
PROFESSIONAL ETHICS IN THE FUNDING OF SECONDARY EDUCATION: A STRATEGY FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION IN PORT HARCOURT METROPOLIS, RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

This study explores professional ethics in the funding of the education sector as a solution for effective secondary school administration in Port Harcourt Metropolis. It highlights how ethical considerations in the allocation and management of educational funds influence administrative efficiency and overall school performance. The study recognizes that while funding remains a critical determinant of educational success, the manner in which these funds are sourced, allocated, and utilized is equally important. Issues such as mismanagement of funds, political interference, poor accountability, and lack of transparency often undermine the objectives of educational financing. These ethical lapses result in inadequate infrastructure, poor teacher motivation, and widening inequalities among schools. Conversely, when funding practices are guided by professional ethics characterized by integrity, accountability, transparency, and fairness, secondary school administration becomes more effective. The study concludes that professional ethics should be central to all aspects of educational funding to ensure that financial resources achieve their intended developmental impact. It therefore recommends that the Rivers State Government, educational administrators, and other stakeholders adopt ethical frameworks in financial decision-making, strengthen monitoring mechanisms, and promote accountability in the use of educational funds.

Keywords: Professional Ethics, Educational Funding, Accountability, Secondary School Administration, Port Harcourt Metropolis

Introduction

Education remains the cornerstone of national development and social transformation, serving as the foundation upon which a nation's progress and prosperity are built (UNESCO, 2020). In Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State, the effective administration of secondary schools is vital for nurturing future leaders and sustaining socio-economic growth. However, one of the most persistent challenges confronting the educational system is inadequate and sometimes unethically managed funding. The manner in which educational funds are generated, allocated, and utilized has a direct impact on the effectiveness of school administration and the overall quality of learning outcomes. This paper therefore examines professional ethics in the funding of the education sector as a solution for effective secondary school administration in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental human right and a critical driver of sustainable development (UN, 1948). Yet, providing quality education requires substantial and wellmanaged financial resources. When funding is insufficient or when the available funds are mismanaged due to ethical lapses such as corruption, favoritism, or poor accountability, the quality of education suffers significantly (World Bank, 2019). In many public secondary schools within Port Harcourt, this problem manifests through deteriorating infrastructure, shortages of instructional materials, underqualified teachers, and administrative inefficiencies. Thus, the issue is not only one of limited funding but also of ethical responsibility in managing the funds that are available.

Adequate and ethically managed funding plays a pivotal role in ensuring the smooth functioning of secondary schools (Ezenwafor & Okorie, 2018). It supports essential areas such as infrastructure development, teacher recruitment and training, curriculum improvement, and efficient school administration (Federal Ministry of Education, 2021). Moreover, professional ethics in educational finance ensures transparency, accountability, and fairness in the allocation of resources. When funds are administered with integrity and guided by ethical principles, schools can operate more effectively and equitably, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes (Okebukola, 2017).

In the Nigerian context, the responsibility for financing education is shared among several stakeholders—government agencies, parents, private organizations, and international partners (Oduaran & Okwilagwe, 2008). The Rivers State Ministry of Education and the State Universal Basic Education Board play crucial roles in allocating and monitoring funds, while parents, private individuals, and corporate organizations contribute through fees, donations, and partnership programs (Udu, 2014). However, the effectiveness of these funding mechanisms depends largely on the ethical behavior of those entrusted with financial oversight. Mismanagement, diversion of funds, or lack of transparency in spending can erode trust and limit the impact of educational investments.

Professional ethics, therefore, must be at the heart of educational funding and administration. Ethical management practices such as honesty, accountability, and commitment to fairness,

promote financial discipline and ensure that resources reach the schools and students who need them most (TRCN, 2019). When education funding is ethically guided, the outcomes extend beyond financial efficiency to include improved teacher morale, enhanced student performance, and stronger community trust in the school system.

While adequate funding remains the backbone of educational success, the integration of professional ethics in funding decisions is what ensures sustainability and effectiveness. For Port Harcourt Metropolis, embedding ethical principles in the financial management of education can serve as a transformative solution to the challenges of secondary school administration. This approach not only strengthens the quality of education but also contributes to the broader goals of equity, accountability, and social development in Rivers State.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Agency Theory. This theory, as formulated by Jensen and Meckling (1976), explains the relationship between principals, those who delegate authority, such as government agencies and school boards and agents, who are entrusted with the management of resources, in this case, school administrators. Agency Theory posits that agents may act in their self-interest, which could conflict with the goals of principals, particularly in the management of public resources.

In the context of secondary education, school administrators are responsible for the proper allocation and utilization of funds meant for school development, teacher welfare, and student learning. Ethical conduct in financial management ensures that administrators act in accordance with the principles and expectations set by the governing authorities. By upholding professional ethics, administrators reduce the risk of financial mismanagement, corruption, and misuse of funds, thereby aligning their actions with the objectives of the principals.

Agency Theory further suggests that effective monitoring, transparency, and accountability mechanisms are essential to ensure that agents act in the best interest of principals. In secondary schools, this implies that ethical funding practices such as proper budgeting, accurate reporting, and judicious disbursement of resources serve as a control mechanism that enhances trust between stakeholders and administrators. Consequently, professional ethics in funding becomes a strategic tool for achieving effective school administration, as it ensures resources are utilized efficiently to improve school performance, teacher productivity, and student outcomes in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

By applying Agency Theory, this study demonstrates that ethical management of school funds is not only a moral imperative but also a practical strategy to bridge the gap between administrative responsibility and educational objectives.

Conceptual Clarifications

Professional Ethics in Educational Funding

Professional ethics in educational funding refers to the moral principles, standards, and values that guide the behavior and decision-making of individuals and institutions responsible for managing financial resources in the education sector. It involves the commitment of school administrators, government officials, and other stakeholders to transparency, accountability, fairness, and integrity in the sourcing, allocation, and utilization of educational funds. When ethical principles are upheld, the funds meant for educational development are used judiciously to achieve their intended purpose, improving teaching, learning, and school administration.

In the context of secondary education in Port Harcourt Metropolis, professional ethics plays a decisive role in ensuring that allocated funds are properly managed and that corruption, diversion, or misappropriation of resources is prevented. Ethical lapses in the management of education funds have long-term consequences, such as poor infrastructure, lack of instructional materials, unpaid staff salaries, and loss of public trust in educational institutions (TRCN, 2019). Therefore, adherence to ethical standards is not only a professional obligation but also a strategic necessity for effective school administration.

According to Ezeani and Akujuru (2018), ethical behavior among educational managers enhances financial discipline and accountability, thereby ensuring that available funds are utilized efficiently. When administrators demonstrate honesty and transparency in financial dealings, it promotes trust among stakeholders (teachers, parents, and government agencies) and creates a culture of shared responsibility for educational outcomes. Conversely, unethical practices such as favoritism, embezzlement, and financial misreporting undermine the goals of education and weaken the administrative structures that sustain school operations (Okebukola, 2017).

Professional ethics also extends to policy formulation and implementation in educational finance. Government bodies and administrators are expected to uphold justice and equity by ensuring that schools across all areas (urban and rural) receive fair and adequate funding. This ethical distribution of resources helps bridge gaps between well-resourced and under-resourced schools, thereby promoting inclusivity and social justice in education (UNESCO, 2020). Moreover, ethical financial practices encourage international donors, NGOs, and corporate partners to invest confidently in the education sector, knowing that their resources will be properly managed for the intended educational impact.

Furthermore, professional ethics fosters a culture of accountability in which school leaders and administrators are answerable for how funds are spent. This accountability not only improves financial efficiency but also strengthens governance within the education system. As noted by TRCN (2019), ethical leadership in education is essential for achieving excellence and maintaining the integrity of the profession. Leaders who model ethical behavior set the tone for others, creating a ripple effect that enhances overall school performance and credibility.

Sources of Funding for Secondary Education in Rivers State

The National Policy on Education (FGN, 2013) clearly emphasizes that education in Nigeria is no longer a private affair but a collective national responsibility. Over the years, the government's increasing involvement has transformed education into a major public enterprise. The central purpose of government investment in education is to equip citizens with the knowledge, skills, and competencies required to improve their quality of life, increase productivity, and actively contribute to national development. However, despite this recognition, Nigeria has consistently failed to meet the UNESCO-recommended benchmark of 26% of the national budget for education, leaving the sector underfunded and dependent on supplementary sources of finance.

In Rivers State, funding for secondary education comes from multiple sources, including the government, parents and guardians, and non-governmental and international organizations. Each of these stakeholders plays a unique role in sustaining educational operations, yet their effectiveness depends greatly on how ethically and transparently funds are managed.

Government Funding

Government funding remains the backbone of secondary education finance in Rivers State. Through annual budgetary allocations, the state government provides resources to cater for teacher salaries, capacity development, infrastructural projects, curriculum improvement, and administrative costs (Okoli, 2013). These funds are essential for maintaining the stability of the education system and ensuring that schools have the basic facilities and personnel required for effective teaching and learning (Ezeani & Akujuru, 2018).

However, the effectiveness of government funding depends on ethical financial management. Mismanagement, corruption, and political interference in fund allocation often hinder the achievement of educational goals. Professional ethics anchored on transparency, accountability, and fairness ensures that government funds are judiciously used and directed toward genuine educational needs. When education administrators uphold ethical standards, public confidence in government education spending increases, promoting trust and sustainability in the system.

At the federal level, the Nigerian government also provides subventions, grants, and intervention programs, such as those through the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), to strengthen state-level funding (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2002). Ethical oversight at both the federal and state levels is therefore crucial to ensuring that funds reach schools as intended, rather than being lost to bureaucratic inefficiencies or unethical practices.

Parents' Contributions

Parents and guardians play a vital complementary role in the financing of secondary education in Rivers State. Their contributions through school fees, levies, and voluntary donations help cover essential operational costs, maintain school facilities, and support extracurricular programs (Ezenwafor & Okorie, 2018). These financial inputs often bridge the gap left by

insufficient government funding, particularly in areas such as equipment procurement, maintenance, and student welfare.

Importantly, ethical management of parental contributions fosters trust and partnership between parents and school administrators. When funds contributed by parents are used transparently and accountably, it encourages continued community participation and reinforces shared ownership of the education process. Conversely, when such funds are misappropriated or spent without proper accountability, it erodes confidence and weakens the collaborative spirit needed for school development. Thus, professionalism and ethics are central to managing parental contributions responsibly.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and International Donors

Non-governmental organizations and international development partners have increasingly become key contributors to educational development in Rivers State. These organizations provide grants, materials, scholarships, and technical assistance aimed at enhancing the quality, inclusiveness, and accessibility of secondary education (UNESCO, 2020). Their support often targets critical areas such as teacher training, digital learning, gender equality, and school improvement projects.

However, the impact of NGO and donor interventions is closely tied to ethical collaboration and transparent fund utilization. International partners are more likely to sustain support when they are confident that their resources are being used effectively and honestly. This highlights the importance of professional ethics in maintaining accountability and ensuring that every donation contributes meaningfully to educational advancement rather than being diverted or wasted.

Effects of Secondary Education Funding in Port Harcourt Metropolis

Adequate funding for secondary education in Port Harcourt Metropolis has far-reaching implications, not only for school performance but also for societal development. Beyond simply providing financial resources, the ethical management of these funds plays a critical role in determining their effectiveness. When funds are allocated and utilized transparently, responsibly, and fairly, their impact on educational quality is maximized.

Improved Infrastructure and Facilities

One of the most visible effects of well-funded secondary education is the development of school infrastructure. Increased funding allows for the construction and maintenance of modern classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and recreational facilities (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2002). Ethical administration ensures that these funds are used specifically for the intended purposes, preventing diversion or misuse. As a result, students learn in safe, well-equipped, and conducive environments, which enhances academic performance and fosters holistic development.

Enhanced Teacher Quality

Professional ethics in funding directly affects teacher recruitment, retention, and professional development. Properly managed funds enable schools to offer competitive salaries, incentives, and training programs for educators (Okoli, 2013). When administrators adhere to ethical standards, teachers are assured of fair compensation and opportunities for growth, which motivates them to perform effectively. Consequently, ethically managed funding contributes to a cadre of well-trained, committed, and morally responsible educators capable of delivering quality instruction.

Reduced Student-Teacher Ratios

Adequate financial resources, ethically allocated, allow schools to hire additional teachers, thereby reducing class sizes and improving student-teacher ratios (Baker & Green, 2019). Lower ratios enable educators to provide personalized attention, identify learning challenges early, and create a more conducive learning atmosphere. The ethical dimension ensures that recruitment is based on merit and need, rather than favoritism or patronage, thereby enhancing both administrative integrity and educational outcomes.

Curriculum Development and Enrichment

Funding also supports curriculum enhancement by providing access to updated textbooks, educational technology, laboratory equipment, and other learning materials (Ezenwafor & Okorie, 2018). Ethical oversight ensures that these resources are procured and distributed transparently, benefiting all students rather than a select few. This creates an inclusive learning environment where students have equitable opportunities to acquire relevant knowledge and skills necessary for personal and societal advancement.

Equity in Education

Ethically managed funding is crucial for addressing disparities within the education system. Schools in underserved or marginalized areas of Port Harcourt Metropolis can receive equitable financial support, bridging gaps in infrastructure, learning materials, and teacher quality (UNESCO, 2020). By adhering to principles of fairness and accountability, education administrators ensure that resources are distributed based on need, fostering social justice and inclusive education.

Factors Hindering the Proper Funding of Secondary Education in Port Harcourt Metropolis

The effective funding of secondary education in Port Harcourt Metropolis is influenced by a range of economic, political, and administrative factors. While adequate financial resources are essential for quality education, several challenges often prevent the proper allocation and utilization of these funds. Understanding these factors is critical for developing strategies to ensure that resources reach schools and are managed ethically.

Economic Challenges

One of the most significant constraints to proper educational funding is the limitation of financial resources. Economic fluctuations, reduced state revenue, and competing developmental priorities often restrict the amount of money available for secondary education (Ezenwafor & Okorie, 2018). During periods of economic instability, allocations to schools may be delayed or reduced, making it difficult for administrators to plan and implement developmental projects effectively.

Budgetary Allocation

The prioritization of sectors in the state budget can adversely affect secondary education. Often, education receives a smaller portion of the annual budget compared to other competing sectors (Okoli, 2013). Even when funds are allocated, secondary schools may not receive sufficient attention, particularly in urban areas like Port Harcourt, where rapid population growth increases the demand for quality education. Ethical budgeting practices require policymakers to ensure that allocations reflect both the needs and strategic importance of the education sector.

Inefficient Resource Allocation

Inefficient allocation and utilization of available resources remain a major impediment. Funds may not always be directed toward areas of greatest need, leading to disparities between well-resourced and under-resourced schools (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2002). Proper application of professional ethics in administration ensuring transparency, fairness, and accountability can minimize waste, prevent favoritism, and guarantee that resources reach the intended beneficiaries.

Political Considerations

Political factors often influence the distribution of educational funds. Leaders may prioritize projects that provide immediate political gains rather than long-term investments in schools (Ezenwafor & Okorie, 2018). Such practices can result in skewed resource allocation and undermine the sustainability of educational programs. Ethical leadership and professionalism are essential to separate political interests from genuine educational priorities.

Corruption and Mismanagement

Corruption and mismanagement of educational funds significantly hinder the effectiveness of secondary school financing (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2002). Resources meant for schools may be diverted for personal or political purposes, depriving students and teachers of essential facilities and materials. Ethical management, grounded in honesty, accountability, and integrity, is critical to preventing fund misappropriation and ensuring that every naira is used for its intended educational purpose.

Lack of Accountability

Weak monitoring and accountability mechanisms exacerbate funding challenges. Without proper oversight, funds may be misused or poorly managed, limiting their impact on educational outcomes (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2002). Implementing professional ethics in financial management through transparent reporting, audits, and stakeholder engagement helps ensure that resources are directed toward activities that genuinely enhance school performance.

Economic Downturns

Economic recessions and fluctuations reduce the capacity of the state government to maintain consistent funding for secondary education (Okoli, 2013). Schools may experience delays in project execution, salary payments, and procurement of learning materials, affecting overall academic quality. Ethical planning and prudent financial management are essential to mitigate the effects of such economic challenges.

Conclusion

The funding of secondary education in Port Harcourt Metropolis is a complex and multifaceted challenge, influenced by economic constraints, political considerations, inefficient resource allocation, corruption, economic fluctuations, low revenue generation, security concerns, and weak accountability mechanisms. These challenges often hinder the ability of the state to provide sufficient and timely financial support to secondary schools, undermining the quality of education and the effectiveness of school administration.

Despite these challenges, it is clear that adequate and ethically managed funding is indispensable for a robust secondary education system. Proper funding enables the development and maintenance of school infrastructure, recruitment and retention of qualified teachers, reduction of student-teacher ratios, enhancement of curricula, and equitable distribution of educational resources. Beyond improving academic outcomes, well-managed funding fosters social development, economic growth, and the creation of a skilled workforce capable of contributing to the progress of Rivers State.

Addressing the challenges of educational funding requires a collaborative approach. The government, educational administrators, parents, community stakeholders, and development partners must work together to ensure resources are allocated efficiently and utilized transparently. Embedding professional ethics characterized by integrity, accountability, fairness, and transparency into the management of educational funds is crucial. Ethical financial practices not only ensure that funds reach their intended purpose but also build trust among stakeholders, promoting sustained investment in education.

In moving forward, prioritizing ethical governance in educational funding is essential to transforming secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis. A well-funded, ethically managed education system is more than an administrative requirement; it is an investment in the future of students, the community, and the state at large. By committing to both adequate funding and professional ethics in resource management, Rivers State can cultivate a secondary education

sector that is equitable, effective, and capable of fostering the intellectual and social development of its future generations.

Prospects

The future of secondary education in Port Harcourt Metropolis appears promising if adequate and ethically managed funding is sustained. Properly funded schools can achieve significant improvements in infrastructure, teacher quality, and learning resources, creating environments that foster student achievement and personal growth. When financial resources are managed transparently and with integrity, public confidence in the education system is strengthened, encouraging further investment from government, parents, and development partners.

Ethical funding also opens the door to equitable education, ensuring that schools in underprivileged communities receive the support they need to compete with better-resourced institutions. Over time, this can reduce disparities in educational outcomes and create a more inclusive system that nurtures the talents of all students, regardless of socio-economic background.

Moreover, sustained and ethically managed funding contributes to broader societal benefits. Quality secondary education produces a skilled and knowledgeable workforce, which can drive economic development, innovation, and social progress within Rivers State. By combining sufficient financial investment with professional ethical practices, the education sector in Port Harcourt can become a model for excellence, efficiency, and sustainability, ultimately fostering long-term growth for the community and the state.

Suggestions

1. **Increase and Prioritize Budgetary Allocation:** The Rivers State Government should allocate sufficient funds specifically for secondary education. Budget planning should reflect the growing needs of schools, including infrastructure, teaching materials, staff salaries, and administrative support.
2. **Strengthen Ethical Oversight and Accountability:** Transparent financial management systems, including regular audits and reporting, should be established to prevent misappropriation of funds. Professional ethics must guide all aspects of fund utilization, ensuring honesty, integrity, and fairness in resource allocation.
3. **Enhance Stakeholder Collaboration:** Partnerships with parents, community groups, private organizations, NGOs, and international donors should be encouraged. Clear agreements and monitoring frameworks should ensure that contributions are used effectively and equitably.

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