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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PRINCIPALS APPLICATION OF BUDGETING
PRACTICES FOR EFFECTIVE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE.

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ABSTRACT

The study compared comparative analysis of principals' application of budgeting practices for effective financial management in public and private secondary schools in Anambra state. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level. Descriptive Survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprised 1127 principals, 268 public and 859 private secondary schools in Anambra State. Through a multistage sampling procedure, procedure sample a total of 295 (70 public and 225 private) principals were selected. A questionnaire titled "Comparative Analysis of Principals' Application of Budgeting Practices for Effective Financial Management Questionnaire (CAPABPEFMQ)" was the instrument used for data collection. The instruments were face validated by three experts who were lecturers in the department of educational management and policy and measurement and evaluation in the department of Educational Foundation in Faculty of Education all in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. Reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach alpha method which yielded the overall coefficient was 0.89. Mean and Standard deviation was used to answer research questions, while t-test was used to test the hypotheses. The findings of the study revealed among others that principals in both public and private secondary schools agreed that incremental budgeting practices are applied in managing school finances. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that the principals in both public and private secondary schools in Anambra State should embark on regular and continuous training such as seminars, workshops, conference on budgeting and financial management for continuous improvement on budget application.

Key words: Principals, Budgeting Practices, Financial Management, Secondary School

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Introduction

Education plays a crucial role in the development of individuals and society by equipping people with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for self-reliance and national development. According to Ofojebe and Nnebedum (2016), education is an essential instrument for inculcating the right values and competencies required for societal advancement. In Nigeria, the formal education system is structured into three levels: basic (lower and upper basic), secondary, and tertiary education (FRN, 2013). Among these levels, secondary education occupies a strategic position because it serves as the bridge between basic education and higher education or vocational training and it is the focus of this study.

Secondary education in Nigeria consists of two phases: Upper basic (junior secondary schools, each lasting three years). In Nigeria, secondary schools are broadly categorized into public and private institutions based on ownership and sources of funding. This as noted by the National Policy on Education (FGN 2013) which stipulates that the Government welcomes the participation of private voluntary agencies, communities and private individuals in the establishment and management of secondary schools, state government shall prescribe conditions to be met by the communities and others wishing to establish secondary schools. Public secondary schools are established and managed by government authorities at the federal, state, or local levels, and they are mainly financed through government budgetary allocations used for teachers' salaries, infrastructural development, and instructional materials. They may also receive additional support from Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), community donations, and development levies. Private secondary schools, on the other hand, are owned and managed

by individuals, religious organizations, or private establishments. Their primary source of funding is tuition fees paid by parents or guardians, although they may also receive financial support from proprietors, investors, or other sponsoring bodies. These differences in funding sources and administrative structures often influence the availability of resources, facilities, and the general management practices of the schools (Ogwuche, 2024; Peretomode & Obed-Chukwuka, 2024).

The broad objectives of secondary education in Nigeria include preparing students for useful living within the society and for higher, technical careers, or the workforce. Students at this stage are assessed through external examinations such as the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) conducted by the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and the Senior School Certificate Examination conducted by NECO. Achieving these objectives requires the provision of adequate financial resources to support teaching and learning activities. Schools require funds to provide essential facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, libraries, instructional materials, and information and communication technology equipment. In addition, funds are needed to organize extracurricular activities such as debates, drama, sports competitions, and other programmes that contribute to students' holistic development. Consequently, effective financial management becomes an indispensable component of school administration (Ofojebe & Amaikwu, 2020).

Financial management in educational institutions involves the planning, allocation, utilization, and control of financial resources to achieve organizational objectives. Yizengaw and Agegnehu (2021) describe financial management as the application of financial information,

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skills, and methods to ensure the optimal use of organizational resources. Anyanwu, Obilor and Ogbo (2023) assert that financial management is the act of planning, administering and controlling of the financial resources of an organization. In the school system, this implies that principals must apply sound financial planning and budgeting strategies to ensure that available funds are properly utilized to support educational activities. Similarly, Ogbonnaya (2018) explained that financial management practices involve decisions relating to the procurement, utilization, and accountability of funds provided for organizational programmes. Okoye and Okorji (2021) also emphasized that effective financial management entails raising funds and utilizing them efficiently without wastage in order to achieve educational objectives.

In resource mobilization, financial management practices include budgeting, financial reporting, accounting, expenditure control, auditing, and inventory management (Ahmed & Mwangi, 2022). These practices ensure transparency, accountability, and effective financial performance within organizations. Yogendrarajah and Suganya (2017) further described financial management practices as a systematic process of designing, organizing, monitoring, and controlling financial resources in order to achieve organizational goals effectively. Within the school system, financial management practices also involve monitoring resource allocation, ensuring accountability in expenditures, and aligning financial decisions with institutional goals, such as improving teaching quality, supporting staff development, and enhancing student learning outcomes.

The responsibility for managing financial resources in secondary schools largely rests on the principal, who serves as the chief accounting officer of the school. Principals are expected to

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ensure that financial resources are properly mobilized, allocated, and utilized to facilitate the achievement of educational goals. Ekaette, Akeke, and Ekpenyong (2019) explained that the mobilization and management of school funds are integrated processes that must be carefully structured to ensure effective financial administration. School funds may be sourced from government grants, PTA levies, development levies, endowment funds, Education Trust Fund allocations, and internally generated revenue. These funds are used for various expenditures, including payment of salaries, procurement of teaching materials, maintenance of school facilities, and provision of equipment (Owhondah, 2020).

Effective school administration therefore depends largely on the leadership capabilities of principals. Principals function as dynamic leaders who influence teachers, coordinate school activities, and ensure the effective utilization of resources within the school system. Sarwar, Tariq, and Yong (2022) noted that principals play a crucial role in shaping teaching practices and improving students' learning outcomes. Similarly, Obiweluozor and Ogunbiyi (2022) emphasized that the success of schools depends significantly on the leadership qualities and administrative competencies of principals. Research by Ozdogru, Sarier, and Korucuoglu (2025) further indicates that effective school leaders create a conducive learning environment that enhances both teacher performance and student achievement.

One of the key tools used by principals to manage financial resources effectively is budgeting. Budgeting is an essential financial management technique that involves planning future financial activities, allocating resources, controlling expenditures, and evaluating financial performance. Studies have shown that effective budgeting practices significantly improve

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financial outcomes in organizations (Obieze et al., 2024). In educational institutions, budgeting helps principals forecast financial needs, allocate resources appropriately, and monitor the use of funds in order to achieve institutional goals. Several budgeting practices are commonly used in organizations and educational institutions. Traditional budgeting approaches include line-item budgeting, incremental budgeting, zero-based budgeting, and the Planning-Programming-Budgeting System (PPBS) (Drury, 2018). Line-item budgeting categorizes expenditures into specific items such as salaries, utilities, equipment, and supplies, thereby facilitating financial control and accountability. Incremental budgeting, which involves adjusting the previous year's budget by adding or subtracting incremental amounts, is widely used because of its simplicity and practicality (Ross, 2020). Zero-based budgeting, on the other hand, requires every expenditure to be justified from a zero base at the beginning of each budgeting cycle, thereby promoting efficiency and accountability in financial management. The Planning-Programming-Budgeting System (PPBS) integrates planning, programme development, and budgeting in order to ensure that financial resources are allocated in line with organizational goals and programme performance (Andrews & Hill, 2021).

Modern budgeting approaches also include participatory budgeting, performance-based budgeting, flexible budgeting, and rolling budgeting. Participatory budgeting involves stakeholders in financial decision-making processes, thereby promoting transparency and accountability. Performance-based budgeting links financial allocations to measurable performance outcomes, ensuring that resources are directed toward achieving specific organizational goals. Flexible and rolling budgets allow continuous adjustments to financial

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plans based on changing operational conditions, thereby improving planning flexibility and organizational responsiveness (Horngren, Datar, & Rajan, 2019). In this study, principals' budgeting practices will focus on Incremental budgeting practice, Zero-based budgeting practice.

Incremental budgeting is a budgeting method that involves making adjustments to the previous year's budget to create the new budget, typically by adding or subtracting incremental amounts (Ross 2020). The statement means that incremental budgeting is a method where the current year's budget is based on last year's budget, with small changes (increments) made for the new year. These changes usually involve adding or subtracting a fixed amount or percentage to reflect expected increases or decreases in costs, revenues, or other financial needs. Incremental budgeting is widely recognized for its simplicity and efficiency, making it one of the most commonly used budgeting methods in both public and private organizations (Prophix, 2024). According to Prophix (2024), this approach involves making adjustments to the previous year's budget, typically by increasing allocations to accommodate factors such as inflation, rising operational costs, or anticipated changes in resource requirements. Its straightforward nature facilitates ease of preparation and administration, particularly in organizations with stable operations. However, critics argue that incremental budgeting may perpetuate inefficiencies, as it assumes the previous budget is largely appropriate and does not rigorously evaluate the necessity or effectiveness of each expenditure item. Despite this limitation, incremental budgeting remains relevant in educational institutions where school principals rely on predictable funding patterns and incremental adjustments to plan and manage school finances effectively.

Zero-based budgeting (ZBB) is a budgeting method that was developed by Peter Phyrri in

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the 1970s (Phyrr 1970). This budgeting method analyzes an organization's needs and costs by starting from a "zero base" (meaning no funding allocation) at the beginning of every period. The intended outcome is to assess the efficient use of resources by determining if services can be provided at a lower cost. However, the saving comes at the expense of a complete restructuring every budget cycle. Although used at least partially in both government and private sectors, there is some doubt whether zero-based budgeting has ever been fully applied to achieve optimal financial outcomes in many organizations due to implementation challenges and contextual factors (Okoh, Madumere, Amahi, and Akom, 2023). The goal is assessment of the efficiency of resource usage, by determining if services can be provided at a lower cost. Zero-based budgeting (ZBB) is a budgeting process that allocates funding based on programme efficiency and necessity rather than budget history. It set the tone to review every programme and expenditure at the beginning of each budget cycle and must justify each line item in order to receive funding (Deloitte, 2015). Zero-based budgeting always begins the new budget from an established point of zero. Instead of starting off with last period's budget and adding or subtracting from it, you begin with zero, and then go through every expense that government will incur during the course of its activities. This budgeting method utilizes much more detail and makes Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) accountable for their revenue and expenditure.

In Anambra State, both public and private secondary schools operate within different financial and administrative frameworks. Public schools depend largely on government funding and operate under strict financial regulations, while private schools rely primarily on internally generated funds and flexible management decisions. These differences may influence how

principals in the two categories of schools apply budgeting practices and manage financial resources. Despite the importance of budgeting practices in school financial management, there is limited empirical evidence comparing how principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State apply these practices.

This gap in empirical knowledge makes it necessary to examine the budgeting practices adopted by principals in both categories of schools and how these practices influence effective financial management. Such a comparative analysis will provide valuable insights for policymakers, school administrators, and educational stakeholders seeking to improve financial management practices in secondary schools. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the comparative application of budgeting practices by principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State and their implications for effective financial management.

Statement of the Problem

Effective financial management is fundamental to the successful administration of secondary schools, as it ensures the prudent planning, allocation, utilization, and accountability of limited financial resources. In both public and private secondary schools, principals are responsible for managing school finances through the application of appropriate budgeting practices such as participatory budgeting, capital budgeting, performance-based, flexible budgeting incremental budgeting, zero-based budgeting, Line-Item budgeting, and Plan, Program and Budget practice.

Despite the recognized importance of sound budgeting practices, concerns persist regarding the adequacy and effectiveness of principals' application of these practices in

secondary schools. Reports of misallocation of funds, budget overruns, poor accountability, and inadequate provision of instructional facilities suggest possible weaknesses in the budgeting processes adopted by school principals. Furthermore, public and private secondary schools operate under different administrative, financial, and regulatory conditions, which may influence how budgeting practices are applied and how effectively financial resources are managed.

Therefore, the problem of this study is to determine and compare the budgeting practices applied by principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State for effective financial management, in order to identify existing gaps, challenges, and possible areas for improvement.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the incremental budgetary practices applied by principals for effective financial management in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State?
2. What are the zero-based budgetary practices of applied by principals for effective financial management in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school principals' on the application of incremental budgetary practice for effective

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2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school principals' application of zero-based budgetary practice for effective financial management in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Methods

The study employed a descriptive survey design. The population consisted of 1,127 principals of public and private secondary schools in Anambra State. A total of 295 principals were drawn from the population through a multistage sampling procedure by using stratified sampling technique and random sampling technique. The questionnaire titled “Principals’ Application of Budgeting Practices for Effective Financial Management Questionnaire (PABPEFMQ)” was the instrument used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts who were lecturers in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding overall coefficient values of 0.89. Mean and standard deviation were employed to answer the research questions, while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the incremental budgetary practices applied by principals for effective financial management in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1: Respondents’ Mean and Standard Deviation Ratings on incremental budgetary practices applied by principals for effective financial management in public and private

S/N	As a principal I,	Public			Private		
		\bar{X}	SD	Remarks	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1	provide a simple way to allocate funds for my school's financial needs.	3.61	0.572	Agree	3.63	0.568	Agree
2	focus more on adjusting existing budget categories than on rethinking the school's financial priorities.	3.56	.605	Agree	3.65	.665	Agree
3	ensure financial stability in my school's operations.	3.46	.674	Agree	3.73	.584	Agree
4	ensure that the school's budget is primarily developed based on the previous year's budget, with small adjustments made for the new year.	3.64	.483	Agree	3.74	.565	Agree
5	receive adequate training on incremental budgeting practices.	3.59	.496	Agree	3.83	.492	Agree
6	ensure financial predictability in my school's operations.	3.60	.522	Agree	3.80	.526	Agree
7	provide an efficient way to allocate funds for my school's financial needs.	3.64	.512	Agree	3.72	.563	Agree

8	rely on past expenditure patterns to guide current budget decisions.	3.73	.448	Agree	3.72	.578	Agree
9	make minor changes to existing budget lines rather than develop new ones.	3.79	.478	Agree	3.74	.565	Agree
10	believe that using the previous year's budget makes planning faster and more convenient.	3.79	.478	Agree	3.70	.573	Agree
Cluster Mean		3.27		Agree	3.73		Agree

Data presented in Table 1 show the item-by-item mean ratings and standard deviations of principals in both public and private secondary schools on incremental budgeting practices. The analysis revealed that all ten items recorded mean scores above the criterion mean, indicating that principals in both school types agreed that incremental budgeting practices are applied in managing school finances.

Specifically, principals in public secondary schools agreed that incremental budgeting provides a simple and efficient way of allocating funds, focuses on adjusting existing budget categories rather than redefining priorities and ensures financial stability in school operations. They also agreed that school budgets are largely developed based on the previous year's budget with slight adjustments and that reliance on past expenditure patterns aids current budget decisions. These responses suggest that principals in public schools consistently apply incremental budgeting as a financial management strategy. Similarly, principals in private secondary schools recorded slightly higher mean scores across most items, indicating stronger agreement with incremental budgeting practices. They agreed that incremental budgeting ensures financial stability, enhances financial predictability and allows efficient allocation of funds. They also indicated receiving adequate training on incremental budgeting practices, suggesting a higher level of exposure and capacity in financial management compared to their public school counterparts.

The cluster mean of 3.27 for public schools and 3.73 for private schools further confirms that incremental budgetary practices are generally adopted by principals in both school systems. However, the higher cluster mean for private schools indicates that private school principals apply incremental budgeting practices more consistently than those in public schools.

Research Question 2: What are the zero-based budgetary practices of applied by principals for effective financial management in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 2: Respondents' Mean and Standard Deviation Ratings on zero-based budgetary practices of applied by principals for effective financial management in public and private secondary schools.

S/N	As a principal I,	Public			Private		
		\bar{X}	SD	Remarks	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1	ensure that in our budgeting process, all expenditures must be newly justified each year.	3.64	.483	Agree	3.67	.667	Agree
2	ensure that before funds are allocated, each department must provide detailed justification for their budget requests.	3.67	.557	Agree	3.78	.521	Agree

3	reallocate funds more effectively to high-priority needs.	3.59	.648	Agree	3.88	.344	Agree
4	observed that using zero-based budgeting has significantly improved financial accountability in our school.	3.61	.546	Agree	3.56	.610	Agree
5	believe that the practice of zero-based budgeting is realistic to our school's financial management system.	3.67	.531	Agree	3.70	.515	Agree
6	observed that using zero-based budgeting has significantly improved financial transparency in our school.	3.56	.605	Agree	3.63	.519	Agree
7	believe that the practice of zero-based budgeting is adaptable to our school's financial management system.	3.54	.606	Agree	3.67	.516	Agree
8	use zero-based budgeting to critically assess the relevance of ongoing programs each year.	3.54	.674	Agree	3.61	.589	Agree
9	ensure that budgeting decisions are based on current needs rather than past allocations.	3.44	.754	Agree	3.63	.635	Agree
10	find that zero-based budgeting encourages more strategic and result-oriented financial planning in my school.	3.76	.576	Agree	3.46	.762	Agree
Cluster Mean		3.60		Agree	3.66		Agree

The data presented in Table 2 show the mean ratings and standard deviations of principals in public and private secondary schools on zero-based budgeting practices. The analysis revealed that all ten items recorded mean scores above the criterion mean, indicating that principals in both public and private secondary schools agreed that zero-based budgeting practices are applied in managing school finances.

Specifically, principals in public secondary schools agreed that all expenditures are newly justified each year during the budgeting process and that departments are required to provide detailed justifications before funds are allocated. They also agreed that zero-based budgeting allows for more effective reallocation of funds to high-priority needs and improves financial accountability. Furthermore, respondents indicated that zero-based budgeting enhances financial transparency and encourages strategic and result-oriented financial planning. Similarly, principals in private secondary schools agreed that zero-based budgeting requires fresh justification for all expenditures annually and ensures that departments justify their budget

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proposals before fund allocation. They further agreed that zero-based budgeting supports effective reallocation of funds to priority needs, improves financial transparency, and promotes strategic, result-oriented financial planning. The cluster mean scores of 3.60 for public secondary schools and 3.66 for private secondary schools indicate that principals in both school systems generally apply zero-based budgeting practices for effective financial management. However, the slightly higher cluster mean for private secondary schools suggests that private school principals adopt zero-based budgeting practices marginally more than public school.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school principals' on the application of incremental budgetary practice for effective financial management in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 1: t-Test Analysis on significant difference in the mean ratings of principals on the application of incremental budgetary practice for effective financial management in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t-cal	p-value	α -value	Remark
Public	70	3.6400	.20600					
				293	-3.007	0.000	0.05	Not Significant
Private	225	3.7262	.21060					

Data provided in Table 5 reveal the independent-samples t-test conducted to examine the difference in the mean ratings of principals' application of incremental budgetary practices for effective financial management in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State. The result showed no statistically significant difference between public secondary schools and private secondary schools. Since the obtained p-value is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis of no significant difference was accepted. Hence, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals in public and private secondary schools on principals' application of incremental budgetary practice for effective financial management in secondary schools in

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary school principals' application of zero-based budgetary practice for effective financial management in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 2: t-Test Analysis on significant difference in the mean ratings of on principals' application of incremental budgetary practice for effective financial management in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t-cal	p-value	α -value	Remark
Public	70	3.6029	.22261	293	-2.024	0.000	0.05	Not Significant
Private	225	3.6591	.19667					

Data provided in Table 6 reveals the independent-samples *t*-test to examine the difference in personnel management strategies of principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State with respect to enhancing teachers' job satisfaction. The result revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between public schools and private schools. This indicates that principals in both secondary schools employ personnel management strategies that enhance teachers' job satisfaction. Since the obtained *p*-value is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis of no significant difference was accepted.

Discussion of findings

Incremental Budgetary Practices Applied in Public and Private Secondary Schools by Principals for Effective Financial Management in Secondary Schools in Anambra State.

The results of the findings revealed that principals in both public and private secondary schools agreed that incremental budgeting practices are applied in the management of school finances. This indicates that incremental budgeting remains a widely utilized financial management approach across both categories of schools. The cluster mean scores of 3.27 for public schools and 3.73 for private schools further suggest that although both groups adopt this budgeting

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method, principals in private secondary schools tend to apply it more consistently and perhaps

with greater rigor. This variation may be attributed to differences in administrative flexibility, funding structures, and the level of financial autonomy available to private school administrators.

The test of Hypothesis 1 (Table 1) showed that there is no statistically significant difference between public and private school principals in their application of incremental budgeting practices ($t = -3.007, p < 0.05$). This finding implies that, despite minor variations in the degree of application, incremental budgeting is a common and established practice in both public and private secondary schools. Its widespread use can be linked to its simplicity, familiarity, and ease of implementation, as it builds on previous budgets with minor adjustments rather than requiring a complete financial overhaul.

This finding is in agreement with the study by Olalekan (2019), which found that incremental budgeting significantly enhances resource utilization efficiency in educational institutions. However, the study also noted that the rigidity inherent in incremental budgeting limits flexibility and reduces the ability of school administrators to respond effectively to changing educational demands. In the same vein, Eze and Uche (2021) reported that while incremental budgeting promotes financial accountability and transparency by providing a stable and predictable financial framework, its reliance on fixed annual increments may constrain the ability of schools to address emerging priorities or urgent needs.

Furthermore, Ndem (2020) highlighted that incremental budgeting may restrict funding flexibility, particularly in rural schools where there is a greater need for innovation and adaptation. According to the author, reliance on previous budget patterns can hinder investment

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in critical areas such as ICT infrastructure, curriculum development, and staff professional development. This limitation underscores the need for school administrators to complement incremental budgeting with more flexible and responsive financial strategies.

Overall, while the findings of this study confirm that incremental budgeting is widely practiced in both public and private secondary schools, they also reveal inherent limitations that may affect its effectiveness in dynamic educational environments. Therefore, there is a need for school administrators to adopt a more balanced approach by integrating incremental budgeting with other modern budgeting techniques to enhance flexibility, responsiveness, and overall financial management efficiency.

Zero-Based Budgetary Practices Applied by Principals for Effective Financial Management in Public and Private Secondary Schools in Anambra State.

The results of the findings revealed that principals in both public and private secondary schools agreed that zero-based budgeting (ZBB) practices are applied in their respective schools. This suggests a shared recognition among school administrators of the importance of adopting systematic and needs-based budgeting approaches in managing school finances. Furthermore, the test of Hypothesis 2 (Table 2) indicated that there is no statistically significant difference between public and private school principals in their application of zero-based budgeting practices. This implies that the adoption and implementation of ZBB is relatively uniform across both categories of schools, regardless of differences in ownership structure or funding sources.

This finding underscores the growing acceptance of zero-based budgeting as an effective

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financial management strategy within the secondary school system. The uniformity in responses may be attributed to increased awareness among principals of the need for accountability, transparency, and efficient allocation of scarce resources in schools. By requiring that all expenditures be justified from a zero base, ZBB minimizes wasteful spending and ensures that financial decisions are aligned with institutional priorities.

The present finding is consistent with the study conducted by Sunny, Joseph, and Emmanuel (2019), which revealed that zero-based budgeting enhances efficient resource allocation and improves organizational performance. However, the authors emphasized that adequate training and capacity building are essential for school administrators to effectively implement ZBB practices. In a similar vein, Mustapha, Abba, Bello, and Ali (2017) found that the perceived benefits of zero-based budgeting significantly influence its adoption, suggesting that when principals understand the advantages of ZBB such as cost control and improved financial discipline they are more likely to integrate it into their financial management processes.

However, despite its benefits, the implementation of zero-based budgeting is not without challenges. Aliyu and Salami (2022) noted that the complexity and technical nature of ZBB can pose significant difficulties for school administrators, particularly in environments where there is limited expertise or inadequate training. Such challenges may hinder effective implementation and, consequently, reduce its potential impact on administrative effectiveness. Therefore, while the findings of this study affirm the widespread application of zero-based budgeting in both public and private schools, there is a need for continuous professional development and

Conclusion

The study examined the application of budgeting practices including incremental and zero-based by principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State for effective financial management. The findings revealed that principals in both school types implement these budgeting practices to enhance financial accountability, resource allocation efficiency, and overall financial stability. In conclusion, the effective implementation of budgeting practices by principals is crucial for promoting financial accountability and efficiency in secondary schools. The study further highlights the need for capacity building and training for principals, to ensure optimal adoption and adaptation of budgeting practices for sustainable school financial management in Anambra State.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. There is a need for school principals to adopt a more balanced approach by integrating incremental budgeting with other modern budgeting techniques to enhance flexibility, responsiveness, and overall financial management efficiency.
2. Public and private school principals should adopt need for continuous professional development and institutional support to ensure its optimal utilization of zero-based budgeting (ZBB) practices. Also embark on regular and continuous training on budgeting and financial management. This will enhance their ability to manage school finances effectively and ensure proper allocation of resources.

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