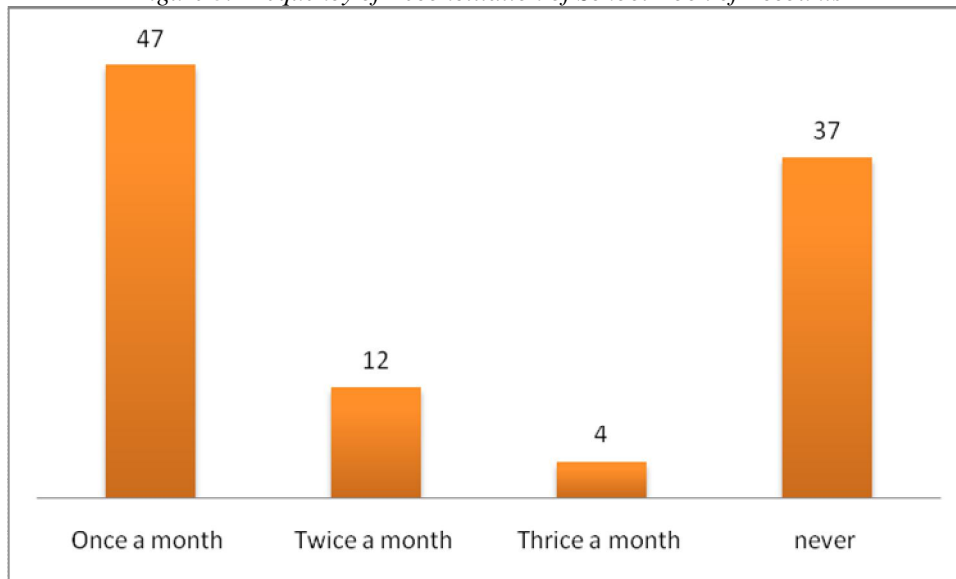
Figure 2. Challenges faced by school development committees.



The above findings imply that there is a lack of financial skills on most of the members of the school development committees members and this can be attributed to type of education which maybe non financial in scope and nature. The

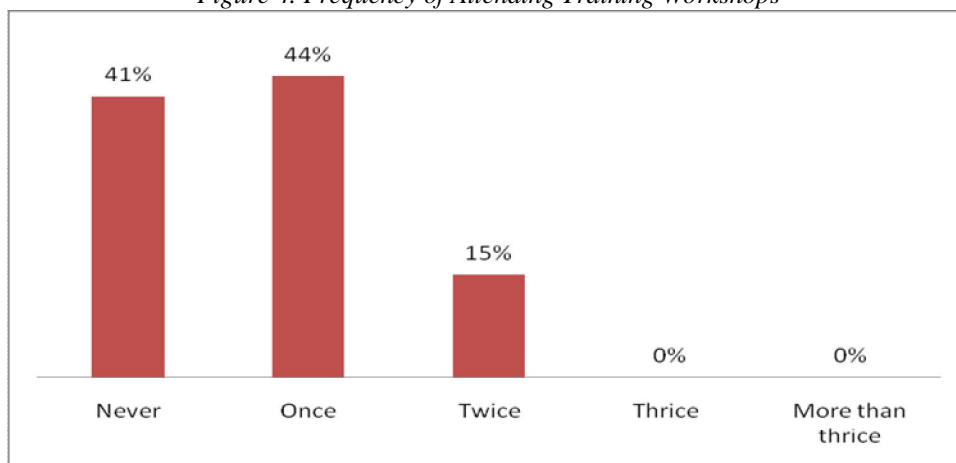
survey findings also revealed the meetings to reconcile the books of accounts were mostly done once a month (47%). however, few respondents stated that they reconcile twice a month (12%) and thrice a month (4%). Surprisingly, a total of 37% stated that they did not reconcile their book of accounts. The findings are illustrated below:

Figure 3. Frequency of Reconciliation of School Book of Accounts



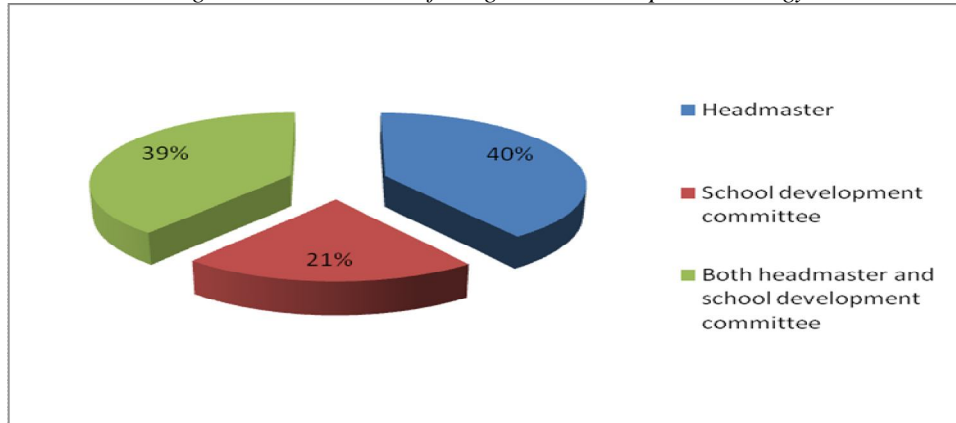
The above findings shows a lack of understanding of the statutory instrument for the schools which compile school development committee members to constantly review and reconcile the books of accounts for the schools. Thus, the school development committee failed to execute their duties as required by the statutory instrument. The above findings are in sharp contrast with studies by Pampalis (2002) in former white schools in South Africa where the school development committees who constant reconcile the books of accounts for the schools. Studies by Dimmock (2003) in Nigeria and guinea showed that the members of the school development committee members are active in the auditing of school finances as part of community participation. The study also ascertained if members of the school development committee have attended workshops to deal with school administration. As shown from the responses, 44% revealed that they had never been workshopped whilst 44% pointed out that they had been workshopped once and 15% were workshopped twice. However, no respondent attend a school finance work shop more than thrice. The findings are shown below:

Figure 4. Frequency of Attending Training Workshops



The above findings did reveal that most of the members of school development committees did not attend much of workshops for capacity building. The findings concur with studies by Chikoko (2008) in Masvingo which showed that school development committee did not have much training and induction on budgeting and infrastructure construction. In brief, that may be the reason why SDCs did not have the knowledge of their financial management roles. The study also sought to ascertain the people who were largely involved in the formulation of budgets and school development strategies. According to the findings, the headmaster (40%) was largely involved, followed by a combination of both the headmaster and members of the school development committee. However, a small number (21%) of the respondents believed that the school development committee was largely involved. The findings are shown below:

Figure 5. Formulation of budgets and development strategy



The study also calculated standard deviations and means for various responses from the participants. Table.1 below shows the descriptive statistics from the respondents regarding five point likert scale questions which they respond to.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Feature	n.	Mean	Standard deviation
The SDC receive refresher courses and training in financial management.	60	3.45	1.12
The SDC formulates business strategy and business plans on manages the school finance policy	60	2.05	0.08
The headmaster alone does the budget	60	3.67	0.45

The above findings did show The SDC members did not formulate business strategy and business plans on managing the school finance policy with a mean average of 2.05 and standard deviation of 0.08. In addition, the respondents believed that in most cases, the headmaster alone does the budget with a mean average of 3.67 and standard deviation of 0.45. At the same time, a mean of 3.45 showed that the respondents were largely undecided on the question regarding SDC members receiving refresher courses and training in financial management.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall purpose of this study was an analysis financial skill by school development committees in schools in Harare. The study based on the primary data findings and existing literature concluded that most members of school development committee are in deficiency in financial management skills and this affected the daily operations of the schools under study. From the findings, it can be concluded that there is no adequate training for financial literacy for members of school development committees in Harare. The study further explored that in schools, principals or head master in most cases create master servant environment which makes the teachers feel alienated from the system. Based on the above conclusions, members of the school development committee need to be continually updated of financial skills so that they will be able to cope with the different changes and challenges in schools. In particular, the school administration should have managerial skills training so that they become financial literate and also manage the schools professionally.

It is also recommended that the government through their provincial offices should ensure that all schools do have Statutory Instrument 87 of 1992 and other associated guides to all schools for successful administration of the schools. In addition, school development committee should also work as clusters and become learning organisations through the sharing of ideas and financial management skills. Furthermore, the ministry of higher and tertiary education should also intervene through its curriculum policy to include courses in financial management, project management and accounting in teacher education programmes to ensure that this would also help in training of parents and other members of the school development committees. There is the need for professional organisations for school leaders and this would offer platform for dialogue, knowledge, sharing and dissemination of best practice between professionals and policy makers. Offering career development for school administration could also help in making school leadership more attractive and professional. There is the need for more in-service training of school development committee members. Submission of monthly financial reports by schools must be strengthened. There is a need to develop a simple user friendly template that would be easily understood by schools. This would also make it easy for the district to analyze these reports and give feedback to schools. This will promote actual interaction and examination of submitted financial information by schools and the then general practice of a mere check on the number of schools that have submitted would be eliminated. The lack of managerial skills in finance usually leads to shortage of critical resources in schools as money would not be available to purchase school resources.

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