

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA



**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES FACING HEADS OF SENIOR HIGH
SCHOOLS IN CENTRAL REGION, GHANA**

GRACE NANA EKUA QUANSAH



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**GRACE NANA EKUA QUANSAH
(220033002)**

**A thesis in the Department of Educational Administration
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**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING
UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

MAY, 2025

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Grace Nana Ekuu Quansah, declare that this thesis, except quotations and references contained in published works which have been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature.....

Date.....



SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work were supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of the thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: Prof. Alfred Kuranchie

SIGNATURE.....

DATE.....

DEDICATION

To the glory of God for His sufficient grace, this work is dedicated to my husband, Mr. Sampson Quansah, and my children, Gloria, T.K., Nhyiraba, Kofi and Egya Obeng



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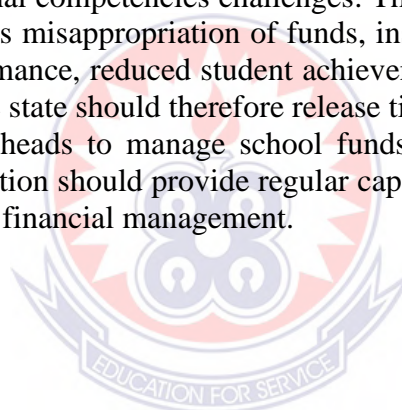
LIST OF ABBREVIATION

ABFA	Annual Budget Funding Amount
CPD	Continuous Professional Development And Training
GASHSs	Government Assisted Senior High Schools
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MMDDes	Metro/Municipal/District Directors of Education.
MoE	Ministry of Education
NaSIA	National Schools Inspectorate Authority
PAC	Public Accounts Committee
SHSs	Senior High Schools
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, And Cultural Organization
TCT	Transaction Cost Theory



ABSTRACT

The study investigated financial management challenges facing heads of senior high schools in the Central Region, Ghana. Specifically, it examined financial management challenges, facing heads, sources of the challenges, the effect of the challenges, and the available support system. The research paradigm is pragmatism while the approach is mixed methods. The study employed the concurrent triangulation design. The target population was heads of senior high schools, Zonal Internal Audit, and Directors of Education, made up of 75 heads of SHSs, 7 heads of Zonal Internal Auditors, and 21 MMD Directors of Education, which constituted a population of 104. The sample size was 70 participants, made up of 63 heads of SHSs, 4 Directors, and 3 Auditors. Simple random and purposive techniques were used for the selection of the participants. The research relied on primary data, which was gathered using a structured questionnaire for heads and a semi-structured interview guide for the Directors and Internal Auditors. Both the quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently and analyzed. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, and the qualitative data were analyzed using iNVIVO. Key findings of the study were that procurement, accounting, audit infractions, budgetary inefficiencies, professional incompetence, and financial policy were major financial management challenges for the heads. Sources of the financial challenges were inadequate financial management knowledge and skill, inadequate education and training on financial management, long stay in schools, and doubling roles of heads as administrators and financial managers are major professional competencies challenges. The findings also indicate that the challenges have effects such as misappropriation of funds, insufficient teaching and learning materials, poor teacher performance, reduced student achievement, public audit scrutiny, and emotional stress on heads. The state should therefore release timely and adequate fund as well as necessary support for the heads to manage school funds efficiently. It is also that the Regional Directorate of Education should provide regular capacity building for heads and the Board of Governors on school financial management.



CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

Financial management plays a crucial role in the effective administration of educational institutions. It involves the planning, allocation, utilization, and control of financial resources to achieve organizational goals in an efficient and accountable manner. In public educational institutions, particularly Government-Assisted Senior High Schools (GASHSs), financial management is essential for ensuring that available resources are properly utilized to support teaching, learning, infrastructure development, and overall school operations. The study examines the financial management challenges facing heads of Government-Assisted Senior High Schools in the Central Region of Ghana and it focuses on identifying the sources of these challenges, examining their effects on school management and operations, and assessing the support systems available to assist heads of schools in managing financial resources effectively. This chapter discusses background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose and objective of the study. It also outlines the research questions, delimitation and limitation of the study, significance of the study, and some operational definitions.

1.1 Background to the study

Education is not only concerned with teaching and learning outcomes but also with the effective management of resources that support the educational process. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2015) defines education as a fundamental human right and the basis for a more just and sustainable world; it empowers individuals with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary to live productive lives and contribute to society. Illeris (2018) views education as a lifelong process of learning that integrates cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions, enabling individuals to function effectively in a complex and dynamic world. Thus, education is a continuous and purposeful process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and competencies that enable individuals to think critically, adapt to societal changes, participate effectively in social and

economic life, and contribute meaningfully to sustainable development. This perspective aligns with contemporary educational goals that stress human capital development, social responsibility, and effective management of resources, particularly within public institutions such as schools. It is considered a basic human right and a key factor that influences an individual's social life outcomes. It is said to bring transformation in the economic development of every nation as the nation builder, and this is acknowledged by the World Bank (Leu & Bryner, 2005). Indeed, education is an investment as well as an instrument that can be used to achieve a more rapid economic, social, political, technological, scientific, and cultural development in the country. It promotes the development of the right citizenship as a basis for effective participation and contribution to the life of the society, and also assists in developing the individual's ability to adapt to changing environments and inculcating character and moral training and the development of a sound mind (Aremu & Oluwole, 2000). Ghana as a nation recognizes this crucial role education plays in human and socio-economic development. The development of the education sector has therefore been a longstanding objective of the government of Ghana from pre-independence days, and several efforts have been made at revamping the ailing education sector in the country. The education system in Ghana is structured into three main levels: basic, senior high, and tertiary. The secondary education consists of Senior High School (SHS) and Technical/Vocational Institutes, which are all made free under the Free SHS policy. The SHS program spans three years and aims to prepare students for tertiary education or entry into the workforce. The curriculum is designed to be comprehensive, offering general education as well as specialized tracks in science, arts, business, and technical subjects (Ghana Education Service, 2020).

The importance of education confirms the rationale behind the huge resources pushed into education by governments and private individuals, and that require efficient management by educational leadership, of which financial resources play pivot role. Education is a precondition for the exercise of human rights, and it is itself viewed as a 'right', which means it should be

provided regardless of cost–benefit ratios (Eide, A. et al., 2001). Globally, acknowledgement of education and its importance demand several inputs and their effective management if the full potential of education is to be realized. Education as a social organization is considered a process of integrating different types of activities to achieve predetermined goals and objectives (Esia-Donkoh, 2019). Kusi (2012) also affirms that it is very difficult for an educational institution to function effectively without having someone or a group of people to provide leadership to it. This means that an educational institution is nothing but a process of integrating and coordinating the efforts of human and material resources for the accomplishment of set goals. Education management is therefore the day-to-day administration of the education system in which a group combines human and material resources to supervise, plan, strategize, and implement structures to execute an educational system (Kusi, 2012). This requires effective and efficient management of educational input. Financial management of SHS is entrusted in the hands of heads and accounting staff, with Directors and Auditors playing a supervisory role. Finance broadly refers to the science or system of managing money and other assets, encompassing activities such as budgeting, investing, borrowing, saving, and forecasting (Brigham & Houston, 2019). Financing specifically refers to the methods and sources through which funds are raised to support expenditures or investments. It is about the process of getting the money. It includes both internal sources, such as retained earnings, and external sources like government funding, loans, grants, and equity (Gitman, 2015). The cost of education is the total resources devoted to education, which include the direct money outlays and the indirect financial burdens. (Babalola, 2015).

This essence motivates governments, individuals, and donors to contribute significantly to financing it. For instance, globally, the World Bank fiscal year 2021 reported that the World Bank Group collectively provided \$98.8 billion to global development, out of which Sub-Saharan Africa, including Ghana, received \$35.2 billion (17%). Significantly, 8% of this sub-Saharan Africa support is offered in education. It is worth noting that education programmes

in Ghana are largely funded by the Central Government through the consolidated fund (UNESCO, 2015). In 2022, the Government of Ghana allotted a total sum of GH¢17.79 billion to the education sector, marking a 13.8% increase from the 2021 allocation of GH¢15.63 billion. This allocation represented approximately 12.9% of the national budget and 3.5% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for that year (Modern Ghana, 2021) of which petroleum revenue portion allocated under the Annual Budget Funding Amount (ABFA) was GH¢ 1,203,681,689.14 (Ministry of Finance, 2021), and 3.8% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to the education sector per the 2022 budget. The actual expenditure for SHS and tertiary education has consistently remained over 20% between 2017 and 2020, the statement said. “Excluding the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund), the total allocation to the Ministry of Education MoE for 2023 is GH¢22.9 billion. of this amount, GH¢2.7 billion, which represents about 12 per cent of MoE allocation, is devoted to Capital Expenditure (CAPEX)” (Education Budget Briefing, 2022), necessary resource allocation to achieve SDG 4 by 2030. In government-assisted senior high schools in Ghana, the responsibility for financial management primarily rests on the head of the institution, supported by the accounts staff, as mandated by the Education Act, 2008 (Act 778), the Public Financial Management Act, 2016 (Act 921), and the Financial Administration Regulations, 2004 (L.I. 1802) The head of the institution, an educationist, is faced with the task of doubling as a financial manager (Ghorman, 2010). The head is the administrator as well as the manager of a school, and these managerial and administrative functions of a head of a school cannot be separated. Eisa-Donkoh (2019) emphasizes that these functions are overlapping in nature and that they are highly inseparable because each function blends into the other, and each affects the performance of the other; that is why competent heads who can manage these inseparable roles are essential; otherwise, there will be deficiencies. Any dereliction in this financial responsibility by the Head shall be deemed to be a breach of financial indiscipline. So undoubtedly, the head of an institution such as Government Assisted Senior High School must necessarily have good financial knowledge

to function efficiently. It is worth emphasizing that the school is a complex formal organization and the head must have skills and competencies in financial administration to organize and manage school funds, human and material resource as well as time, for the achievement of the organizational goal and objectives effectively and efficiently. Government-Assisted Senior High Schools (GASHSs) in Ghana refer to second-cycle educational institutions that are publicly funded and regulated by the Government of Ghana through the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service (GES), but which may have originated from missions, state, communities, or private initiatives. These schools receive financial, administrative, and professional support from the state, including payment of staff emoluments, supply of teaching and learning materials, and funding for administrative and service expenditures, and are therefore subject to public financial management laws and educational policies.

Financial management encompasses the planning, organizing, directing, and controlling of financial activities such as procurement and utilization of funds, which is essential for maintaining the financial health of educational institutions and ensuring that they can provide high-quality educational outcomes (Adu-Gyamfi, 2014). It means arranging, sorting out, coordinating, and controlling the monetary activities and the application of general administration standards to the financial assets of the venture, such as education. Titman, Keown, and Martin (2011) also added that financial management is a careful, informed planning for the future to ensure the generation of positive cash flows. However, this financial management responsibility of the head has not been spared from its associated challenges. Generally, a head master of a senior high school is responsible for the day-to-day running of the school. He or she ensures that all the resources at his or her disposal are managed efficiently and effectively for quality educational outcomes at the senior high school. Thus, the head master is the focal point, the center of the school environment in which all other factors revolve. This double task poses its own challenges to the head.

In the Ghanaian context, financial management in educational institutions is particularly challenging due to limited resources and bureaucratic inefficiencies. These challenges necessitate robust financial management practices to ensure that funds are used effectively to improve educational outcomes (Mensah, 2016). The Ghana Auditor General Report 2021 on Summary of Irregularities indicated that GHC 23,320,821.68, over an average increase of 55.82% in the 2020 fiscal year, out of which cash irregularity is 11,065,388.38, thus, 82.87% increase in the 2020 fiscal year. This is the affirmation of the financial management challenges these heads are facing. According to Osei and Konadu (2019), this deficiency has resulted in financial starvation of public SHSs and drained the government's national purse. Public SHSs continue to struggle with inadequate financial resources to undertake their mandates for quality academic performance, and its dam consequence is far-reaching. While the top-performing countries are, on average, spending less (4.18%) of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on education and achieving higher educational outcomes, Ghana, on the contra is spending an average of 6.16% of its GDP on education but achieving less. This calls for a systematic scientific investigation into such a phenomenon

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Public Financial Management (PFM) constitutes the legal, institutional, and administrative systems through which public funds are mobilized, allocated, utilized, accounted for, and audited to ensure efficiency, transparency, and accountability in the public sector (Lawson, 2015; Public Financial Management Act, 2016, Act 9210) Government-Assisted Senior High Schools rely predominantly on public funding sources, including central government grants, Free Senior High School (Free SHS) policy allocations, and limited internally generated funds, to finance personnel emoluments, administrative expenses, service activities, infrastructure development, teaching and learning materials, and other operational requirements. Consequently, heads of SHSs, as principal spending officers responsible for ensuring probity, regularity, efficiency, and effectiveness in the management of public funds entrusted to their

institutions under legal framework of the Education Act, 2008 (Act 778), the Public Financial Management Act, 2016 (Act 921), the Financial Administration Regulations, 2004 (L.I. 1802), and the GES Code of Professional Conduct (2018) to ensure prudent, efficient, and accountable financial management.

Despite this robust legal and regulatory framework, evidence suggests persistent weaknesses in financial management within public sector institutions, including senior high schools in Ghana (Ametefe, 2019). Reports by the Auditor-General and deliberations of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) consistently reveal widespread financial irregularities, particularly in cash management, procurement, and accountability across pre-university educational institutions. For instance, the Auditor-General's Report indicates a significant increase in cash irregularities within the education sector, with pre-university institutions accounting for a substantial proportion of these infractions in recent years. 2021 Ghana Auditor General Report on Summary of Irregularities, out of GHC 23,320,821.68 audit infractions, cash irregularity accounted for GHC 11,065,388.38, thus, 82.87% increase of 2020 fiscal years in the public sector, including SHSs. Again, the Auditor General's report (2025) indicates that financial irregularities in pre-university institutions remain a major challenge. The irregularities for the 2024 financial year were GH¢21,075,112.88, representing 89.89 percent of the total irregularities of GH¢23,444,814.16 in pre-university educational institutions. The recurring appearance of heads of SHSs before the PAC underscores ongoing challenges in compliance with public financial management regulations and raises concerns about the effectiveness of existing financial controls (Public Account Committee, 2025)

Scholarly efforts have attempted to address financial management issues in secondary education. International studies conducted in Tanzania and Kenya have focused on school heads' financial management skills, budgeting, accounting, and auditing challenges (Magak, 2013; Munge et al, 2016; Wasiche, Mwebi, & Ajowi, 2018; Onesmo et al, 2021), but their findings are limited by contextual differences in socio-economic conditions, policy

environments, and administrative structures. In Ghana, existing studies have largely examined isolated components of financial management challenges, such as government funding, audit compliance, or isolated aspects of financial accountability in senior high schools (Agyeman, 2020; Mensah, 2021; Addae-Boahene & Adjei, 2021; Arhin, 2021; Amponsah & Boateng, 2023). While these studies provide valuable insights, they tend to address specific components of financial management challenges rather than examining the issue comprehensively and holistically integrating the challenges, their sources, and their effects within a single analytical framework. Existing central regional studies are limited either by narrow geographical scope, small sample sizes, or reliance on single research methods, thereby restricting the generalizability and depth of their findings. Additionally, limited attention has been given to the institutional support systems available to heads of schools to address financial management challenges, including training, supervision, and policy implementation mechanisms.

Palpably, there remains limited empirical evidence that comprehensively investigates the totality of financial management challenges, their sources, effects, and the support systems available to heads of Government-assisted Senior High Schools, particularly within the Central Region of Ghana, in a single study using a mixed-method approach. This gap is significant given the increasing number of SHSs in the central region cited for financial irregularities and the potential implications for school operations, educational quality, and the efficient use of public resources.

Against this backdrop, there is a need for a systematic and context-specific investigation into the financial management challenges facing heads of Government-Assisted Senior High Schools in the Central Region of Ghana. This study sought to examine the nature, sources, and effects of financial management challenges, as well as the support systems available to school heads, in order to generate empirical evidence that can inform policy, strengthen financial governance, enhance accountability, and improve financial management within Ghana's secondary education sector.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The study aimed at discovering the financial management challenges facing SHS in the Central Region of Ghana and their effect on the activities of the school to offer suggestions to improve all financial management practices of the schools.

1.4 Objective of the Study

The objectives of the study include:

1. To examine the financial management challenges facing heads of senior high schools in the Central Region of Ghana.
2. To determine the sources of the financial management challenges facing heads of senior high schools in the Central Region of Ghana.
3. To assess the effects of financial management challenges on senior high schools in the Central Region.
4. To determine the support system available for heads in managing the school finances of senior high schools in the Central Region.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are the financial management challenges facing heads of senior high schools in the Central Region?
2. What are the sources of financial management challenges of heads of senior high schools in the Central Region?
3. What are the effects of financial management challenges on senior high schools in the Central Region?
4. What support systems are available for heads in managing the school finances of senior high schools in the Central Region?

1.6 Delimitation of the study

In terms of coverage, the research extends only to government-assisted senior high schools in the Central Region of Ghana. The study is also delimited to financial management challenges, sources of financial management challenges, the effect of financial management challenges on school administration, and an effective support system for financial management in the selected schools. Lastly, the study sourced data from heads of senior high schools, the Metropolitan/Municipal/District Education Auditors, and Directors.

1.7 Limitations of the study

This research only examined 63 heads of senior high schools, 4 Directors of Education, and 3 leaders of Zonal Internal Auditors. This sample of the respondents in the Central Region does not cover all heads in the country, hence their financial management challenges are not covered in the study. Equally challenging was getting access to all the MMD Education Directors and leaders of Zonal Internal Auditors for the interview, and that their responses did not cover all such officers in the country. Again, the fact that financial issues are sensitive, some of the heads of SHSs were apprehensive and doubtful in divulging the requisite information.

1.8 Significance of the study

The findings of this study provide empirical evidence on the financial management challenges confronting heads of Government-Assisted Senior High Schools in the Central Region of Ghana. This evidence is significant for policymakers, the Ghana Education Service, and other relevant stakeholders, as it offers a factual basis for reviewing existing financial management policies and funding mechanisms such as government subventions and Free Senior High School allocations. The study highlights policy-related issues, including delays in fund disbursement and inconsistencies in financial directives, thereby informing the formulation of more responsive, timely, and context-specific policies aimed at improving financial accountability and efficient resource utilization in public secondary schools.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on public sector financial management and educational administration. By examining budgeting, accounting, procurement, and internal control challenges within senior high schools, the study extends the application of Public Financial Management and accountability theories to the secondary education context in the Central Region, Ghana. The findings provide empirical support for theoretical assumptions that effective financial controls and managerial competence are essential for institutional effectiveness, thereby enriching the literature on financial management in public educational institutions.

Practically, the study offers valuable insights for heads of schools, auditors, Boards of Governors, and MMD education officials by identifying specific financial management challenges and their effects on school operations. The findings can inform capacity-building and professional development programs aimed at improving the financial literacy, administrative competence, and compliance levels of school heads. Additionally, the study serves as a practical reference for internal and external auditors in strengthening monitoring, supervision, and support systems to enhance transparency and accountability in school financial management.

Methodologically, the study contributes by adopting a mixed-methods approach that integrates quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of financial management challenges in public senior high schools. The combination of survey data and in-depth qualitative insights from heads of schools and education officials enhances the robustness and credibility of the findings. This methodological approach serves as a useful guide for future researchers in educational administration and management who seek to investigate complex administrative and financial issues within the education sector.

The research would also benefit future scholars and students in educational administration and management by serving as a foundation for further studies on financial management practices, challenges, and reforms within the education sector in Ghana and beyond.

1.9 Operational definition of terms

Some technical terms used in the study are defined in this section of Chapter One.

Government Assisted Senior High Schools: Government-Assisted Senior High Schools (GASHSs) in Ghana refer to second-cycle educational institutions that are publicly funded and regulated by the Government of Ghana through the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service (GES), but which may have originated from missions, state, communities, or private initiatives. These schools receive financial, administrative, and professional support from the state, including payment of staff emoluments, supply of teaching and learning materials, and funding for administrative and service expenditures, and are therefore subject to public financial management laws and educational policies. The GASHSs used in the work include Senior High Schools (SHS) and Senior High Technical Schools (SHTS)

Heads of Senior High Schools: They are educational managers and administrators of the secondary institution in Ghana, designated as principal spending officers responsible for the prudent management of public funds allocated to their institutions. They belong to a professional association named Conference of Heads of Assisted Secondary Schools (CHASS).

Senior High Schools (SHSs): SHSs in Ghana are post-basic secondary educational institutions that provide three years of general academic, technical, or vocational education to students who have completed Junior High School (JHS). The study focused on government-assisted senior high schools in the central region.

Heads of Zonal Internal Auditors: In the context of the study, internal auditors are professionals responsible for evaluating and improving the effectiveness of risk management, internal controls, and governance processes within public institutions in Ghana. The internal auditors in the study are the central regional GES Zonal internal audit leaders.

Directors of Education: Directors of Education are senior administrative officers of the Ghana Education Service (GES) appointed by the Government of Ghana to oversee, coordinate, and supervise the administration of pre-university education within defined

geographical jurisdictions, such as regions, metropolitan, municipal, and district education directorates. In the Ghanaian education system, Directors of Education are responsible for policy implementation, supervision of schools, monitoring of teaching and learning, and oversight of administrative and financial activities within their respective jurisdictions. They serve as a critical link between the Ministry of Education/Ghana Education Service headquarters and educational institutions, including Government-Assisted Senior High Schools. They play a supervisory role in ensuring that heads of schools comply with education policies, public financial management regulations, and accountability requirements. They also provide administrative guidance, capacity building, and monitoring support to heads of institutions, particularly in areas such as budgeting, financial reporting, and audit compliance. The Directors of Education in the study are the Metro, Municipal, and District Directors of Education (MMDDE)

Financial Management: Financial management in public educational institutions refers to the systematic process of planning, allocating, utilizing, accounting for, and controlling financial resources in compliance with statutory regulations to ensure efficiency, transparency, and accountability in the delivery of educational services as measured through responses to structured questionnaire items on budgeting, expenditure control, accounting, auditing, financial reporting, etc.

Financial Management Challenges: These refer to the observable and measurable difficulties and constraints school heads face in carrying out financial tasks, which limit the ability of heads to manage school finances effectively at public SHSs. Financial management challenges are the difficulties experienced by heads of Government-Assisted Senior High Schools in performing financial management functions, measured by the frequency and severity of problems reported in areas such as budgeting, fund utilization, record keeping, internal controls, audit compliance, etc.

Sources of Financial Management Challenges: Sources of financial management challenges refer to the institutional, human, policy, and systemic factors that contribute to ineffective financial management in Government-Assisted Senior High Schools, operationalized through respondents' ratings of factors such as delayed government funding, inadequate financial management skills, weak internal control systems, excessive bureaucratic procedures, and policy constraints. These include the internal and external sources,

Effects of Financial Management Challenges: These are the consequences of financial management challenges on the schools and the heads, which compromise the educational environment and the quality of learning outcomes. Thus, the degree to which financial management difficulties influence school operations and educational delivery, as quantitatively measured by the mean scores of respondents' ratings on structured Likert-scale items relating to indicators such as delays in procurement, inadequacy of teaching and learning materials, deterioration of school infrastructure, frequency of audit queries, disruptions in academic program, stress on the heads and reduced staff and student support.

Support Systems: Support systems refer to the institutional and professional assistance available to heads of schools for effective financial management, including training, supervision, monitoring, and technical guidance from the Ghana Education Service, Internal Auditors, non-teaching accounting staff (e.g., bursars), Boards of Governors, training programs, and policies measured through respondents' assessments of availability and effectiveness of such support.

1.10 Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter comprises the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the objectives of the study, the research questions, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, the delimitations of the study, the limitations of the study, operational definitions of terms, and the organization of the study. Chapter two reviews literature on theories underpinning the work, conceptual review, and empirical review.

Chapter three outlines the research methodology and profile of the study area, thus, the target population, the sample size, and sampling technique, the research instrument, and data collection procedures. The data analysis, interpretation, and discussions are contained in chapter four. Chapter five presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study for further research.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses scholarly views and arguments on the financial management challenges facing heads of senior high schools in the context of effective school financial management. An attempt is also made to already research works on the topic to establish gaps in the literature that need to be addressed. The literature covers the following sub-headings: the theoretical framework underpinning this study, conceptual review and framework on financial management and its challenges, and empirical review of works related to the topic.

2.1 Theoretical framework

A theoretical review involves a critical examination of existing theories and models relevant to a research problem, demonstrating how these theories inform, support, or constrain understanding of the phenomenon under study and how the current research contributes to theory (Grant & Booth, 2009; Sekaran & Bougie, 2020). In other words, a theory systematically explains and interprets interrelated variables and propositions in order to predict a phenomenon or behavior of interest within certain conditions and assumptions (Bhattacharjee, 2012). This work hinges on two theories: principles of management theory by Henry Fayol (1949) and the Transaction Cost Theory (TCT) of public financial management by Khan and Hildreth (2004)

2.1.1 Principles of Management Theory

This study is anchored on Henri Fayol's Principles of Management Theory, which provides a foundational framework for understanding management practices in educational institutions. Fayol (1946) identified management as a universal process involving forecasting and planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, and controlling, functions that are central to effective school administration and financial management. These ideas are considered fundamental to management practice across sectors, including education, due to their emphasis on planning,

organization, coordination, and control (Cole & Kelly, 2011). In Government-Assisted Senior High Schools in Ghana, heads of schools serve as the principal accounting officers and are responsible for budgeting, authorization of expenditure, supervision of accounts staff, and enforcement of financial controls. Fayol's top-down management perspective is therefore relevant, as it explains the central role of school heads in financial decision-making and accountability. Financial management challenges such as poor budgeting, weak control systems, and misallocation of funds can be interpreted as deficiencies in one or more of Fayol's managerial functions.

The theory further supports this study by emphasizing the efficient and effective use of resources to achieve organizational goals (Stroh, Northcraft, & Neale, 2002). Applied to senior high schools, this underscores the importance of prudent financial planning and control in ensuring the availability of teaching and learning resources.

Fayol's theory adopts a top-down perspective, viewing management as a responsibility vested primarily in those at the apex of the organizational structure. This is consistent with the financial management structure of Government-Assisted Senior High Schools in Ghana, where the headmaster or headmistress serves as the principal accounting officer, authorizing payments and ensuring compliance with financial regulations. Thus, the theory helps to explain why financial management challenges in schools are often attributed to leadership capacity, decision-making, and control mechanisms at the headship level. The principles of management theory also provide a framework for understanding how management effectiveness is achieved through the judicious use of resources to attain organizational goals efficiently and effectively (Stroh, Northcraft, & Neale, 2002).

However, Fayol's theory has certain limitations in explaining contemporary financial management challenges in public senior high schools. The theory assumes a relatively stable organizational environment and places less emphasis on external factors such as government funding delays, policy inconsistencies, bureaucratic controls, technological changes, and

stakeholder pressures, which significantly affect school financial management in Ghanaian SHSs, thus failing to explain all aspects of financial management challenges in public senior high schools. Additionally, management principles are broad guidelines rather than rigid rules and must be applied flexibly, taking into account human behavior, contextual differences, and changing institutional demands (Achinivu et al., 2017; NCERT, 2015). This study demonstrates how Fayol's classical management principles operate within the contemporary public education system in Ghana, highlighting areas where the theory remains applicable and where contextual adaptations are necessary to address modern financial management challenges in senior high schools.

2.1.2 Transaction Cost Theory (TCT)

Transaction Cost Theory (TCT), as advanced by Khan and Hildreth (2004), in their Transactional Cost Model of Public Financial Management, provides a useful theoretical framework for analyzing financial management challenges in public senior high schools in the Central Region of Ghana. The theory explains how the costs associated with planning, executing, monitoring, and enforcing financial transactions affect efficiency and accountability in public institutions. According to the theory, public institutions seek to minimize these transaction costs to achieve efficiency, transparency, and effective use of resources (Williamson, 1985; North, 1990); thus, where transaction costs are high, financial management systems become inefficient and prone to delays and wastage. In the context of public senior high schools in Ghana, heads operate within a centralized and highly bureaucratic financial management system, which often increases transaction costs and constrains effective financial management. Bureaucratic red tapes characterized by complex approval procedures, rigid budgeting rules, delayed fund disbursement, and stringent procurement processes, significantly raises transaction costs at the school level. These processes delay financial decisions, limit the flexibility of heads to respond to emerging needs, and contribute to inefficiencies in the use of school funds (Pritchett & Woolcock, 2004). In addition, strict procurement regulations increase

monitoring and enforcement costs and may create opportunities for inefficiencies and corrupt practices (de Renzio, 2006).

Specifically, transaction costs in senior high schools manifest through complex approval procedures for budget preparation, fund releases, and expenditure authorization. Schools are often required to seek approval from multiple administrative layers, resulting in delays in financial decision-making. While these procedures are designed to promote accountability, they often lead to delays in acquiring instructional materials, inflated costs, and missed procurement opportunities. In extreme cases, prolonged procurement processes may create incentives for inefficiencies or corrupt practices such as over-invoicing and collusion with suppliers (de Renzio, 2006). Such delays hinder the timely implementation of school programs, restrict the ability of heads to respond to emergencies such as infrastructure breakdowns or sudden increases in student enrolment, and lead to inefficiencies in the utilization of allocated funds (Pritchett & Woolcock, 2004). Transaction Cost Theory helps to explain financial management challenges in senior high schools as systemic and institutional rather than solely the result of individual incompetence or mismanagement. The theory, therefore, supports the argument that many challenges faced by headmasters arise from high transaction costs imposed by centralized controls, limited autonomy, weak information systems, and excessive bureaucratic procedures (Besley & Ghatak, 2005). However, the theory is limited in its ability to fully account for contextual and human factors such as leadership capacity and ethical behavior. This study addresses this limitation by empirically examining how transaction costs embedded in public financial management structures influence the financial management practices of headmasters.

TCT provides a relevant theoretical foundation for understanding how reducing transaction costs through streamlined procedures, timely fund disbursement, improved information systems, and increased autonomy can enhance financial management efficiency and accountability in Ghanaian senior high schools (Andrews, 2013).

2.2 Conceptual Review

A conceptual review involves the identification, clarification, and discussion of key concepts and variables relevant to a study, and explains how these concepts are related to each other (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This research examines concepts such as finance and financing, management, financial management, financial management in public senior schools, financial management challenges, sources of the challenges, effect on the SHSs, and support systems available to the school.

2.2.1 Concepts of finance and financing

Finance broadly refers to the science and system of managing money and other financial resources, encompassing activities such as budgeting, investing, borrowing, saving, and forecasting (Brigham & Houston, 2019). Thus, school finance refers to the management of financial resources within educational institutions, focusing on both income generation and expenditure patterns. It involves the procedural and administrative steps required when planning and implementing projects, programs, or investments within schools (Emiliana et al., 2012). In the context of this study, finance is not viewed merely as a set of practices but as a critical organizational function that ensures financial resources are effectively acquired, allocated, and utilized to achieve institutional objectives, including accountability and efficiency. Financing, by contrast, concerns the methods and sources through which funds are raised to support expenditures or investments. It includes internal sources, such as retained earnings, and external sources, including government allocations, grants, loans, and other forms of support (Gitman, 2015). For this research, financing is explained as the process by which senior high schools secure the necessary resources to sustain operations and implement programs effectively. The Combined concept of finance and financing provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how institutions acquire, distribute, and utilize financial resources to ensure sustainability and performance. In the context of public senior high schools in the Central Region of Ghana, these concepts are essential for analyzing how

headmasters manage public funds, make strategic financial decisions, and prioritize resource allocation within the constraints of bureaucratic systems and regulatory requirements. Effective school financing requires identifying mechanisms that ensure funds reach their intended targets, particularly students and school programs, while minimizing inefficiencies, delays, and risks of mismanagement. In Ghanaian senior high schools, headmasters face challenges such as delayed disbursement of government funds, rigid budgeting procedures, and complex procurement regulations. Understanding school finance in this way allows this study to examine how these systemic and administrative challenges affect the ability of heads to manage resources efficiently and ensure accountability, ultimately shaping educational outcomes.

2.2.2 Concept of Management

Management is a process of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling the activities of an organization to ensure the effective and efficient use of human and material resources in achieving organizational objectives (Treworth & Newport, as cited in Kusi, 2017). This definition emphasizes that management is not a single act but a sequential and continuous process of coordinating resources toward goal attainment. Management involves a series of interrelated activities aimed at harmonizing human and material resources to achieve institutional goals. Thus, management is getting things done effectively and efficiently through other people, highlighting the critical role of human collaboration in utilizing resources optimally to meet organizational objectives (Kusi, 2017; Kanter, 2017). Steiss (2019) complements this view by framing management as the strategic utilization of resources through planning, organizing, leading, and controlling to achieve specific goals. From these perspectives, it depicts that management is a dynamic and scientific process, consisting of ongoing activities and tasks designed to coordinate resources systematically. Management in this sense is both goal-oriented and resource-focused, requiring continuous assessment of progress and provision of guidance to ensure resources, both human and material, are efficiently deployed and effectively accounted for (Emiliana et al., 2012). With this study,

management is interpreted as the practical and systematic coordination of financial and human resources by headmasters to achieve educational objectives. This conceptualization allows the researcher to examine how management processes influence the efficient use, allocation, and monitoring of school funds, highlighting both the strategic and operational aspects of financial administration in public schools.

2.2.3 Concept of financial management

Financial management is a critical function that ensures the effective planning, organization, direction, and control of an institution's financial resources. Financial management, according to Barr and McClellan (2018), involves not only the acquisition and utilization of funds but also the protection of equity capital from various sources of risk. This highlights the need for administrators to apply general management principles specifically to financial resources to maintain institutional stability and sustainability (Fung, 2015). Titman, Keown, and Martin (2011) emphasize that financial management requires careful and informed planning to ensure positive cash flows, which underscores the importance of risk identification and mitigation as part of the management process. Financial management is not simply a technical function but a strategic activity that directly influences an institution's capacity to achieve its goals. The ultimate objective, as noted by these scholars, is to maximize the value of resources and ensure that financial decisions align with organizational priorities. Financial management can therefore be described as the lifeblood of institutions, as the efficiency of all operational activities depends on the availability and proper utilization of funds (Francisco, 2017). It encompasses a broad range of activities, including financial planning and budgeting, financial accounting, financial analysis, and decision-making, as well as the continuous monitoring and control of budgets. These activities collectively ensure that financial resources are allocated appropriately, risks are managed, and institutional objectives are met.

Financial management takes on a practical dimension with the heads responsible for not only safeguarding public funds but also ensuring that these resources are deployed efficiently to

support teaching, learning, and infrastructural development (Emiliana et al., 2012). This emphasizes the researcher's view that effective financial management is both a strategic and operational necessity, requiring competence, planning, and a proactive approach to risk and resource allocation.

2.2.4 Financial Management of Public Secondary Schools

Financial management in public secondary schools encompasses key functions such as budgeting, accounting, procurement, auditing, and financial reporting, which are often carried out within the constraints of government regulations and limited financial resources (Ngidi & Dorasamy, 2013). Financial management in public secondary schools is not only a technical accounting function but also a strategic leadership responsibility. Although accountants handle routine financial transactions, the school head, as the accounting officer, bears ultimate responsibility for the prudent management of school funds. In Ghana, school heads are accountable to the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service through performance agreements and statutory reporting requirements (MoE, 2020). They are also responsible to School Boards and Parent-Teacher Associations for the transparent use of public funds (GES, 2012; Pre-Tertiary Education Act, 2020; Prempeh, 2019) and are therefore responsible for ensuring that financial resources are managed efficiently and in accordance with established regulations. The head serves as the secretary to the School Board of Governors and is responsible for presenting the school's budget, financial statements, and audit reports for approval (Ghana Education Service, 2012; Pre-Tertiary Education Act, 2020). Furthermore, the head's financial management includes the mobilization of alternative sources of funding and ensuring that such resources contribute meaningfully to the attainment of school objectives and is accountable to the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) for the management of school funds, as PTA contributions are classified as public monies and must be administered with transparency and in accordance with government guidelines (Article 176 of the 1992 Constitution; Prempeh, 2019) which enhance transparency and accountability in the use of

public funds aligned with institutional goals, thereby supporting the achievement of academic excellence (Bradley, 2009, as cited in Espinosa, 2018; Hunjra, 2010; Thenga, 2012). This multi-layered accountability structure places the school head at the centre of financial decision-making and oversight within public secondary schools.

Financial management in public secondary schools involves the strategic planning and oversight of financial resources to ensure accountability, transparency, and the achievement of educational objectives. It encompasses budgeting, accounting, procurement, auditing, and financial reporting, often within a framework of governmental regulations and limited resources (Ngidi & Dorasamy, 2013). Financial management in public secondary schools involves the strategic planning and oversight of financial resources to ensure accountability, transparency, and the achievement of educational objectives. Management of funds in schools remains the indispensable duty of the accountant and accounting staff, but it is the obligation of the head to make sure that resources are used well. The head is recognized as an accounting officer. He or she is therefore directly accountable to the Minister of Education and Ghana Education Service through signed performance agreements and mandated reporting on key indicators (MoE, 2020) and to the Board of Directors, as the head acts as secretary and presenter of the school's budget and audit reports (GES, 2012; Pre-Tertiary Education Act, 2020). Additionally, the school head is responsible to the PTA for the use of school funds, since PTA dues are classified as public monies and must be managed with transparency and government approval (Article 176, 1992 Constitution; Prempeh, 2019). Hence, the school plans the budgetary requisites which shall cover budgeting, setting objectives, managing human resources, time setting, purchasing of learning resources, and the relevant costing. All these are overseen by the financial manager, who is the head (Hunjra, 2010). Furthermore, part of financial management is the sourcing of alternative funds and ensuring that it helps in the attainment of the goals of the organization. Bradley (2009), as cited by Espinosa (2018), emphasized that effective and efficient financial is manifested in the proper documentation of

financial reports. If principals practice efficient financial management, there is a transparent and accountable implementation of programs to achieve academic excellence (Thenga, 2012). Principals (head) plan, control, and monitor the school finances throughout financial management through budgeting, accounting, and monitoring effective implementation of the school budget (Achinivu, et al, 2010).

2.2.5 Challenges of Financial Management in Public Senior High Schools

Financial management in public senior high schools is a complex process involving multiple actors with varying roles and interests, yet it is often not examined from a holistic perspective (Emiliana et al., 2012). This fragmented approach contributes to persistent challenges in planning, coordination, and accountability within school financial systems. School heads play a central role in financial management as both instructional leaders and accounting officers. As immediate planners and spending authorities, they are expected to manage scarce financial resources effectively and to mobilize additional funding to support educational objectives. However, the increasing financial responsibilities assigned to school heads frequently exceed their managerial training and administrative capacity, thereby creating significant financial management challenges. Although school heads are trained primarily as educationists, the dual role of school heads as educationists and financial managers further compounds these challenges. The administrative and managerial functions of school heads are inseparable and interdependent, with weaknesses in financial management negatively affecting overall school administration (Ghorman, 2010; Eisa-Donkoh, 2019). Inadequacies in financial management systems, accounting procedures, documentation, and reporting constitute financial indiscipline and expose school heads to accountability challenges. Indeed, financial management challenges in public senior high schools stem largely from systemic and capacity-related constraints rather than individual failure. Understanding these challenges conceptually provides a foundation for examining how institutional structures and managerial capacity influence financial management effectiveness among heads of public senior high schools.

Financial management challenges may be grouped into budgeting, procurement, accounting, professional competency, auditing and audit process, policy, and information systems.

2.2.5.1 Budgetary challenges

Budgeting is a core element that provides a framework for planning, allocating, and controlling the use of limited financial resources in financial management in public senior high schools. The budgeting process is continuous and involves needs assessment, priority setting, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Effective budgeting is forward-looking and should be aligned with the school's strategic objectives and future vision (Clark, 2007; du Preez et al., 2003). In principle, school budgets are prepared to ensure efficient allocation of public resources, promote value for money, and enhance transparency and accountability in financial operations. Budgeting also supports systematic planning by translating educational goals into financial terms, and further facilitates managerial control by authorizing expenditure, motivating middle-level management, and enabling continuous monitoring and evaluation of financial performance (Kruger, 2005; Neto, 2009). However, these objectives are often not fully realized in practice. Studies have shown that many public senior high schools lack effective program-based planning and budgeting systems that link expenditure to educational outcomes. Irungu (2012) found that school heads rarely assess whether budgetary decisions achieve intended results, resulting in weak financial control and accountability. Consequently, budgeting in many schools becomes a procedural requirement rather than a strategic management tool, contributing to persistent financial management challenges. Such budgetary weaknesses manifest in poor prioritization of expenditures, inflexible budget structures, and limited responsiveness to emerging needs. These challenges significantly undermine the effective management of school finances and reinforce inefficiencies in the use of public funds.

2.2.5.2 Procurement Challenges

In Ghana, all procurement activities in public institutions, including senior high schools, are regulated by the Public Procurement Act, 2003 (Act 663). The Act provides the legal

framework within which public funds must be expended and seeks to promote fairness, transparency, and competition in public procurement processes. Gorman (2010) further emphasizes that effective procurement involves acquiring the right goods and services at the right price, in the right quantity, at the right time, and from the right source to meet organizational needs. The importance of procurement regulation has been widely recognized globally, particularly since the 1990s, when many countries introduced procurement laws to improve public financial management systems (Arrow et al., 2003; Macdonald, 2008). Within the Ghanaian senior high school context, Act 663 grants school heads limited authority to undertake procurement within approved thresholds, using methods such as requests for quotations for low-value items and competitive tendering for higher-value procurements through established school procurement committees. Despite the existence of these regulatory structures, rigid procurement procedures, limited technical capacity, and bureaucratic delays often hinder the timely acquisition of essential teaching and learning materials. Weak implementation of procurement regulations may also lead to non-compliance, habitual sole sourcing, and poor documentation. These challenges are exacerbated by the complexity of procurement structures, which require effective coordination among tender, evaluation, and disposal committees (Republic of Kenya, 2007). The Auditor-General's Report (2021) identifies procurement and stores irregularities as significant managerial weaknesses in secondary schools. Although public procurement laws are intended to promote efficiency and accountability, challenges related to bureaucratic rigidity, weak compliance, and capacity constraints continue to undermine effective financial management in public senior high schools. Addressing these procurement-related challenges is therefore essential to improving overall financial management practices in Ghanaian public senior high schools.

2.2.5.3 Accounting challenges

Accounting involves recording, controlling, and reporting of financial transactions. The school head plays a critical supervisory role in accounting activities, particularly in authorizing

expenditures and ensuring compliance with financial regulations. Effective accounting practices are essential for institutional performance and the achievement of educational objectives (Orlesky, 1984). In public senior high schools, financial reporting depends largely on accounting outputs such as annual reports and financial statements, which provide information on expenditure patterns and budget performance. These reports are expected to conform to prescribed public sector accounting standards and reporting formats (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). However, the limited technical capacity of accounting staff and delays in the preparation of financial reports often pose a challenge. Management decisions in schools rely on accounting information generated through accounting information systems. Where these systems are weak or poorly managed, the accuracy and timeliness of financial information are compromised, thereby undermining transparency and accountability, which, according to Means (2015), contribute significantly to broader financial management problems in public senior high schools. And this reflects on structural and capacity constraints within the school's financial management system. Addressing these challenges requires strengthening accounting systems, improving staff competence, and enhancing the oversight role of school heads to ensure accurate and timely financial reporting (Ngidi & Dorasamy, 2013).

2.2.5.4 Auditing and Auditing Process Challenges

Auditing is a key financial control mechanism within the Ghana Education Service (GES), designed to promote accountability, transparency, and compliance in the management of public education funds. By law, auditing in GES is carried out through the Internal Audit Unit and the External Audit Service, in accordance with the Internal Audit Agency Act, 2003 (Act 658) and the Public Financial Management Act, 2016 (Act 921). Internal Auditors are mandated to assess internal control systems, ensure compliance with financial regulations, detect irregularities, and provide advisory support to school heads and education managers (Ghana Audit Service, 2020; Osei & Boateng, 2015). Despite this mandate, the effectiveness of auditing in public senior high schools is constrained by several challenges. A major challenge

is the lack of operational and reporting independence of internal audit units, as auditors often report to the same management structures they are required to audit. This arrangement compromises objectivity and weakens the credibility of audit findings (Agyemang & Osei, 2016; Mihret & Yismaw, 2007). Additionally, inadequate logistical and financial resources limit the capacity of internal auditors to conduct regular school-level audits and follow up on audit recommendations, particularly in remote areas (Osei & Boateng, 2015). The effectiveness of the audit function is further undermined by a shortage of professionally qualified audit personnel and limited training in modern auditing techniques, including risk-based and digital auditing approaches (Adu-Gyamfi & Baah-Kumi, 2019; Arena & Azzone, 2009). Another persistent challenge relates to poor cooperation between auditors and school heads, often resulting from role misunderstandings and perceptions of auditors as punitive rather than supportive. This leads to delays in accessing financial records and resistance to audit processes (Agyemang & Osei, 2016). Moreover, the weak implementation of audit recommendations remains a systemic problem. Although audit reports frequently highlight financial irregularities in public institutions, follow-up actions are often inadequate, resulting in repeated infractions and weak accountability (Asare, 2021; Ghana Audit Service, 2022). These challenges indicate that while auditing frameworks exist within GES, their impact on improving financial management in public senior high schools is limited by institutional, capacity, and enforcement weaknesses. Strengthening auditor independence, resourcing, professional capacity, and commitment to implementing audit recommendations is therefore essential for enhancing financial accountability in Ghanaian public senior high schools.

2.2.5.5 Professional competence challenges

Effective financial management requires school heads to possess competencies in resource mobilization, particularly the ability to identify and diversify sources of school funding beyond government subventions by developing Internally Generated Funds (IGF) through income-generating activities and by engaging stakeholders such as Parent–Teacher Associations, non-

governmental organizations, and development partners such as USAID and UNESCO, as alternative sources of funding for school development (Chonjo, 2018; Paul, 2018; Amos & Koda, 2018; Bush & Glover, 2014). Consequently, the financial management skills of heads are fundamental to securing and sustaining adequate financial resources for effective curriculum implementation (Okumbe, 2007). However, studies indicate that many heads lack adequate skills in financial planning and resource mobilization, resulting in overdependence on government funding and limited capacity to provide sufficient teaching and learning materials (Galabawa, 2015; Kuboja, 2019). Inadequate professional training in financial management further exacerbates these challenges. Research shows that school heads who lack knowledge in budgeting, accounting, and auditing often struggle to comply with financial regulations, maintain accurate financial records, and exercise effective financial control (Atieno & Simatwa, 2012; Clarke, 2008; Lumby & Foskett, 2016). Auditing skills are particularly critical, as they enable heads to detect financial irregularities, prevent fraud, and effectively supervise financial officers within the school system (Lee & Azham, 2008). Inadequate professional training in financial management further compounds these challenges. Although some countries have introduced structured training programs for secondary school heads, many education systems continue to experience stagnation in the professional development of school leaders despite longstanding calls for capacity building (Ajayi, 1987). Studies have consistently shown that school heads who lack knowledge and skills in financial management, budgeting, accounting, and auditing often struggle to comply with financial regulations and to maintain accurate and reliable financial records (Atieno & Simatwa, 2012; Clarke, 2008; Edmund & Lyamtane, 2018; Magak, 2013; Nyakanyanga, 2019). These challenges highlight systemic gaps in leadership preparation and continuous professional development for school heads. Understanding these competence-related challenges, therefore, provides a critical basis for examining financial management difficulties among heads of public senior high schools in the Central Region of Ghana.

2.2.5.6 Financial policy challenges

Financial management in public senior high schools is guided by a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework designed to ensure accountability, transparency, and proper use of public resources. Key provisions include the Public Financial Management Act, 2016 (Act 921), Public Financial Management Regulations, 2019 (L.I. 2378), Audit Service Act, 2000 (Act 584), Public Procurement Act, 2003 (Act 633) and its Amendment, 2016 (Act 914), Financial and Accounting Instructions (FAI) issued by the Ghana Education Service (GES) for senior high schools, as well as the Income Tax Act, 2015 (Act 896) and Value Added Tax Act, 2013 (Act 870), among other relevant legislations. These regulations collectively provide detailed guidelines for budgeting, accounting, procurement, auditing, and reporting of public funds within schools (MoE, 2020; GES, 2019). The complexity and sometimes cumbersome nature of these regulations can make strict adherence difficult, particularly for heads with limited training or experience in financial management (Prempeh, 2019). Additionally, balancing regulatory compliance with the need for timely financial decisions often creates tension, especially in contexts where funds are delayed, alternative resources are needed, or urgent school projects must be executed (Thenga, 2012). These challenges highlight the intersection between institutional regulations and practical constraints at the school level. While the legal frameworks are intended to promote accountability and transparency, they can inadvertently contribute to bureaucratic bottlenecks, increased administrative workload, and delays in financial decision-making. Consequently, school heads must navigate the dual pressures of regulatory compliance and operational efficiency, which can impact their ability to manage school funds effectively. Understanding these challenges is critical for identifying areas where financial management systems can be improved and where capacity-building interventions for school heads are necessary.

2.2.5.7 Financial Management Information Systems

Financial Management Information Systems (FMIS) play a critical role in enhancing efficiency, transparency, and accountability in the management of public funds. The primary objective of financial management in public institutions is to minimize waste, prevent fraud and irregularities, and ensure prudent use of scarce financial resources in order to reduce costs and improve service delivery (Simon et al., 2012). In public senior high schools, effective FMIS is essential for accurate budgeting, timely financial reporting, monitoring expenditures, and supporting informed decision-making by school heads.

Empirical evidence suggests that the effectiveness of financial management systems is largely dependent on institutional capacity and system robustness. Yaseen and Baklouti (2024) highlighted that internal technical expertise, cybersecurity measures, and system resilience are crucial for safeguarding electronic accounting systems and ensuring the reliability of financial reports. While such findings demonstrate the potential of FMIS to strengthen financial management, their application in public institutions within low-income countries remains constrained by systemic weaknesses.

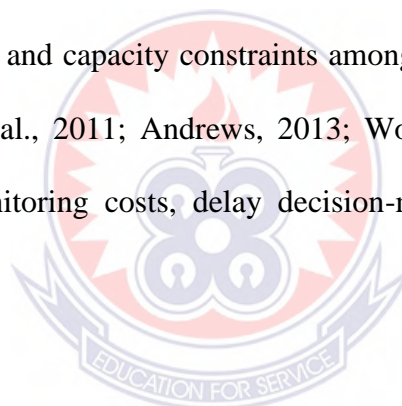
In many developing country contexts, including Ghana, public institutions are often characterized by poorly designed financial management systems that lack essential functionalities (Zeng et al., 2010). These systems frequently do not support automated bank reconciliation, audit trails, comprehensive system documentation, data validation checks, and effective internal control mechanisms (Diamond & Khemani, 2006). The absence of these critical features limits the ability of school heads to track financial transactions accurately, detect irregularities, and ensure compliance with financial regulations.

Weak FMIS are further associated with slow processing, limited reporting capacity, and poor access security controls, all of which undermine financial management performance and accountability (Zeng et al., 2010; Dener, Watkins, & Dorotinsky, 2011; Yaokumah, 2020). In the context of public senior high schools, these challenges may result in delayed financial

reports, weak oversight of expenditures, and poor financial decision-making. suggests that inadequacies in financial management information systems constitute a significant challenge to effective financial management in public senior high schools.

2.2.6 Sources of financial management challenges

Sources of financial management challenges refer to the institutional, administrative, technical, and human-related factors that hinder the effective planning, utilization, control, and accountability of financial resources within an organization. These sources originate from both internal structures and external systems and collectively affect the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of financial management practices. In public sector institutions, common sources of financial management challenges include weak financial management information systems, bureaucratic procedures, delayed release of funds, inadequate internal controls, limited managerial autonomy, and capacity constraints among financial managers (Diamond & Khemani, 2006; Dener et al., 2011; Andrews, 2013; World Bank, 2018). Such factors increase transaction and monitoring costs, delay decision-making, and weaken oversight mechanisms.



2.2.6.1 Internal Sources

These are factors originating within the organization, such as limited financial literacy of managers, weak internal control systems, inadequate record-keeping, and poor budgeting practices that hinder the effective management of funds. In the context of schools, these may include the incompetence of administrative staff, miscommunication between departments, and the absence of standard financial procedures (Mensah & Nyarko, 2022; Agyeman, 2020). These internal deficiencies often lead to financial irregularities, inefficient resource use, and audit infractions (Ghana Audit Service, 2020).

2.2.6.1.1 The heads and accounting staff's financial incompetence

Oftentimes, heads have inadequate knowledge about accounting policies and accounting systems (Ghorman & Amakyi, 2013). Some heads also fail to demonstrate a professional code of conduct with high ethical standards by being honest and trustworthy in financial management to ensure quality education provision in secondary schools (Onesmo et al, 2021). According to Tayid and Hussen (2005), the struggle of getting qualified staff is one of the major challenges. They asserted that many institutions do not have the requisite trained staff that really understands the financial processes and compliance, which tends to impede the financial management process. The ability to use budgeting data poses a challenge in the preparation of a financial budget. This is as a result of the many units and departments in the institutions which must be involved, including all heads and executive officers, of which some of these entities are not accounting inclined and do not understand some financial management practices, systems, and compliances. On the contrary, it requires complete knowledge of the legal framework which governs the specific project, so the Head is in a position to assess correctly what is on offer and delivered in each case. In such cases, specialized knowledge of Operational Research or the use of a computerized Decision Support System is required (Siskos, 2008). However, such knowledge is typically not available to educational management staff, as they are usually drawn from the ranks of former teaching personnel. It is therefore not difficult to understand that, during the decision-making process and the general management of school projects, a Head may fall into misdemeanours due to a lack of knowledge and/or a weak moral foundation.

2.2.6.1.2 Inadequate Financial Management Knowledge of the Board of Governors

The governing council of SHS is the Board of Governors (BOG). Pre-tertiary Education Act (2020, Act 1049, Section 37) establishes Boards of Governors for all public senior high schools. With reference to the Act, Boards must manage schools in line with regulations by the Ghana Education Service (GES) and the Minister for Education. Boards are expected to approve

school budgets, hold and manage school property, review and discuss school financial/audit reports, and assist but not override the headmaster's authority. Boards are mandated to review internal audit reports and external auditor findings and to ensure robust internal control systems for monies allocated to schools. In the context of financial management challenges, Boards of Governors are pivotal in ensuring strong internal controls, bridging resource gaps, supporting heads in compliance and accountability (Ministry of Education, 2020; National Schools Inspectorate Authority (NaSIA), 2021). Dwuma et al (2020) found that BOD was not up to the task. Their inadequate knowledge of fundamental principles of financial management makes them fail in their proper supervisory role as financial advisors to the head. Nevertheless, it was observed that the board is efficient in managing human resources and its related activities. Chruy & Tiep (2017) revealed that many school board members do not understand the financial reports presented to them, which makes them poorly informed or delayed decisions.

2.2.6.1.3 Weak accounting control mechanisms

Research done by Mobegi, Ondigi, and Simatwa (2012) and cited by Magak (2013) established that weak accounting control mechanisms were major factors contributing to financial mismanagement and misappropriation in schools. Bursars and accounts clerks were unqualified and so unable to prepare books of accounts. Some head teachers were not in a position of identifying wrong entries and anomalies in financial records if done by the bursars/account clerks. It was revealed that due to the incompetence of the head teachers and bursars, head teachers took books of accounts to pseudo-accountants to update them to fit their interests.

2.2.7.1 Internal Control System

Internal control systems are critical mechanisms within organizations, including public secondary schools, designed to safeguard assets and ensure the reliability of financial reporting. According to Sulaiman, Siraj, and Mohamed (2007), an internal control system comprises policies and procedures implemented to protect organizational resources and enhance the

reliability of financial information. Effective internal control requires that managers and school heads ensure financial resources are utilized responsibly, thereby building trust among donors, contributors, and stakeholders. The purpose of internal controls extends beyond safeguarding assets; it also ensures efficiency and effectiveness of organizational activities, compliance with applicable laws and regulations, and the timely preparation of financial reports (Jokipii, 2009). In the context of schools, financial reports prepared by accountants using accounting information systems serve as tools for monitoring expenditures, performance against budgets, and overall resource utilization (Kaguri, Charles, & Kubaison, 2014). These reports enable school heads to make informed decisions and maintain accountability in financial management. Effective financial control is a continuous process that involves setting objectives, measuring actual performance, comparing it against standards, and taking corrective action when necessary (Boddy, 2011). In this regard, controlling is closely linked to planning, as it ensures that school activities and financial operations are aligned with established objectives. Additionally, financial control encompasses several key elements, including authorization of transactions, segregation of duties, record-keeping, safeguarding of assets, and reconciliation of accounts (Jajo, 2005; Paisley, 1992). The researcher emphasizes that these elements are context-dependent but essential for the survival and effective functioning of educational institutions. Practical strategies for internal control in schools include clearly defined procedures and responsibilities for financial management. Rosalind and Downes (2004) argue that school heads should separate duties among staff, delegate procurement authorization appropriately, and supervise compliance to prevent fraud. Weak internal control mechanisms have been identified as significant contributors to financial mismanagement in educational institutions (Mobegi, Ondigi, & Simatwa, 2012). Supporting this, the Auditor-General's Report (2021) noted that while internal control procedures in Ghanaian schools were generally satisfactory, lapses and irregularities occurred primarily due to non-adherence to established procedures. Implementing effective and efficient internal control systems in senior high

schools is central to reducing loopholes that facilitate financial mismanagement. Proper internal controls enhance accountability, transparency, and efficiency in the use of public and donor funds, thereby strengthening overall school financial management. Consequently, internal control is not merely a technical function but a strategic tool for promoting good governance and financial integrity in public secondary schools.

2.2.7.2 External sources

External sources of financial management challenges refer to financial difficulties that arise outside the direct control of the institution's internal management. These include factors such as delayed government subsidies, inconsistent policy implementation, economic instability, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and political interference. Such external pressures often constrain the ability of school heads to execute budgets efficiently, comply with financial regulations, or plan long-term (Asiedu, 2021).

2.2.7.2.1 Delay and insufficient release of funds

Among the most common external financial management challenges facing senior high schools in Ghana are delays in the release of government subventions and the inadequacy of allocated funds. These challenges originate from bureaucratic inefficiencies, late budget approvals, and fiscal constraints at the national level. Heads of schools often report receiving funds long after the academic year has begun, forcing them to operate on credit or suspend key administrative and academic activities (Asiedu, 2021). In many cases, even when funds are eventually released, they are insufficient, far below the estimated budget, to meet the operational demands of the school, especially in institutions with growing student populations. These funding delays and limitations disrupt procurement, affect the timely payment of service providers, and hinder effective financial planning. These situations highlight the broader systemic issues within public financial management that limit the autonomy and effectiveness of school administrators.

2.2.7.2.2 Government financial policy on education

Government financial policies play a crucial role in shaping the delivery, quality, and accessibility of education. In developing countries, where resources are often scarce, such policies determine how funds are allocated, distributed, and utilized across educational levels and regions (Boakye & Ampofo, 2016). Public financial policies affect not only the overall funding for education but also the efficiency and equity of spending. For instance, policies that promote decentralization of education financing can enhance local accountability and responsiveness but may also lead to disparities in resource distribution if not well regulated (World Bank, 2018). In Ghana, the introduction of financial policies such as the Free Senior High School (Free SHS) policy and the Capitation Grant has significantly impacted access to education. While these initiatives have increased enrollment, they have also placed pressure on infrastructure and learning resources due to limited budgetary allocations (Ankomah & Osei, 2020). Additionally, delays in the disbursement of government funds to schools often hinder the timely execution of academic and administrative programs (Ampofo, 2019). Financial policies also influence teacher recruitment, remuneration, and training, all of which directly affect educational quality (UNESCO, 2021). Studies emphasize that for financial policies to yield the desired impact, they must be adequately funded, timely implemented, and effectively monitored (Osei & Amponsah, 2017).

2.2.8 Effect of financial management challenges

The effects of financial management challenges in education are the negative consequences that arise when financial resources are poorly planned, inadequately allocated, mismanaged, or delayed, thereby affecting the smooth operation and quality of educational service delivery (Ayeni & Akinfolarin, 2014). School image is a critical institutional asset that influences stakeholder perceptions, resource support, and overall educational effectiveness. Recent studies emphasize that a positive institutional image strengthens stakeholder confidence

and engagement, which in turn enhances trust, reputation, and resource flows to schools (Nguyen et al., 2023). In educational settings, reputation and image are closely linked to how stakeholders such as parents, alumni, staff, and local communities perceive the quality, accountability, and trustworthiness of school leaders and governance structures. When schools demonstrate sound financial stewardship, transparent reporting, and compliance with regulatory requirements, their reputation among key stakeholders is reinforced, encouraging increased support and participation. Conversely, financial management challenges such as irregular accounting, weak controls, or public disclosure of mismanagement can seriously damage a school's public image. In many developing country contexts, schools that appear in Auditor-General reports or are summoned before PAC for financial irregularity often experience reputational loss, diminished trust, and withdrawal of stakeholder engagement.

2.2.8.1 Effect on teaching and learning resources

Financial resources allocated to public senior high schools are intended primarily to support the acquisition of textbooks, laboratory equipment, instructional materials, and other teaching aids essential for quality teaching and learning. The Government of Ghana (GoG) invests significant funds in formal education to ensure equitable access and enhance academic outcomes. The effective utilization of these resources is critical to achieving the educational objectives of schools. Mismanagement or improper use of allocated funds can directly impede the academic progress of students, leading to poor learning outcomes. Furthermore, financial accountability is closely tied to continued funding. Schools that fail to account properly for the use of funds risk losing subsequent government grants, which further constrains their capacity to provide adequate teaching and learning materials (Ngidi & Dorasamy, 2013). It is therefore indispensable for ensuring that financial resources translate into tangible improvements in teaching and learning (Hunjra, 2010; Prempeh, 2019).

2.2.8.2 Effect on Feeding

Feeding of students at SHS forms a major component of financial resource management, especially in the boarding facility. One of the six (6) key features of the Free SHS' policy is that Government of Ghana (GoG) Feeding costs for all admitted as boarding students at the SHS will be paid for by the GoG. Lunch would be provided for day students (those not admitted as boarding students) by the GoG (Adarkwah, 2021). This suggests that government spending on food for academic purposes is substantial. The head of SHS has the responsibility to supervise store keeper, as well as the domestic bursar, for the utilization of these resources. Inadequate funds or untimely release of funds to schools for feeding affect quality as well as the quantity and availability of food at the school. Sometimes, this results in riots by the student body, and properties are destroyed.

2.2.8.3 Effect on school infrastructure

School infrastructure refers to the physical and organizational assets owned by an institution, including immovable assets such as land and buildings, as well as movable assets like vehicles, furniture, equipment, machinery, and tools (Ghorman & Amakyi, 2013). In the context of public secondary schools, the head of the institution functions as the property manager, responsible for initiating procurement, negotiating leases, reviewing rent, overseeing physical maintenance, and ensuring compliance with any lease covenants. Prudent management of financial resources enables timely maintenance, acquisition, and replacement of infrastructure, ensuring that facilities remain functional and conducive to teaching and learning. Conversely, financial management challenges such as delays in fund disbursement, inadequate budgeting, and poor monitoring of expenditures directly constrain the availability, upkeep, and expansion of school infrastructure. In essence, when school heads fail to manage resources effectively due to systemic, institutional, or bureaucratic challenges, the maintenance and development of essential infrastructure are compromised.

2.2.8.4 The effect of financial management challenges on heads of schools

Stress among heads of educational institutions has become a growing concern globally, especially in developing countries where school leaders are often burdened with increasing administrative, financial, and academic responsibilities. School heads are expected to manage limited resources, meet performance targets, and comply with complex government policies, all of which contribute to occupational stress (Kyriacou, 2001). In Ghana, heads of public secondary schools are often stressed out due to financial constraints, delayed release of government funds, lack of autonomy in decision-making, and pressure to maintain academic performance (Boakye & Osei, 2019). The stress experienced by school heads can negatively impact their job satisfaction, decision-making capacity, leadership effectiveness, and their general health. It may also lead to burnout, absenteeism, and in some cases, early retirement or resignation (Mensah & Adu, 2020). Studies have shown that financial management responsibilities are a major source of stress for school heads, especially when they lack adequate training in budgeting, accounting, and procurement processes (Amponsah & Owusu, 2018). In such contexts, the pressure to comply with public financial management regulation can further intensify emotional and psychological stress. Furthermore, excessive stress among school leaders may affect school performance, staff morale, and student outcomes. When school heads are overwhelmed, they are less likely to provide effective instructional leadership or maintain a positive school climate

2.2.9 Support system available to the school

Support systems available to the school refer to the formal and informal structures, mechanisms, and resources that assist school administration, particularly heads of institutions, in managing academic, administrative, and financial responsibilities. These include internal support units such as finance officers, bursars, internal auditors, school management committees, and Boards of Governors, as well as external bodies like District Education

Directorates, Audit agencies, Ghana Education Service (GES), development partners, and NGOs. According to Osei-Owusu (2020), such systems are critical for enhancing decision-making, ensuring compliance with regulations, and promoting accountability and transparency in school operations.

2.2.9.1 Training and Professional Development for heads on financial administration

The increasing complexity of school financial operations and accountability requirements underscores the need for school heads, as financial administrators, to possess adequate knowledge and skills in financial management, thus making training and professional development in financial administration essential for enhancing the financial competence of school heads. Inadequate training in financial management contributes to inefficiencies and challenges in school resource utilisation, highlighting the need for targeted capacity building for school leaders (Canares & Estremera, 2025; Mgandi, Mathuva, and Egondi, 2017). Shahanga et al. (2026) affirmed that gaps in financial management skills among school heads negatively affect the quality of education because leaders struggle with budgeting, financial reporting, and internal controls. Therefore, continuous and structured professional development should be institutionalized by education authorities such as the Ghana Education Service to ensure that school heads remain current with financial best practices. Such training should include practical modules on budgeting, financial reporting, auditing, and the use of financial management tools to improve transparency and accountability. When school heads are well trained, they are better positioned to lead effective financial processes that align with institutional goals and regulatory requirements (Canares & Estremera, 2025; Shahanga et al., 2026).

2.2.9.2 Decentralization of Financial Management Decision Making

Decentralization in school financial management refers to the delegation of authority from central authorities to individual schools, allowing local stakeholders to participate in planning,

budgeting, and resource allocation (Ostman, 2009). Effective financial control systems shape how functions and resources are managed, as well as the interactions between internal and external stakeholders. School-based management, which involves boards, staff, and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), enhances decentralized decision-making and enables school heads to respond to the specific needs of students and staff, who are central to school development (UNESCO, 2013; Osorio, Fasih, & Patrinos, 2009; Bandur, 2011). Decentralization promotes ownership, transparency, and accountability in the use of school funds. It allows timely, context-specific financial decisions, enabling efficient planning and implementation of school projects while mitigating bureaucratic delays. Thus, effective involvement of local stakeholders in financial management is critical for improving resource utilization, enhancing educational quality, and strengthening institutional performance in public senior high schools.

2.2.9.3 Board of Directors supervision

The governance and financial oversight of public senior high schools in Ghana are institutionally anchored in the Pre-Tertiary Education Act, 2020 (Act 1049), which mandates the establishment of Boards of Governors for all public senior high schools. Section 37 of the Act assigns Boards the responsibility to manage schools in accordance with policies and regulations issued by the Ghana Education Service (GES) and the Minister for Education. Within this governance framework, Boards play a critical supervisory role in ensuring prudent financial management and accountability at the school level. Boards are mandated to review internal audit reports and external audit findings and to ensure the existence and effective functioning of internal control systems for public funds allocated to schools (Dwuma et al., 2020). Through these functions, Boards serve as a critical accountability mechanism, enhancing transparency and reducing the risk of financial mismanagement. Boards of Governors are expected to support school heads in complying with financial regulations and reporting requirements, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of school budgets to ensure

effective and transparent use of financial resources in educational institutions (Mestry, 2013), as well as to facilitate access to resources where funding constraints exist. In this regard, effective Board supervision can help bridge resource gaps and strengthen compliance and accountability systems within schools (Ministry of Education (MoE), 2020; National Schools Inspectorate Authority (NaSIA), 2021). However, the effectiveness of Board oversight largely depends on members' financial literacy, clarity of roles, and collaboration with school management. Weak oversight may exacerbate financial management challenges, while effective supervision can strengthen internal controls and enhance accountability.

2.3 Empirical Review

In view of the relevance of financial management of school funds and the accompanying challenges, studies have been conducted, in part, around the globe. Some of those studies are presented in this section of the chapter to help establish gaps for the study.

Chrui and Tiep (2017) conducted a study to assess the awareness of school governing bodies on financial practices, their perceptions on financial allocation and maintenance, and examine financial management challenges facing school governing bodies in three levels of general public education in Cambodia, adopted quantitative approach using questionnaires with 200 respondents from six Cambodian provinces. found that school heads and governing bodies faced significant challenges related to inadequate budget allocations, weak financial responsiveness from central authorities, and limited autonomy in expenditure decisions. These challenges constrained effective school administration and service delivery. The study focused on school governing bodies rather than heads as accounting officers and was conducted outside the African context.

In East Africa, Onesmo (2021) examined the effectiveness of school heads' financial management skills in Tanzanian secondary schools using a document-based qualitative approach. The study revealed that competencies such as budgeting, auditing, monitoring, and

fund mobilization were essential but insufficiently developed among most school heads, bursars, and clerks. While the study highlighted skills deficits, its reliance on secondary data limited context-specific empirical evidence from practitioners.

Kimani (2016) conducted a cross-sectional survey to examine financial challenges in public secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya. The study targeted school heads and bursars, with an accessible population of 344 respondents, from which a stratified random sample of 78 was selected. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that public secondary schools faced serious financial challenges, particularly the burden of high fees charged to students, which adversely affected school operations and access to education. While Kimani's (2016) study provides valuable insight into financial challenges within public secondary schools, it is limited in several respects. First, the study was conducted in the Kenyan context, which differs significantly from Ghana in terms of education financing policies, governance structures, and public financial management systems. Second, the study primarily highlighted fee-related challenges without adequately examining broader financial management issues such as budgeting inefficiencies, procurement constraints, delayed fund disbursement, internal controls, and accountability mechanisms. It largely focused on fee-related challenges and did not comprehensively examine internal. Again, the study did not sufficiently situate school heads as principal accounting officers operating within complex bureaucratic and regulatory environments. This research adopts a context-specific approach that reflects Ghana's public financial management framework and focuses explicitly on the experiences of school heads as accounting officers. By analyzing a wider range of financial management challenges, including budgeting, procurement, auditing, fund disbursement, and bureaucratic constraints, the study provides a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing financial management effectiveness in Ghanaian senior high schools.

Kaguri, Njati, and Thiaine (2014) examined the financial management challenges associated with the implementation of Free Day Secondary Education in Imenti North District, Kenya. Again, the study employed a mixed-methods research approach with a random sampling design. Data were collected through questionnaires administered to members of Boards of Governors (BOGs) and Parent–Teacher Associations (PTAs), as well as interviews conducted with principals, District Education Officers (DEOs), and Zonal Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (ZQASOs). From a target population of 730 respondents, a sample size of 250 participants was selected. The findings revealed poor budget preparation, weak financial reporting, and arbitrary auditing practices as major challenges. Although the study provided useful evidence on financial management challenges in public secondary education, it is limited by its focus on policy implementation rather than on school heads as principal accounting officers. In addition, the Kenyan context differs from Ghana’s educational and financial management systems. This creates a gap in context-specific empirical evidence on the financial management challenges faced by heads of senior high schools in Ghana, which the current study sought to fill.

Furthermore, Wasiche, Mwebi, and Ajowi (2018) examined financial management challenges facing newly appointed head teachers in public day secondary schools in Siaya Sub-County, Kenya, using a mixed-methods approach involving questionnaires and interviews with head teachers, deputies, accounts clerks, and a quality assurance officer. The study identified major challenges, including school indebtedness, frequent policy changes, delayed disbursement of Free Secondary Education funds, sponsor interference, poor record keeping, lack of accounting books, fraud, limited financial management skills, irregular auditing, and delayed audit reports, with auditing challenges emerging as the most critical. While this study is useful, it is limited by its focus on newly appointed heads and its Kenyan context, which differs from Ghana’s public financial management and educational systems. Consequently, there is limited empirical evidence on the financial management challenges faced by heads of government-assisted senior

high schools in Ghana, particularly within the Central Region. Unlike Wasiche et al. (2018), this study includes both newly appointed and experienced school heads and places emphasis on institutional, administrative, and systemic factors influencing financial management. The present study sought to fill this gap with particular attention to institutional and systemic factors influencing financial administration for both new and old heads.

Empirical evidence indicates that financial management challenges in public secondary schools are significantly influenced by both capacity limitations and institutional constraints. Mpolokeng (2011) examined the impact of education-related Acts and policies on financial management in schools within the Lejweleputswa Education District using a qualitative approach. Through purposive sampling of principals and School Governing Body (SGB) chairpersons, the study found that both groups lacked adequate financial management skills to perform their managerial roles effectively, with the deficiency more pronounced among SGB chairpersons. This study underscores the role of limited financial management capacity as a major constraint to effective school financial administration. However, the study focused primarily on policy compliance and governance actors rather than the operational challenges faced by school heads as accounting officers.

Magak (2013) examined the financial management challenges facing heads of public secondary schools in Kisumu East District, Kenya, using a mixed-methods approach involving questionnaires, observations, and interviews with head teachers, deputies, bursars, and a district auditor. The study identified numerous challenges, including poor budgeting and accounting practices, over- and under-spending, weak record-keeping, role duplication, inadequate and incompetent accounting staff, delayed fund disbursement, fee defaulting, unauthorized levies, weak procurement systems, irregular auditing, and limited financial management and auditing knowledge among head teachers. While the study provides important empirical evidence on the multidimensional nature of financial management challenges in public secondary schools, it is limited by its Kenyan context and does not account for the specific public financial

management structures, regulatory frameworks, and accountability demands governing government-assisted senior high schools in Ghana. Moreover, it gives limited attention to systemic and bureaucratic factors that shape financial management practices. The current study addresses these gaps, thereby providing context-specific empirical evidence to inform policy, practice, and capacity-building initiatives.

Ezenagu (2019) investigated documentation challenges in accounting practices within educational institutions in Nigeria using a qualitative case study approach. The study focused on accounting departments in universities, polytechnics, and colleges and found that inadequate training of accounting staff, lack of standardized documentation procedures, and limited use of modern accounting software contributed to errors, inefficiencies, and poor transparency in financial reporting. While the study provides useful insights into accounting documentation challenges, it is limited by its focus on tertiary institutions and accounting personnel rather than school heads as accounting officers. In addition, the Nigerian context differs from the Ghanaian public secondary school system, limiting the applicability of the findings to senior high schools in Ghana, and so this study sought to fill that gap.

To add to the above research, Shahanga, Akyoo, and Sospeter (2026) conducted a study to examine the financial management skills of school heads and their influence on the quality of basic education in Tanzania, with implications for the Tanzania Development Vision 2050. The study employed a quantitative research design using structured questionnaires to collect primary data from a population of 300 school heads and financial officers, from which a sample of 150 participants was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across different regions and school types. The findings revealed that many school heads lacked adequate financial management skills, particularly in budgeting, auditing, monitoring, and fund mobilization, which negatively affected the planning and delivery of quality educational services significantly undermined the quality of basic education, highlighting the critical role of heads' competencies in managing school funds. While the study provides valuable insights

into skills deficits and their impact on educational outcomes, it is limited in its generalizability to senior high schools in the Ghanaian context, where financial management is similarly constrained by bureaucratic procedures, delayed fund disbursement, and limited autonomy.

In Ghana, Mensah (2021) conducted a quantitative survey involving 150 headmasters and financial officers from various public secondary schools in Ghana to examine the impact of bureaucratic red tape on financial management. Using structured questionnaires, the study found that excessive paperwork, complex approval procedures, and delayed fund disbursement significantly undermined financial decision-making, procurement processes, and overall school performance, while increasing the administrative burden on school heads. Although these findings highlight the effects of institutional constraints on financial management, the study was limited by its lack of region-specific focus and by examining bureaucratic constraints in isolation, without considering the role of capacity-related challenges such as skills deficits. Consequently, there is limited empirical evidence on how both institutional and capacity-related factors jointly influence financial management practices in government-assisted senior high schools in the Central Region of Ghana. The present study sought to fill this gap by employing a mixed-method targeting heads of government-assisted senior high schools, Education Directors, and Zonal Internal Auditors in the Central Region, quantitative and qualitative data, thereby generating context-specific evidence to inform policy, practice, and capacity-building initiatives.

Abor and Quartey (2021) conducted a quantitative study in Ghana to examine financial management practices and challenges within public sector organizations, including government ministries, agencies, and other public institutions responsible for financial management and service delivery. The study employed a descriptive research design, targeting a population of financial managers, accountants, internal auditors, and senior administrative personnel, with a sample of 250 respondents selected using stratified random sampling. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and supplemented with secondary

information from government financial reports and audit findings. Analyses using descriptive statistics and regression revealed significant challenges, including budgetary constraints, procurement issues, accounting and auditing deficiencies, regulatory limitations, and gaps in capacity and competence. While these findings illuminate systemic financial management challenges in the Ghanaian public sector, they are not specific to educational institutions or the unique context of senior high schools, where heads serve as accounting officers and face additional constraints such as delayed disbursements, bureaucratic procedures, and limited autonomy in fund management. This gap underscores the need for context-specific research. Addae-Boahene and Adjei (2021) investigated financial challenges in secondary education in Ghana, with a focus on the role of government funding. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive analysis of financial management issues in the national secondary education sector. The population comprised secondary education institutions across Ghana, and data were collected through surveys, interviews, and analysis of financial records from the selected schools, though the specific sample size and sampling technique were not explicitly stated. The findings revealed several critical financial management challenges affecting schools, including inadequate funding, delays in government fund disbursement, and their subsequent impact on the quality of education, highlighting systemic inefficiencies in resource allocation and oversight. While the study provides important insights at the national level, it does not disaggregate findings for government-assisted senior high schools in specific regions, nor does it examine the direct administrative and managerial challenges faced by heads as primary financial officers. Consequently, there is a research gap in understanding how these funding-related challenges translate into day-to-day financial management difficulties at the school level, particularly in the Central Region. The current study sought to fill this gap by focusing on heads' experiences in budgeting, accounting, auditing, and fund utilisation, thereby providing context-specific evidence to inform policy, training, and institutional reforms.

Amponsah and Boateng (2023) investigated financial accountability in Ghanaian senior high schools through a case study approach, employing a qualitative methodology that involved document analysis of audit reports and financial statements from a selected sample of senior high schools across Ghana. The study aimed to identify patterns and themes related to audit compliance and financial management practices. Findings revealed persistent challenges, including delayed submission of financial statements and widespread non-compliance with audit recommendations, which negatively affect transparency, accountability, and overall financial management effectiveness in the schools. While the study provides valuable insights into audit compliance, it is limited in scope as it primarily examines document-based evidence and does not explore the experiences and challenges faced directly by school heads, who are the key accounting officers responsible for financial administration. This highlights a research gap concerning the specific financial management challenges encountered by heads of government-assisted senior high schools, particularly at the regional level. The current study sought to fill this gap using primary data from school heads, education directors, and auditors to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the administrative, institutional, and capacity-related factors influencing effective financial management.

Amoah (2024) conducted an explanatory quantitative study on financial practices and financial irregularities in senior high schools in the Central Region of Ghana, targeting second-cycle institutions. The study collected primary data via questionnaires from a sample of 133 participants, including heads of schools, accountants, matrons, bursars, and administrators, with data analyzed using SPSS and Partial Least Squares (PLS) estimation techniques. The findings revealed widespread financial management challenges, including misappropriation of funds, embezzlement, fraudulent financial transactions, difficulties in maintaining accurate financial records, and inefficiencies in procurement processes. Importantly, the study found that enhanced account management procedures were associated with improved detection and control of financial irregularities. While Amoah's study provides valuable insights into the

prevalence of financial irregularities and the role of control systems, it primarily focuses on the presence of irregularities rather than the broader systemic challenges that heads of senior high schools face in managing school finances effectively, such as bureaucratic delays, capacity constraints, and training gaps. This presents a research gap in understanding the contextual and administrative factors that influence financial management practices at the school leadership level. This gap is explored by the current research, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of both systemic and operational factors affecting school financial administration.

Agormedah, Arko, and Maison (2018) investigated the role of governance structures in promoting financial accountability in senior high schools within the Cape Coast Metropolis of Ghana. The study employed a quantitative research approach with a descriptive cross-sectional survey design, targeting a total population of 150 participants, including 30 headmasters, 10 secretaries, 20 accountants, and 90 teachers. A census sampling technique was used for headmasters, secretaries, and accountants, while simple random sampling was applied for teachers. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed with appropriate statistical techniques for survey research. The findings revealed that robust governance structures are critical for ensuring financial accountability and mitigating financial irregularities in Ghanaian senior high schools, highlighting the importance of clearly defined roles, oversight mechanisms, and effective institutional practices. While this study underscores the significance of governance in addressing financial management issues, it does not specifically examine the financial management challenges faced directly by heads of schools as the principal financial administrators, particularly in relation to budgeting, auditing, procurement, and compliance within government-assisted senior high schools. This limitation presents a research gap that the current study sought to fill.

Yawson (2022) examined the effect of financial disbursement delays on school management in public secondary schools in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana using a mixed-methods

research approach. The study targeted head teachers, bursars, and administrative staff, employing a stratified random sampling technique to select 30 public secondary schools with a total sample size of 90 respondents, comprising 30 head teachers, 30 bursars, and 30 administrative staff. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews and analyzed using descriptive statistics for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data. The findings revealed that persistent delays in financial disbursements significantly undermined effective school management by disrupting budgeting and financial planning processes, delaying the procurement of teaching and learning materials, and constraining the timely payment of staff-related obligations. These challenges highlight how systemic funding delays contribute directly to financial management inefficiencies in Ghanaian secondary schools. However, while Yawson's study provides important insights into the effects of delayed disbursements, it focuses narrowly on a single financial challenge within one region and does not comprehensively examine the broader range of financial management challenges confronting heads of senior high schools as accounting officers. Moreover, the study does not sufficiently explore how institutional, administrative, and capacity-related factors interact to compound these challenges. The present study addresses this gap by adopting a broader and more integrated approach.

Abaasa-Ababio (2015) investigated financial control practices in public second-cycle schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis of Ghana to determine the existence of financial irregularities in the management of school funds. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach using a cross-sectional survey design, with data collected through questionnaires and interview guides. The target population comprised 12 heads of public second-cycle schools, 31 assistant heads, 12 bursars/accountants, and four education officers (regional and metropolitan directors and auditors), giving a total population and sample size of 59 respondents, selected through census sampling. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 20.0, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically using Neuwenhuis's (2007) guidelines. The findings revealed that

although heads generally managed school funds in line with approved budgets and were subject to internal and external audits, significant financial management challenges persisted. In particular, limited financial management knowledge among heads led to the delegation of budget preparation to accountants without proper segregation of duties, creating opportunities for financial improprieties. The study further found that heads lacked the requisite skills to detect fraudulent practices by bursars and accountants, while weaknesses in external control mechanisms undermined effective internal financial controls. These findings highlight systemic capacity and control challenges in senior high school financial management in Ghana. However, the study was limited in scope to financial control practices within a metropolitan setting and did not comprehensively examine the broader range of financial management challenges facing heads across different administrative contexts.

Acquah (2017) conducted an empirical study to examine the relationship between governance structures, financial controls, and financial irregularities in Senior High Schools in Ghana, using a correlational survey design. The study covered a population of 93 public Senior High and Technical Schools in the Eastern Region of Ghana, and a census sampling technique was employed to include all the schools. Primary data were collected through questionnaires, while secondary data on financial irregularities were obtained from published Accountant-General reports on pre-university institutions covering the period 2010 to 2013. Data were analyzed using correlation and ordinary least squares (OLS) regression techniques. The findings revealed significant relationships between school governance variables such as board size, gender composition, experience of head teachers, and the existence of implementation committees and financial irregularities. Similarly, aspects of financial control, including the use of accounting software, responsibility for budget preparation, and stakeholder involvement in budgeting, were found to be significantly associated with financial irregularities. Regression results further showed that governance and financial control variables jointly explained a substantial proportion of cash irregularities in schools. These findings affirm that weaknesses

in governance arrangements and financial control systems constitute major financial management challenges in senior high schools in Ghana. However, Acquah's study is limited in scope as it focuses primarily on governance and control variables without examining the broader administrative, institutional, and capacity-related challenges faced by heads of senior high schools as accounting officers. In addition, the study was confined to the Eastern Region, thereby limiting its contextual applicability to other regions and this study intend to fill the gap by empirically examining the wider range of financial management challenges confronting heads of government-assisted senior high schools in the Central Region of Ghana, with particular emphasis on budgetary, accounting, procurement, auditing, and institutional constraints affecting effective financial management.

Amakyi (2021) conducted an ex post facto study on internal control practices in senior high schools in the Central Region of Ghana to examine differences between prescribed and actual control practices. The study covered a population of seventy-six (76) public senior high schools in the region and employed a census sampling technique to include all schools. Data were collected using an observation checklist and analyzed using percentages and paired-sample t-tests to determine compliance gaps. The findings revealed statistically significant differences between prescribed internal control procedures and actual practices, indicating that schools were not fully complying with established internal control standards. These weaknesses in internal controls have direct implications for financial management, as inadequate adherence to control procedures increases the risk of misappropriation of funds, weak accountability, and inefficiencies in budgeting, procurement, and financial reporting within senior high schools. However, the study does not explicitly examine how these gaps translate into broader financial management challenges faced by school heads as accounting officers, nor does it explore the administrative and institutional factors that constrain effective financial management. The current study addresses this gap by extending existing knowledge beyond internal control

compliance to a more comprehensive analysis of financial management practices and challenges at the school leadership level.

Owusu, Asare, and Boakye (2019) examined the impact of financial management practices on the stability of senior high schools in Ghana using a descriptive correlational research design. The study targeted senior high schools across various regions of the country, with a population comprising public senior high schools nationwide, from which a sample of 200 schools was selected through stratified random sampling to ensure regional and institutional representation. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed to establish the relationship between financial management practices and school stability. The findings revealed that effective financial management practices, particularly budgeting, financial reporting, and internal control systems, significantly enhanced school stability and operational efficiency, while inadequate practices contributed to financial instability and threatened the long-term sustainability of schools. Although the study provides valuable national-level evidence on the importance of sound financial management, it does not specifically examine the financial management challenges faced by heads of schools as accounting officers, nor does it provide region-specific insights, particularly for the Central Region of Ghana. Moreover, the study focuses on outcomes (school stability) rather than the underlying institutional, administrative, and capacity-related constraints influencing financial management practices. The current study, therefore, sought to fill these gaps.

Agyeman (2020) also examined the relationship between financial management practices and school performance in Ghanaian secondary schools using a quantitative correlational research design. The study targeted a population of public secondary schools in Ghana and collected data from a sample of 150 secondary schools, involving 300 respondents comprising headmasters and finance officers. Structured questionnaires and secondary financial performance data were used as the main instruments for data collection, while statistical techniques were employed to analyse the relationship between financial management practices

and school performance. The findings revealed that effective financial management practices, particularly budgeting and resource allocation, had a significant positive influence on academic performance and overall school effectiveness. While the study provides important empirical evidence on the link between financial management practices and school performance, it did not specifically examine the challenges confronting school heads in managing school finances, nor did it focus on government-assisted senior high schools at the regional level. The present study sought to fill this gap by extending existing knowledge beyond outcomes to the underlying institutional and

Mensah and Nyarko (2022) investigated the impact of decentralization on financial flexibility in Ghanaian public schools, focusing on the challenges and prospects of managing school finances across multiple regions. The study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews and focus group discussions. The population comprised public school administrators and financial officers nationwide, with a sample size drawn through stratified random sampling to ensure representative coverage of schools from various regions. Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical techniques, while qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and challenges. The study found that decentralization imposed significant financial management constraints, including limited financial autonomy for schools, delays in fund disbursement, and inadequate financial management capacity at the local level. However, the study did not focus specifically on heads of senior high schools or region-specific challenges, particularly in the Central Region, nor did it examine the interplay of administrative capacity and institutional structures on school-level financial management. This gap underscores the need for the present study, which sought to provide context-specific evidence to inform policy, capacity-building, and institutional reforms and administrative constraints that influence financial management effectiveness.

Vito and Postrano's (2025) empirical study employed a descriptive-quantitative design to investigate the relationship between financial challenges and teachers' teaching effectiveness among 116 elementary school teachers from Maramag Central Elementary School, using a random sampling procedure and a structured questionnaire rated on a 5-point Likert scale; descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) and Pearson's correlation were used to analyze the data, revealing that teachers experienced a moderate level of financial challenges (notably low salaries and personal financial burdens) and that these challenges were significantly associated with lower levels of teaching effectiveness, as financial stress adversely affected their energy, focus, professional growth opportunities, and overall classroom performance, thereby underscoring a clear empirical link between financial constraints and diminished teacher performance.

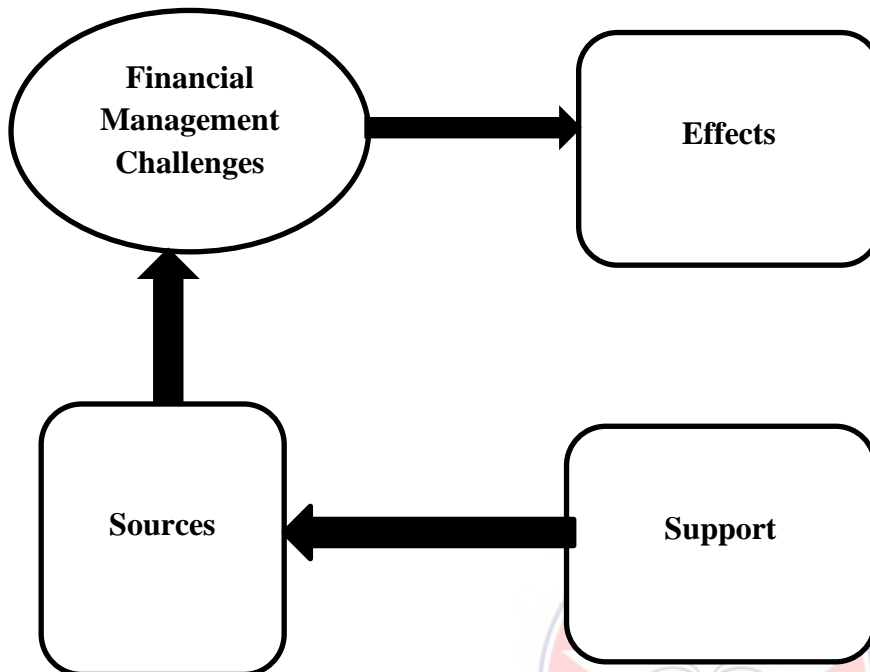
In addition, Ampofo (2022) examined how head teachers manage finances in public basic schools in the Kwaebibirem Municipality of the Eastern Region of Ghana, drawing on Budgetary Theory to explore the sources of financial management challenges, their effects, and strategies for mitigation. The study adopted a quantitative approach with a descriptive research design, targeting head teachers in the municipality. Using a stratified sampling technique, 35 respondents were selected from the total population of public basic school head teachers. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using mean scores, standard deviations, and regression analysis. The findings revealed that head teachers faced accounting challenges, budgetary constraints, auditing difficulties, and professional incompetence, all of which significantly negatively affected the management of school finances. Furthermore, the study identified training in auditing, capacity building in accounting, and financial management workshops as effective strategies to address these challenges. While the study provides important insights, it is limited to basic schools in a single municipality, leaving a gap regarding the financial management challenges of heads of senior high schools in other regions, such as the Central Region, which the current study sought to fill.

In conclusion, the review of literature on financial management in educational institutions reveals several critical gaps. Most studies have focused on broader educational settings, basic or tertiary institutions, with limited attention to government-assisted senior high schools, particularly in the Central Region, Ghana, creating a scope gap. Methodologically, research has largely relied on quantitative surveys, with few qualitative or mixed-method studies that explore the lived experiences of school heads, highlighting a methodology gap. While general public financial management theories have been applied, there is a lack of context-specific theoretical frameworks tailored to school-level financial administration. Additionally, much of the existing literature is drawn from international or urban contexts, leaving a context-specific gap regarding the socio-cultural and policy environment of Ghana's Central Region. Finally, studies often describe financial management challenges without linking them to school outcomes, such as resource utilization efficiency or instructional quality, resulting in an outcome gap.

Addressing these gaps, this study comprehensively covered financial management challenges, sources of the challenges, the effect of the challenges, and the support system available to the head. The study also adopts a mixed-method approach within the Ghanaian senior high school in Central Region context, guided by a contextually relevant theoretical framework such as principles of management theory by Henry Fayol (1949) and a Transaction Cost Theory (TCT) of public financial management by Khan and Hildreth (2004), employs a mixed-method approach to capture both quantitative and qualitative insights using GASHSs heads who are principal spending officers, the MMD Directors and Auditors who are direct supervisors to heads and that links financial management challenges to observable educational outcomes. Addressing these gaps will provide a more comprehensive understanding of financial management challenges and inform policy and practice in Ghanaian secondary education.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

This study is guided by a conceptual framework that explains the relationship between financial management challenges and their effect on Government-Assisted Senior High Schools in the Central Region of Ghana.



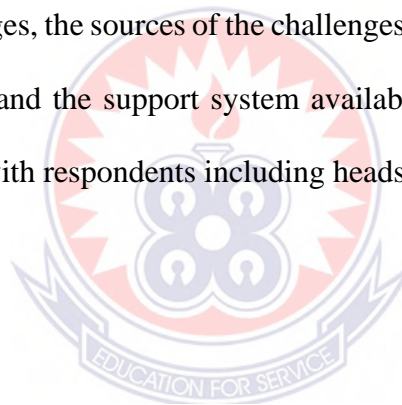
Explanation of the framework

The framework identifies financial management challenges that comprise budgeting challenges, fund disbursement issues, accounting and record-keeping challenges, procurement challenges, and weaknesses in internal control systems. These challenges have root causes such as financial management skills of heads of schools, their knowledge of public financial management and procurement regulations, the competency of the heads, and monitoring and supervision. The challenges also have an effect on how effectively financial resources are planned, accessed, utilized, and accounted for in senior high schools for quality school outcomes. The support system from the Board of Governors and relevant continuous development, if available, will help reduce the sources. The framework assumes that effective management of the sources can mitigate the negative effects of financial management

challenges and enhance positive school outcomes in Government-Assisted Senior High Schools.

2.5 Summary of Review

The literature has been reviewed on financial management and its related challenges in the public sector, including senior high schools globally, in the African context, and in Ghana. Most of the studies focus on financial management challenges and their impact on the resources. Again, the studies reviewed show that the methodology approach adopted was either quantitative or qualitative, sometimes using secondary data. Furthermore, most of the studies of financial management challenges in senior high schools were conducted outside Ghana, hence the need for the current one to be conducted in Ghana using a mixed methods approach and also using three different sets of participants. The current research further looked into the financial management challenges, the sources of the challenges, and the effect of the challenges on the school and the heads, and the support system available to the school to mitigate the effect in the Central Region, with respondents including heads, auditors, and directors.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the procedures used in the study. The chapter is organized around the research paradigm, research approach and design, target population, sample and sampling techniques, research instruments, validity and reliability evidence/trustworthiness, data collection procedure, data analysis, and ethical consideration.

3.1 Research paradigm

A research paradigm articulates a researcher's philosophical position that underpins his or her methodological choice (Scotland, 2012) and prefers methods for data collection and analysis. Therefore, the research paradigm underpinned this study was a pragmatic ontological and epistemological stance. Ontologically, it assumes that financial management realities in senior high schools are multiple and context-dependent, shaped by both institutional structures and individual experiences. Epistemologically, knowledge is created through the integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence, making pragmatism appropriate for addressing the complex and practical nature of financial management challenges in government-assisted senior high schools. Pragmatic is considered a blend of both positivist and interpretivist philosophical approaches on the assumption that there is no single 'best' scientific method that can lead the way to indisputable knowledge (Kuranchie, 2021).

3.2 Research approach

The research adopted a mixed-methods approach, which involves the integration of both quantitative and qualitative methods. This approach enables the researcher to benefit from the strengths of both paradigms; quantitative data offers measurable and generalizable findings, while qualitative data provides deeper insights into participants' experiences and perspectives (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The combination enhances the validity of the research through

triangulation and allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem, which is the challenges heads of senior high schools encounter as financial managers. This approach is particularly appropriate for studies investigating complex phenomena such as financial management challenges in schools, where both numerical trends and contextual understanding are essential. With the adoption of this approach, the researcher was about to gather quantitative data from the heads of the schools, which was further elaborated with the qualitative data generated from the auditors and directors who supervise, among other things, the financial activities of the heads.

3.3 Research design

This is the specific strategy a researcher relies on in collecting, analyzing, and reporting data (Kuranchie, 2021). The selected research type and design helped the researcher to get useful data about the problem under research. The research design used was a concurrent triangulation design, with both quantitative and qualitative data collected concurrently, and the qualitative data from the Auditors and Directors of education were triangulated with the quantitative data from the heads of the senior high schools to ascertain convergences and divergences

3.4 The Site and Sampling Characteristics

The study was conducted in all the Government-Assisted Senior High Schools within the Central Region in Ghana. Geographically, the Central Region is located in the southwestern center of Ghana. The Central Region shares boundaries with the Ashanti Region in the North, Eastern Region to the North-East, Greater Accra Region to the South-East, and on the West by the Western Region. It is bounded to the south by the Gulf of Guinea. The region has a coastline of 150Km, and is the longest coastline in Ghana. It is one of the smallest regions in Ghana, only bigger than the Upper East and the Greater Accra Regions. In terms of population, the Central Region has a population of 2,859,821, representing 9.3% of Ghana's population distribution of 30,832,019. There are 24 MMDAs in the Central Region, of which each has at

least a Senior High School, Ghana Statistical Service (2021). The Central Region of Ghana is recognized as one of the country's major educational hubs, hosting a relatively high concentration of government-assisted senior high schools, including general and technical institutions. These schools serve students from both urban and rural communities and operate under the Free Senior High School (Free SHS) policy, which has increased enrolment but also placed significant pressure on infrastructure, funding, and administrative capacity. As a result, heads of senior high schools in the region are required to manage limited financial resources while complying with public financial management regulations and Ghana Education Service guidelines. In terms of accountability, secondary education institutions in the Central Region fall under the oversight of the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee (PAC) through the examination of the Auditor-General's reports. When financial irregularities such as misapplication of funds, weak internal controls, or procurement breaches are identified, school authorities and officials of the Ghana Education Service may be invited by PAC to account for these lapses (Auditor-General report, 2024, 2025; Public Accounts Committee, 2023). Consequently, the Central Region presents a relevant context for examining financial management challenges, as school heads operate under heightened accountability mechanisms while managing complex financial demands.

3.5 Population of the study

The study was conducted with heads of government-assisted senior high schools (GASHS) in the Central region of Ghana. The region has 75 SHSs, 7 Zonal Internal Audit leaders, and 21 Metropolitan/Municipal/District Directors of Education, making a total population of 103.

The task of financial administration in education is assigned to the head masters who double as the financial manager. Audit team comprises officers mandated by law with authority and responsibility to conduct an account investigation on all public funds, especially in GES, and therefore have first-hand information as to whether the heads comply with accounting regulations and the challenges they identify during auditing.

The Metropolitan/Municipal/District Directors of Education are held responsible for any breach of financial regulation of their schools and dragged to Public Account Committee. Therefore, the researcher believed that these target respondents could give credible responses to gather reliable data for the study.

3.6 Sample and Sampling Techniques

Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination formula or table was used to estimate the number of head masters who took part in the study. Therefore, 63 head masters constituting 84% of the population were selected using a simple random sampling technique.

However, the purposive sampling technique was adopted to select 3 heads of the Zonal Internal Auditors whose zones the selected SHSs were located. Also, the 4 MMDs of the SHSs were purposively selected for the study. The total sample size selected for the study was 70 (63, 3 & 4)

3.7 Research Instruments

The research relied on a primary source of data. This, according to Kuranchie (2021), is the first-hand information that does not exist in the document but was gathered from the respondents during research. The study involved the use of structured questionnaires for the quantitative data and a semi-structured interview guide for the qualitative data collection. The instruments consist of five (5) sections; Section A consists of demographic data of the respondents, Section B was on the financial management challenges, Section C focused on sources of financial management challenges, Section D was on the effect of financial management challenges, and Section E was based on support systems available for heads. Each section was made of a set of test items.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

To ensure ethical and methodological rigor, this mixed-methods study was guided by Guba and Lincoln's (1985, 1986) framework of trustworthiness, adapted to address both qualitative and quantitative components of the research. Ethical integrity was ensured through the

principles of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, alongside quantitative standards of validity and reliability. Credibility was enhanced through accurate data collection, triangulation of qualitative and quantitative findings, and careful interpretation of participants' responses. Transferability was supported by providing detailed descriptions of the research context, enabling readers to assess the applicability of the findings to similar settings. Dependability was ensured through the consistent application of research procedures across both strands of the study, while confirmability was achieved by maintaining objectivity, minimizing researcher bias, and ensuring that findings were grounded in the collected data. Quantitative rigor was further strengthened through the use of validated. Collectively, these measures strengthened both the ethical conduct and the trustworthiness of the study.

3.9 Validity and Reliability

The structured questionnaire was carefully developed based on the study objectives, and the existing literature on financial management in education was reviewed. Expert reviewers from the field of educational administration and financial management assessed the questionnaire for relevance and clarity. Content and construct validity were established through pilot testing with a small group of respondents, made up of 15 GASHS heads from Western Region which enabled refinement of ambiguous items. Reliability was ensured through internal consistency checks. The use of standardized procedures for the administration and analysis of data using SPSS software ensured accurate computation of cumulative percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations, to minimize errors and enhance the repeatability of results.

3.10 Trustworthiness

To enhance trustworthiness, credibility of the study was obtained by data-triangulation from heads, auditors, and directors, which provided a multi-perspective to ensure a comprehensive and accurate representation of financial management challenges and their related issues.

For transferability, the researcher has provided enough contextual detail of the study area to allow others to determine whether the findings could be relevant elsewhere. Dependability was

also ensured by the researcher maintaining an audit trail for documentation of data collection, coding procedures, thematic development, and analysis procedures. iNVivo was used to manage data and extract themes objectively, and the use of verbatim quotes for analysis helped to ensure that findings were grounded in participants' responses to support interpretations.

By combining these strategies, the study ensured that both quantitative and qualitative data were rigorously collected, analyzed, and interpreted, enhancing the overall credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

3.11 Pre-testing

The structured questionnaire was pre-tested using 15 heads of SHSs randomly selected from Western Region. Through the pre-testing, the questions or items that were ambiguous, repetitive and irrelevant were addressed. That is, the researcher reviewed and restructured the ambiguous test items which helped to ensure accurate response. Also, the irrelevant items were deleted from the instruments before administering it on the respondents of the main study. The supervisor's final rigorous scrutiny of the test items contributed to ensuring that the instruments measured what was supposed to measure

The reliability co-efficient was tested using Cronbach alpha. The pre-testing result was $r=0.875$. This means that the instrument had a high reliability which implies that the instrument could be used for data gathering for the main study.

3.12 Data Collection Procedure

The study involved collection of data from three sets of participants, namely Directors of Education, Zonal Internal Auditors and Heads of Senior High Schools. The researcher relied on two data gathering methods; questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire was used to gather quantitative data from the heads while the interview guide was relied on for the qualitative data from the Zonal Internal Auditors and the Directors of Education.

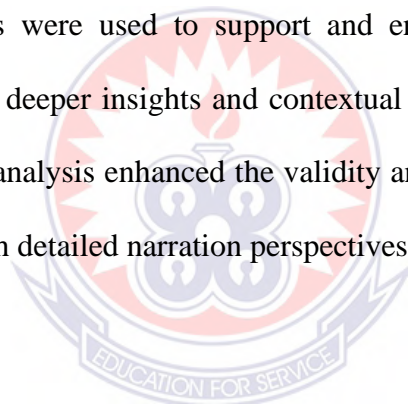
To commence the data collection, an introductory letter was obtained from Department of Educational Administration and Management (DEAM), School of Education and Life-Long Learning (SELLL), UEW explaining the purpose of the study. The letter was sent to the Regional Directorate of Education, Central Region and the Chairman of the Regional Heads of Assisted Senior Secondary (CHASS) to seek permission to conduct the study. Permission was also obtained from the individual participants. For the quantitative phase of the study, the researcher visited the heads at a meeting and was introduced by the chairman to the heads to seek their consent. The questionnaire was then administered by the researcher personally to each of the respondent. The respondents were given instructions on how to complete the questionnaire. The respondents used approximately between 25 to 30 minutes to answer the questionnaire. To ensure maximum response, the researcher went round to offer clarity where necessary. Completed questionnaire were collected when the respondents finished.

Regarding the qualitative data, the Directors of Education were interviewed first. An appointment was secured and the interviews were conducted at their respective offices at their convenience. Their offices offered quiet, conducive environment, and privacy and helped to engage them on one-on-one for the interview. Prior permission was sought for recording of the proceedings. The interviewer's cell phone was used for the recording and field notes were also taken alongside. Each interview lasted approximately forty (40) minutes. The same procedure was employed for the Zonal Internal Auditors where permission was sought for recording of the proceedings.

3.13 Data Analysis

Data collected through both the quantitative and qualitative instruments were analyzed concurrently, and result triangulated using appropriate statistical and thematic analysis techniques. The quantitative data were entered and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize the data. Findings were presented using tables for

clarity and easy interpretation. For the qualitative data, after conducting face-to-face interviews with Directors and Auditors, the audio recordings were imported into NVivo. The built-in transcription feature was used to convert the audio files into text. This enabled the researcher to generate verbatim transcripts efficiently. Subsequently, the researchers coded and listened to audio recordings while editing the transcript line by line manually into themes and sub-themes based on research questions to ensure accuracy, enabling easy verification of responses from each respondent during qualitative analysis. Pseudonyms used were Director 1, 2, 3, and 4 for the Directors and Auditor 1, 2, and 3 for the Auditors. Thematic analysis emerged from the participants' narratives based on the structure of the interview guide, such as the financial management challenges, sources of financial management challenges, the effect of financial management challenges, and support systems available for heads. Direct quotes and significant phrases from the respondents were used to support and enrich the interpretation of the quantitative results, providing deeper insights and contextual understanding. The concurrent triangulated approach to data analysis enhanced the validity and reliability of the findings by integrating numeric trends with detailed narration perspectives.



CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis and a discussion of the findings. The presentation of the discussion of the findings was done in relation to previous studies and based on the study objectives and questions. The chapter is segmented based on the demographic data and the study objectives. The questionnaires were administered to 63 heads of senior high schools, and 63 were returned. The quantitative results were triangulated with qualitative results.

4.1 Demographic Data for Respondents

This section of the chapter displays the demographic information about the study respondents. Although this is not part of the direct research question, it helps to portray the characteristics of the respondents who took part in the study. Table 1 presents the gender distribution of respondents involved in the study.

Table 1: Sex Distribution of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	33	52.4
Female	30	47.6
Total	63	100

Source: field data (2024)

Out of the 63 heads, 33 (52.4%) were male, and 30 (47.6%) were female. There is a relative balance in the gender distribution of the respondents, which is crucial for providing diverse perspectives on the financial management challenges encountered by school heads. As research indicates that gender can play a significant role in leadership and financial management styles. Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) opine that male and female leaders

may differ in their approaches to decision-making, risk management, and resource allocation. In educational institutions, these differences may influence how male and female heads navigate financial constraints and make critical financial decisions for their schools.

Table 2 presents the age distribution of heads of the senior high schools.

Table 2: Age distribution of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
Below 40 years	0	0
41-50 years	37	58.7
51-60 years	26	41.3
Total	63	100

Source: field data (2024)

From Table 2, 37 (58.7%) are aged between 41 and 50 years, while 26 (41.3%) are aged between 51 and 60 years. Notably, no head was under 40 years old. This distribution highlights the predominance of mid-career senior high school heads, which may have significant implications for financial management in these institutions. Age is often associated with varying levels of experience and expertise in leadership and financial management. Leithwood and Day (2007) suggest that more experienced leaders may possess a deeper understanding of organizational structures, budgeting processes, and financial resource management, which could influence their ability to address challenges. The fact that all the heads are above 40 years indicate they are likely to have significant administrative experience, enabling them to better navigate the complexities of financial management in schools. Table 3 shows the rank distribution of heads of senior high schools involved in the study.

Table 3: Rank of Head Respondents

Rank	Frequency	Percent
Assistant Director 1	3	4.8
Deputy Director 1	43	68.3
Director 1	17	26.9
Total	63	100

Source: field data (2024)

Of the total 63 respondents, the majority (43 or 68.3%) are Deputy Director I, followed by 17 (26.9%) who are Director I, and only 3 (4.8%) were of Assistant Director I.

Leadership rank plays a critical role in the capacity of school heads to manage finances effectively. Higher-ranking individuals, such as Director I and Deputy Director, tend to have more extensive experience, greater decision-making authority, and a broader understanding of financial management practices. According to Leithwood et al. (2004), leadership experience and rank are positively correlated with the ability to address complex financial challenges, such as budget allocation, resource mobilization, and compliance with regulatory frameworks. The Deputy Director, who makes up the majority of the respondents, is typically positioned to oversee significant financial decisions. Their rank suggests they have had sufficient exposure to the intricacies of managing a school's budget, securing funds, and liaising with external stakeholders such as government agencies and community leaders. As Walker and Dimmock (2002) point out, school leaders at higher ranks often have better access to financial resources and are more likely to have training in financial planning, which allows them to navigate challenges like delayed funding and allocation of limited resources.

Table 4 presents the academic qualifications of heads of senior high schools in the region.

Table 4: Academic qualifications of Heads Respondents

Qualification	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor's	13	20.6
Second Degree	48	76.2
PhD	2	3.2
Total	63	100

Source: field data (2024)

The results in Table 4 reveal that out of 63 school heads, the majority (48, 76.2%) hold a second degree, while 13 (20.6%) have a bachelor's degree, and only 2 (3.2%) hold a PhD.

Academic qualifications can significantly influence the competence and confidence of school heads in handling financial management tasks. According to Bush and Glover (2004), educational leadership is increasingly becoming complex, requiring heads of institutions to possess advanced skills in financial management and strategic planning. Heads with higher qualifications, such as a second degree or PhD, may be better equipped to manage the financial challenges of their institutions, given their exposure to advanced training in leadership, management, and policy implementation. Having a second degree likely provides heads with enhanced knowledge of financial management principles, including budgeting, financial reporting, and strategic resource allocation (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

Table 5 shows the academic specialization of the school heads who participated in the study.

Table 5: Academic specialization of the heads

Specialization	Frequency	Percent
Sciences	14	22.2
Business	12	19.1
Languages	9	14.3
Education	28	44.4
Total	63	100

Source: field data (2024)

As observed in Table 5, 28 (44.4%) specialized in Education, 14 (22.2%) in the Sciences, 12 (19.1%) in Business, and 9 (14.3%) in Languages. This diversity of academic backgrounds provides a basis for the relevance of specialized financial management approaches.

Academic specialization is said to be an important decision-making process involved in financial management. Heads with varying academic backgrounds may approach financial challenges differently, reflecting the knowledge and skills acquired through their specializations. Heads with a specialization in Education (44.4%); given that most heads come from an educational background, this might imply a strong understanding of pedagogical principles but potentially less formal training in financial management. Educational specialists may prioritize the learning environment, focusing on resource allocation that enhances teaching and learning, such as funding for instructional materials, teacher development, and student welfare programs (Bissessar, 2014). However, heads with an education background may face challenges in handling the technicalities of budgetary control and financial reporting, as these are areas typically outside their primary training (Bush, 2011). This gap could hinder their capacity to deal with complex financial regulations and government funding models, resulting in potential inefficiencies in financial decision-making. Table 6 shows the duration of headship of the senior high school.

Table 6: Duration of headship at SHS

Duration	Frequency	Percent
Above 10 years	3	4.8
6-10 years	16	25.4
5 or fewer years	44	69.8
Total	63	100

Source: field data (2024)

Out of the 63 heads surveyed, 44 (69.8%) have held their positions for five years or less, 16 (25.4%) for 6 to 10 years, and only 3 (4.8%) for more than 10 years. This distribution reveals

that the majority of SHS heads are relatively new to their leadership roles. The duration of headship is a critical factor in understanding the financial management challenges faced by school heads, as it impacts their experience and ability to handle complex financial issues.

The duration of headship plays a crucial role in shaping the ability of school heads to effectively manage financial resources. Studies suggest that experience in leadership significantly contributes to financial decision-making and management competence (Bush & Glover, 2003). School heads who have been in their positions for longer periods tend to develop better financial planning and resource management skills through exposure to different financial challenges and institutional changes. Early-stage headship often involves a steep learning curve, as these leaders must quickly familiarize themselves with budget management, government funding policies, procurement processes, and financial auditing (Oduro & MacBeath, 2003).

4.2 Question One: What are the financial management challenges facing heads of senior high schools in the Central Region?

The research question intended to uncover the challenges that heads of SHS in the Central Region encounter, which are grouped into procurement, accounting, auditing challenges, financial policy, and professional incompetence. Table 7 shows the data obtained on procurement challenges, highlighting issues with irregularities, poor procurement procedures, skewed tendering, poor stock security, and weak tendering committees.

Table 7: Procurement Challenges

Challenges	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Procurement irregularity	30(47.6%)	16(25.4%)	17(27.0%)
Poor procurement procedures	39(61.9%)	8(16.7%)	16(25.4%)
Skewed Tendering	29(46.0%)	12(19.1%)	22(34.9%)
Poor Stock security control	16(25.4%)	19(30.2%)	28(44.4%)
Week procurement and tendering committee	18(28.6%)	16(25.4%)	29(46.0%)

Source: field data (2024)

The procurement irregularities, with 47.6% of respondents disagreeing, 27% agreeing, and (25.4%) remaining neutral, indicate that the majority do not consider procurement irregularities as a challenge in their schools. This finding is contrary to Osei-Tutu et al. (2011), who found procurement irregularity, including non-adherence to procurement laws and unaccountable spending, as common in educational institutions across sub-Saharan Africa.

Concerning poor procurement procedures, the data shows that 61.9% of respondents disagree as a challenge, with 25.4% agreeing and 16.7% remaining neutral. The majority do not concur that poor procurement procedures are a challenge in the school. However, the 25.4% agreeing is in accordance with Baiden and Price's (2021) findings that ineffective procurement procedures can lead to delays in the acquisition of goods and services, affecting overall operational efficiency, emergency purchases, which are costly and disrupt budgeting (Ameyaw, 2012), and lead to financial mismanagement (Kakwezi & Nyeko, 2019).

With the skewed tendering, 29(46.0%) disagree, 22(34.9%) of respondents agree, and 12(19.1%) remain neutral which shows that the majority of the heads do not regard skewed tendering as perceived bias in the procurement process although Transparency International (2021) identifies skewed tendering as a major challenge to fair procurement, leading to favoritism and nepotism in contract awards, that is not the case in the schools investigated.

Poor stock security control was perceived by the majority of respondents, with 28(44.4%) agreeing as a challenge, while 19(30.2%) remained neutral and 16(25.4%) disagreed. This is confirmed by research findings by Asante et al. (2020), that improper stock control mechanisms lead to the loss or misuse of resources, particularly in institutions with limited budgets. That is why Mensah and Ofori-Darko (2023) called for effective stock control to reduce waste, ensure accountability, and help in tracking inventory to meet institutional needs. Lysons and Farrington (2016) also emphasized the importance of stock control for organizational efficiency, suggesting that inadequate protection can lead to financial wastage. Enhanced security measures and frequent audits could maintain resource integrity.

The data obtained from respondents on the weak procurement and tendering Committee indicates that 46% of respondents agree that it is a challenge, with 18(28.6%) disagreeing and 16(25.4%) remaining neutral. This finding aligns with Appiah and Oduro (2020) that a weak committee may lack the authority or skills to implement procurement standards, which can lead to procurement issues, that underscores the need for robust, trained committees to oversee procurement activities (Thai, 2009). Effective committees are vital for ensuring adherence to procurement regulations and overseeing transparent, competitive processes (Frimpong, 2021).

From the qualitative results. For the headmasters, poor stock security control and a weak procurement and tendering committee were perceived as procurement challenges. The auditors also agreed that there are procurement challenges, as well as the directors, who affirmed that weak procurement and tendering committees hinder transparent processes. A participant indicated that,

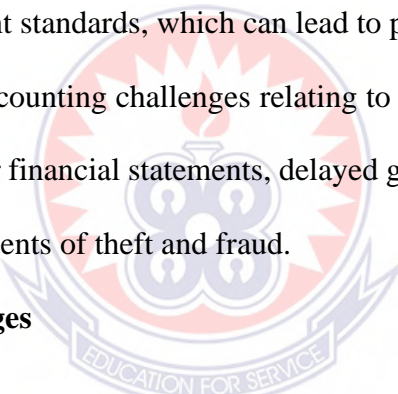
“The challenge is that there are processes they are to go through before accessing any funds. At times, they have to go through procurement, and sometimes the quotations that they are to look for, they don’t get the right quotations, and sometimes they go by sole sourcing, which auditors don’t want.” (Interview data, Director 3)

Another Director added: *“Most heads have challenges with procurement compliance, for example One sold a PTA-donated bus but didn’t follow the procurement process. The head and the PTA executives were all queried.”* (Interview data, Director 2)

Generally, poor stock security control and ineffective procurement and tendering committee, as expressed by the respondent, can lead to loss or misapplication of resources, which will eventually affect the school scarcity resource. Enhanced security measures and frequent audits could maintain resource integrity. The findings by Asante et al. (2020) confirm that improper stock control mechanisms lead to the loss or misuse of resources, particularly in institutions with limited budgets. Lysons and Farrington (2016) also emphasize the importance of stock control for organizational efficiency, suggesting that inadequate protection can lead to financial wastage. Appiah and Oduro (2020) found that a weak committee may lack the authority or skills to implement procurement standards, which can lead to procurement issues.

Table 8 shows the results of accounting challenges relating to weak internal controls, delayed document submission, irregular financial statements, delayed government funding, inadequate accounting resources, and incidents of theft and fraud.

Table 8: Accounting Challenges



Challenges	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Weak internal accounting control mechanisms	29(46.0%)	15(23.8%)	19(30.2%)
Activity initiators' inability to submit accounting documents on time	31(42.9%)	13(17.4%)	17(28.7%)
Irregular provision of the financial statement	4(6.4%)	13(20.6%)	46(73.0%)
Delay in releasing funds by the government	14(22.2%)	10(15.9%)	39(61.9%)
Inadequate accounting resources	17(27%)	13(20.6%)	33(52.4%)
Theft and fraud	13(20.6%)	13(20.6%)	37(58.8%)

Source: field data (2024)

The results data indicate that 46% of respondents disagree with the statement that their schools have weak internal accounting control mechanisms, while 30.2% agree, and 15(23.8%)

remaining neutral. The majority disagreeing implies that the quality of internal control across different schools is good. They are likely to experience effective internal controls, which are essential for managing funds in public institutions (Abor & Quartey, 2010; Adam, 2019). This aligns with the need for strong accounting controls in educational institutions, particularly in developing contexts where such controls may be less robust (Mukherjee, 2018).

Activity initiators' inability to submit accounting documents on time. Out of the total respondents, 42.9% disagree as a challenge, 28.7% agree, with 17.4% remaining neutral. This finding is contrary to a study by Boateng (2012), which found that the delay in document submission obstructs timely financial assessments and limits decision-making capabilities. Late submission of accounting documents is a significant challenge, but not to the heads who participated in the study. The higher percentage disagreeing indicates that a number of the schools are able to ensure that activity initiators are able to submit accounting documents on time. That is a good step for effective financial management.

Irregular provision of school financial statements response indicates that an overwhelming 46(73%) of respondents agree to it as a challenge, 13(20.6%) remain neutral, and 4(6.4%) disagree with the statement. This result indicates that irregular provision of school financial statements is a problem. This emphasizes the idea that in Ghana, inconsistent financial statements are a common problem, affecting the heads' ability to make informed financial decisions and maintain accountability, and that schools that fail to regularly produce financial statements may face challenges in securing future funding or effectively managing allocated resources, which could affect operational continuity and educational outcomes (Nyarko, 2020). World Bank (2018) reiterates the importance of regular financial reporting for public trust and institutional effectiveness. According to Thompson and White (2021), regular financial reporting in schools enables transparency and builds stakeholder trust.

With the delay in the release of funds by the government, the data indicates that 61.9% of respondents agree that it is a significant challenge, 22.2% disagree, and 15.9% remain neutral. This suggests that the majority of heads view it as a primary accounting issue affecting their financial management responsibilities. The findings align with similar challenges faced by educational institutions in Ghana and globally, where timely government funding is essential for financial stability and smooth operations, which can lead schools to rely on temporary loans or reduce spending (Mensah & Adomako, 2020, 2019). Addae-Boahene and Adjei (2021) state that the financial stability of schools, particularly government-funded senior high schools, is often affected by delayed funds from central authorities, highlighting how delays in government funding can lead to a reliance on credit from suppliers, which can strain financial relationships and limit budgetary flexibility.

One prominent accounting challenge faced by the heads is the inadequacy of accounting resources, with 52.4% of respondents agreeing that the range of accounting books and accounting software available is insufficient, 27% disagree, while 20.6% were neutral. Inadequacy of necessary accounting resources can be attributed to limited funding allocations and inadequate financial planning frameworks within the educational system, which can lead to inefficient financial oversight and hinder sound financial management (Mestry, 2013, 2006). Restricted access to essential financial tools exacerbates this challenge, resulting in difficulties in ensuring proper financial documentation (Oduro, 2009). Consequently, when essential accounting records are unavailable, schools face difficulties in budget forecasting, financial reporting, and compliance with regulatory requirements (Robbins & Judge, 2019).

The results further demonstrate that 58.8% of heads indicated concerns about theft and fraud as financial management challenges, 13(20.6%) disagree and 13(20.6%) also remained neutral. Theft and fraud in schools have been associated with weak internal controls and inadequate oversight (Hayes et al., 2020). The study by Adu-Gyamfi et al. (2014) links weak controls with

increased risks of fraudulent activity in educational institutions, which compromise financial integrity and can reduce the funds available for essential school activities, affecting educational quality and student outcomes. This also damages the institution's credibility (Boateng & Asamoah, 2021). The heads' responses demonstrate that irregular provision of school financial statements, delay in releasing funds by the government, inadequate accounting resources, theft, and fraud were perceived as the main accounting challenges confronting heads of SHS in financial management.

Regarding the Auditors' responses, the accounting challenges the heads experience in the course of their duties are due to the heads not having an accounting background when they were appointed as heads of SHS. They are unable to perform their accounting roles effectively as expected. They highlighted that unearned salary is another major accounting challenge confronting the heads, which often leads them to the Public Accounts Committee.

"Most of them do not have accounting backgrounds, yet they are appointed as heads, so I will say yes, this is a major challenge" (Interview data, Auditor 3)

"The major challenge has to do with the unearned salaries, but not necessarily embezzlement because there are checks and balances...As for unearned salaries, when auditors detect it, you will go to the Public Accounts Committee to justify or to make sure those monies are retrieved" (Interview data, auditor 1)

The responses from the directors varied on the issue of accounting challenges. Some indicated that the heads did not have accounting challenges due to the presence of technical personnel.

"The major challenge has to do with the unearned salaries, but not necessarily embezzlement because there are checks and balances...When auditors detect it, heads are called before the Public Accounts Committee." (Interview data, Director 1)

Other directors also hold the view that there are accounting challenges or issues that the head encounters.

"Yes, delays in releasing funds by the government really affect the implementation of budgets" (Interview data, Director 4)

Generally, the heads, Auditors, and Directors hold the view that the main accounting challenges are irregular provision of school financial statements, delay in releasing funds by the government, inadequate accounting resources, and theft and fraud, and these contribute significantly to financial management challenges in schools. They emphasized much on unearned salary. High levels of fraud within schools compromise financial integrity and can reduce the funds available for essential school activities, thereby affecting educational quality and student outcomes. Adu-Gyamfi et al. (2014) link weak controls with increased risks of fraudulent activity such as theft and fraud in educational institutions. According to Owusu (2023), salary-related financial mismanagement is a major concern in public institutions, as it diverts funds from essential services, arguing that financial infractions in public institutions are often linked to payroll mismanagement rather than outright embezzlement. This also damages the institution's credibility (Boateng & Asamoah, 2021).

Table 9 shows results of budgetary challenges such as overspending of budgeted funds, underspending of budgeted funds, fluctuation in inflation, influence from sponsors and other stakeholders, and exaggerated prices.

Table 9: Budgetary challenges

Cchallenges	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Overspending of budgeted funds	15(23.8%)	12(19.1%)	36(57.1%)
Under-spending of budgeted funds	31(49.2%)	10(15.9%)	22(34.9%)
Fluctuation in inflation (prices of goods & service)	15(23.8%)	7(11.1%)	41(65.1%)
Influence from sponsors and other stakeholders	18(28.6%)	6(9.5%)	39(61.9%)
Exaggerated prices	27(42.9%)	12(19.0%)	24(38.1%)

Source: field data (2024)

The data indicates that overspending of budgeted funds is a significant issue, with 36(57.1%) of respondents agreeing that it is a challenge, while 15 (23.8%) disagree, and 12 (19.1%)

remain neutral. Overspending can stem from unforeseen expenses, inadequate planning, or misallocation of funds, absence of strict budgetary controls in maintaining fiscal discipline, inflation, and fluctuating prices of goods and services (Mestry, 2013; Coleman, 2007; Robbins & Judge, 2019; Oduro & MacBeath, 2003). When schools exceed their budgets, it disrupts the financial equilibrium, potentially resulting in a reduction of funds for essential programs or facilities (Bush, 2008). To minimize overspending challenges, it is essential to strengthen the financial planning capacities of heads through targeted training in budgeting and accounting practices (Bissessar, 2014).

Under-spending of budget fund data indicates that 49.2% of respondents disagree with the narrative suggesting they effectively utilize the funds allocated to them, which implies that under-spending is not a challenge to many schools in the central region. The results also revealed that 65.1% of respondents agree that fluctuations in the inflation of prices of goods and services significantly affect financial management, while 23.8% disagree, with a smaller percentage, of 11.1%, remaining neutral. This overwhelming agreement confirms Mestry (2006), who argues that in Ghana, inflation impacts the cost of goods and services, making it challenging for heads to plan budgets accurately, and this reduces the purchasing power, which can lead to a compromised quality of education delivered (Coleman, 2007). The data indicates that a significant 61.9% of respondents agree that influence from sponsors and other stakeholders is a major budgetary challenge. Conversely, 28.6% disagree, and 9.5% remained neutral.

External influence from sponsors and stakeholders can hinder the autonomy of school heads in financial decision-making. Sponsors, often motivated by their priorities or interests, may dictate how funds are allocated; even when their directives conflict with the schools' most pressing needs (Bush, 2008). This dynamic can create misalignment between stakeholder expectations and the strategic goals of the schools, resulting in inefficient use of resources

(Coleman, 2007). This situation is particularly pronounced in contexts where funding is limited, and schools rely heavily on external donors or organizations for additional support, which can lead to a lack of accountability, conflicts between stakeholders and school leadership, potentially leading to mismanagement of funds (Mestry, 2006; Robbins & Judge, 2019).

The heads' responses indicate that overspending of budgeted funds, fluctuation in inflation, and influence from sponsors and other stakeholders were identified as the major budgetary challenges confronting heads of SHS in financial management. Responses of the auditors also revealed that the absence of budget lines is a critical issue affecting financial management in secondary schools. They elaborated that although headmasters prepare budgets, they have limited control over budget implementation due to the Free Senior High School (SHS) policy. Budget constraints are a major challenge, as schools depend solely on government disbursements, which are often delayed or insufficient.

One interviewee stated, "For the budgeting, sometimes we do the budget, but now we have Free SHS, so they don't collect fees. What we budget for, there is no problem, but we are not in control of the funds" (Interview data, Auditor 2).

The directors reinforced budgetary constraints as a major challenge and emphasized that funding delays hinder financial planning by the heads.

"Funds are not enough, so we do this budget, and we are unable to meet our target." (Interview data, Director 4)

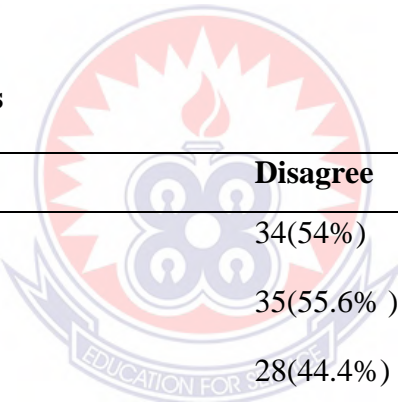
"By the time the funds will even come, then you have finished with the activity you want to undertake, and that affects the activity." (Interview data, Director 2)

Generally, heads indicated overspending of budgeted funds, fluctuation in inflation, and influence from sponsors and other stakeholders were identified as the major budgetary challenges confronting them. Auditors stressed the absence of budget lines as a critical issue affecting financial management, while directors reinforced budgetary constraints as a major

challenge and emphasized that funding delays hinder financial planning by the heads of secondary schools. Schools lack independent revenue-generating mechanisms, such as partnerships, endowment funds, and commercial ventures. Both respondents emphasized that major budgetary constraints the heads encountered include, but are not limited to, uncertainty in budget preparation and usage. Coleman (2007) argues that the absence of strict budgetary controls often leads to overspending, as heads may lack the necessary training to anticipate and mitigate excessive expenditures. Studies confirm that government-controlled budgets limit financial flexibility and delay urgent expenditures (Boateng & Asare, 2021).

Table 10 shows the results of auditing challenges, such as delay in audit feedback, delay in audit report, inadequate audit support, disregarding or failing to implement audit recommendations.

Table 10: Auditing challenges



Challenges	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Delay in audit feedback	34(54%)	10(15.9%)	19(30.1%)
Delay in the audit report	35(55.6%)	13(20.6%)	15(23.8%)
Inadequate audit support	28(44.4%)	10(15.9%)	25(39.7%)
Failure to implement audit recommendations	10(15.9%)	9(14.3%)	44(69.8%)

Source: field data (2024)

Out of four elements stated as audit challenges, the respondents disagree with three, such as delay in audit feedback, delay in audit report, and inadequate audit support. The only element that the respondent agreed was a challenge was disregarding or failing to implement audit recommendations. The study reveals that 69.8% of respondents agreed, while 14.3% remained neutral, and 15.9% disagreed.

From the heads' responses, disregarding or failing to implement audit recommendations is a major audit challenge that the heads identified. The auditors also affirmed that delays in audits and non-compliance with recommendations are a major audit challenge that hinders financial

accountability. Another audit challenge is unearned salaries, a persistent financial audit challenge. One auditor expressed frustration:

“We have a lot of challenges. When we write or report an issue, they don’t respond.”
(Interview data, Auditor 1)

The directors identified audit challenges as a major issue. They stated that some school heads lack a comprehensive understanding of auditing processes, making it difficult for them to comply with audit requirements. One Director commented,

“Yes, it is [a challenge], because sometimes, the knowledge of auditing is not known fully by the heads... They come for audit, and so many issues arise.” (Interview data, Director 4)

Generally, the heads, the auditors, and directors expressed their frustration about the heads’ limited knowledge of audit issues and their refusal to respond to audit recommendations. This leads to financial inefficiencies, and often some mistakes reported earlier are repeated by the heads. Owusu (2023) highlighted that failure to address audit queries weakens financial oversight and accountability. Audit body is an internal financial security controller and advisor in the GES. The role of the Internal Audit is to review the accounts of educational institutions and offices concerning cash management and related internal controls measures, evaluate, and report on the soundness, adequacy, and application of systems, procedures, and related internal controls and review and ascertain the extent to which GES assets are accounted for and safeguarded from losses of all kinds and ensure the effective utilization of those resources (Internal Audit Agency Act, 2003, Act 658). Non-compliance with audit recommendations can have several adverse consequences. Such as repeated financial errors, weakening institutional credibility. Previous studies underscore that inadequate understanding of audit procedures and fear of repercussions can also discourage heads from fully adhering to recommendations.

Table 11 is the result of financial policy challenges affecting financial management, such as conflicting policies, frequent changes in policies, inflexible government policies, and delays in policy implementation.

Table 11: Financial Policy

Challenges	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Conflicting policies	26(41.3%)	10(15.9%)	27(42.8%)
Frequent changes in policies	17(26.9%)	12(19.1%)	34(54.0%)
Inflexible Government policies	15(23.8%)	17(26.9%)	31(49.2%)
Delay in policy implementation	16(25.4%)	11(17.5%)	36(57.1%)

Source: field data (2024)

The data indicates that conflicting financial policies is challenge but not very significant, as 42.8% of respondents agreed, 41.3% disagreed, while 15.9% were neutral. These results suggest a polarized perception, with nearly equal proportions believing that financial policy conflicts either exist or are not prevalent. Nevertheless, conflicting financial policies can create ambiguity and inefficiency in resource allocation and decision-making. For instance, heads may face challenges when policies from different regulatory authorities contradict each other, leading to delays in implementation and confusion in reporting (Mensah & Aboagye, 2022). Additionally, conflicts in policies may result in misuse or underutilization of funds if guidelines are unclear or contradictory, which undermines the confidence of school heads, making them hesitant to execute decisions, especially when they fear repercussions from non-compliance. This situation is exacerbated by inconsistent communication between policy issuers and implementers, which can further complicate understanding and adherence (Osei & Tuffour, 2021). Smith et al (2014) emphasize the importance of integrating policy frameworks through inter-agency collaboration and stakeholder consultation. Such efforts not only reduce conflicts but also improve compliance and accountability in educational institutions.

With the data collected, 54.0% of respondents indicated that frequent changes in financial policies pose challenges to their work, while 26.9% disagreed and 19.1% remained neutral. This suggests that the majority of school heads perceive frequent policy shifts as a significant obstacle. Such challenges may stem from difficulties in adapting to new requirements, inadequate communication of policy changes, or a lack of accompanying resources or training to support implementation. Policy instability may reduce morale among school administrators and affect developing long-term financial plans (Amponsah & Boateng, 2023). Frequent changes in financial policies often leave educational institutions unprepared, particularly when there is a lack of consultation during policy formulation. Smith and Jones (2020) observed at the global front that educational institutions in countries with stable and predictable financial policies exhibit better financial outcomes, suggesting the need for a strategic approach to policy formulation and implementation.

Of the total respondents, 49.2% agree that inflexible government policies pose challenges to financial management, while 26.9% are neutral, and 23.8% disagree. This distribution suggests that a substantial proportion of school heads perceive government policies as restrictive and limiting their ability to manage finances effectively. This also confirms with research findings that government-imposed policies, such as standardized procurement processes, fixed budgets, and delayed disbursement of funds, are often cited as barriers to financial efficiency in public educational institutions (Boateng, 2023). Heads of schools frequently express concerns over the rigidity of policies that fail to account for the unique operational needs of schools. Rigid government policies often create inefficiencies by imposing a one-size-fits-all approach, which fails to address the varying needs of schools. Scholars such as Smith and Jones (2020) advocate for a hybrid model of financial governance, where central oversight is balanced with localized decision-making. This approach ensures accountability while empowering heads to respond to unique challenges. In Ghana, efforts to decentralize

financial decision-making in public schools have shown promise but require further development to align with institutional goals (Osei & Tuffour, 2021).

Response on delay in policy implementation reveals that 57.1% of respondents agreed that it is an issue, while 25.4% disagree, with 17.5% remaining neutral. This indicates that more than half of the respondents perceive delays in policy execution as a challenge, underscoring a persistent issue in the financial administration, which suggests systemic inefficiencies that may impede the smooth execution of financial policies.

The results show that the heads admitted that financial policies, including conflicting policies, frequent changes in policies, inflexible government policies, and delays in policy implementation, contribute to financial management challenges facing them in SHSs. Similarly, the auditors indicated that the major financial policy challenges identified with the heads are conflicting policies, frequent changes in policies, inflexible government policies, and delays in policy implementation.

“When funds are released like this free SHS policy, we have recurrent expenditure and feeding. Sometimes the feeding of the recurrent aspects may not come, and we have to adjust and maybe use some of the feeding for recurrent, so I can say that their policy is not flexible. Even the feeding we can use some for other non-recurrent expenses, so it’s not rigid”. (Interview data, Auditor 2)

The directors equally affirmed that strict financial regulations hinder the flexibility of school heads in managing funds, and bureaucracy delays fund utilization. One Director explained:

“If money is sent to the school, there are so many restrictions, and some of them are a bit challenging to the head because they seem to be so rigid.” (Interview data, Director 2)

“There are certain things we need, but I cannot easily give approval without following laid-down procedures, which can also delay the process.” (Interview data, Director 4)

Generally, while heads acknowledged that conflicting policies, frequent changes in policies, inflexible government policies, and delay in policy implementation are the major financial Policy challenges that confront their financial management, auditors and directors affirmed these and stressed that the major challenge is the inflexible government financial policies. Asiedu and Darko (2021) confirm that overly strict financial policies create bottlenecks in school administration, preventing efficient resource utilization. Established financial regulations make it difficult for heads to respond to urgent financial needs, such as repairing school infrastructure or covering unexpected expenditures.

Table 12 entails the result of professional competency in relation to financial management, which involves academic background and headship demand, inadequate financial management knowledge and skill, inadequate education and training on financial management, lack of competent accounting staff, doubling roles of head as administrator and financial manager, and long stay in schools.

Table 12: Professional competences

COMPETENCE	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Academic background and headship demand	22(34.9%)	12(19.0%)	29(46.1%)
Inadequate financial management knowledge & skill	16(25.4%)	9(14.3%)	38(60.3%)
Inadequate Education and training on financial management	18(28.6%)	7(11.1%)	38(60.3%)
Inexperienced financial management and skills	32(50.8%)	9(14.3%)	22(34.9%)
Lack of competent accounting staff	34(54.0%)	10(15.9%)	19(30.2%)
Duah's roles as head administrator and financial manager	23(36.5%)	10(15.9%)	30(47.6%)
Long stay in schools	39(61.9%)	8(12.7%)	16(25.4%)

Source: field data (2024)

Out of the 7 test indicators, the respondents disagreed with 3, such as inadequate education and training, inexperience in financial management and skills, and long stay in schools, while 4 of

the indicators were agreed upon. The data indicate that 29 (46.1%) of respondents agreed that their academic background adequately prepares them to meet the demands of headship, while 22 (34.9%) disagreed, and 12 (19.0%) remained neutral. This split highlights a significant divergence in perceptions of preparedness among heads. Many heads feel that their educational qualifications and prior training equip them to handle the multifaceted responsibilities of school financial management. However, the 34.9% who disagreed is noteworthy, as it reflects a significant portion of heads who feel underprepared to address the financial challenges of their roles. Mensah and Ofori (2022, 2021) observed that professional competence gaps can lead to inefficiencies in financial decision-making, including misallocation of resources, non-compliance with financial regulations, and challenges in budget preparation and implementation and many school heads in Ghana lack formal training in financial management; while academic qualifications provide theoretical knowledge; they often fail to address the practical demands of headship roles. Smith and Brown (2020) argued that leadership programs must balance theoretical insights with practical skill-building in areas such as budgeting, auditing, and financial reporting, with continuous learning through Continuous Professional Development (CPD) initiatives to ensure heads remain equipped to manage evolving financial challenges.

The findings show that 60.3% of respondents agreed that a lack of adequate financial management knowledge and skills is a challenge, 25.4% disagreed, and 14.3% remained neutral. Lack of financial expertise can lead to misallocation of scarce resources and may inadvertently violate financial policies, affecting the delivery of quality education (Owusu & Adu-Gyamfi, 2022). Boateng and Appiah (2021) found that heads with little to no financial background struggle to navigate complex budgetary and reporting requirements, which negatively impacts the efficiency of resource utilization. Studies from South Africa and India revealed that school heads often lack formal financial training, leading to reliance on accountants or administrative staff who may not fully understand the unique financial needs of

educational institutions (Chitiyo et al., 2022; Ncube & Moyo, 2020). The dominant view underscores a pervasive challenge, suggesting that financial management competencies are not sufficiently emphasized in the professional development of school heads.

The result disclosed that 60.3% of respondents agree that inadequate education and training in financial management contribute to professional competence challenges among heads of the schools. In contrast, 28.6% disagree, and 11.1% are neutral. This confirms a study by Amponsah and Boateng (2023) in Ghana, which revealed that 72% of school heads lacked formal training in financial management, leading to errors in budgeting and accounting practices, and this, according to their findings, resulted in budgetary inefficiencies and increased audit irregularities.

The data shows that 47.6% of respondents agreed that doubling as both administrators and financial managers is a challenge for heads, while 36.5% disagreed, and 15.9% were neutral. This indicates a divided perspective, with nearly half acknowledging the strain of dual roles.

From the results, the heads identified academic background and headship demand, inadequate financial management knowledge and skill, inadequate education and training on financial management, and doubling roles of head as administrator and financial manager as major professional competencies challenges, which they are confronted with in their financial management.

On their part, the auditors noted that some of the heads are not financially competent in their management. They emphasized that many school heads lack financial management training upon their appointment. Without capacity-building programs, heads struggle with budgeting, financial reporting, and procurement processes. The respondents stated that some school heads lack knowledge of financial management, which contributes to budget mismanagement and audit infractions. One auditor stated:

“that one is true, because if you look at the schools, I can say that the heads in central region we have few heads who did business and those who did business if we look at the way they manage the schools’ expenditure it is better and the others who did not do accounting related course, we can say that it’s a problem for them in managing school finances because we have heads who did PE who are heads. Those who did accounting or business, they manage things better. But they are few. Some of them can’t do petty financial records like petty cash unless they have been in the headship position for some time, and before they become abreast with some of the things” (interview data, Auditor 2)

An auditor added that,

“Most of them do not have accounting backgrounds, yet they are appointed as heads, so I will say yes, this is a major challenge” (interview data, auditor 3)

However, the directors acknowledged that although most school heads lack formal financial training, they develop financial competency through experience. Most of the heads did not pursue a financial management-related course at the higher level of education, and the appointment of a head to manage a school does not strictly depend on an accounting background, so some really struggle to cope with the challenges confronted with in managing finances, especially within the first year of appointment. One director confirmed:

“Most heads are not financially trained, but they do have some financial competency due to their career progression... before becoming heads, they often serve in administrative roles, gaining experience in financial management” (Interview data, Director 2).

Another significant revelation by both the auditors and directors concerning financial management challenges is unearned salary. They elaborated that they are unable to pay the government the unearned salaries detected in their schools as a major financial infractions. One director highlighted

“The major challenge has to do with the unearned salaries, but not necessarily embezzlement because there are checks and balances...As for unearned salaries, when auditors detect it, you will go to the Public Accounts Committee to justify or to make sure those monies are retrieved” (Interview data, Director 1)

Generally, heads, auditors, and directors affirmed that general professional financial competence is a challenge for the heads in the financial management of the school. The

academic background of the heads and headship demand, inadequate financial management knowledge and skill, inadequate education and training on financial management, long stay in schools, and doubling roles of head as administrator and financial manager are major professional competencies challenges. Studies indicate that lack of financial training contributes to budgetary inefficiencies and audit infractions (Nsiah, 2020). According to Mensah et al. (2020), the professional background of school administrators significantly influences their financial management capacity and skills to navigate financial complexities effectively. Early-stage headship often involves a steep learning curve, as these leaders must quickly familiarize themselves with budget management, government funding policies, procurement processes, and financial auditing (Oduro & MacBeath, 2003). Furthermore, studies from South Africa and India reveal that school heads often lack formal financial training, leading to reliance on accountants or administrative staff who may not fully understand the unique financial needs of educational institutions (Chitiyo et al., 2022; Ncube & Moyo, 2020).

According to Owusu (2023), salary-related financial mismanagement is a major concern in public institutions, as it diverts funds from essential services, arguing that financial infractions in public institutions are often linked to payroll mismanagement rather than outright embezzlement. The finding is confirmed by Mensah et al. (2023), who found that school heads in Ghana often struggle to balance financial management and administrative duties due to inadequate training, which can be burdensome. Balancing administrative responsibilities with financial oversight often leads to role overload, time constraints, and potential inefficiencies in financial decision-making, which can lead to errors in financial reporting, missed opportunities for funding optimization, and even ethical lapses due to weak oversight (Adomako, 2022).

4.3 Question Two: What are the sources of financial management challenges of heads of senior high schools in the Central Region?

The research question was intended to solicit the sources of management challenges faced by the heads of the schools. The sources are categorized into two: internal and external sources.

Table 13 discloses the responses on the internal sources of financial management challenges centered around low management capacity, poor financial management accountability, lack of budgetary planning and budgeting systems, lack of professional norms or codes of conduct, breakdown in communication between head and account staff, lack of transparency, weak internal control mechanisms, failure by activity initiators to submit relevant accounting support document on time, inadequate supervision and monitoring and disregarding or failing to implement audit recommendation.

Table 13: Internal sources of financial challenges

Internal sources	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Low management capacity	18(28.6%)	6(9.5%)	39(61.9%)
Poor financial accountability	32(51.0%)	8(12.7%)	23(36.3%)
Lack of budgetary planning & budgeting systems	30(47.6%)	11(17.5%)	22(34.9%)
Lack of professional norms/codes of conduct	42(66.7%)	6(9.5%)	15(23.8%)
Breakdown in communication between the head and the account staff	41(65.1%)	10(15.9%)	12(19.0%)
Lack of transparency	21(33.3%)	7(11.1%)	35(55.6%)
Weak internal control mechanisms	24(38.1%)	5(7.9%)	34(54%)
Failure by activity initiators to timely submit relevant accounting support documents	21(33.3%)	4(6.3%)	38(60.4%)
Inadequate supervision and monitoring	19(30.2%)	16(25.4%)	28(44.4%)
Failure to implement audit recommendations	23(36.5%)	5(7.9%)	35(55.5%)

Source: field data (2024)

Out of the 10 test items collected on internal sources of financial management challenges, the data reveal that the respondents disagree with 4 such as poor financial management accountability (51.0%), lack of budgetary planning and budgeting systems (47.6%), lack of professional norms or codes of conduct (66.7%), and breakdown in communication between head and account staff (65.1%), that they are internal sources of financial management challenges to Heads of SHS. Results from the data reveal that 61.9% of respondents agreed that low management capacity could be the source of financial difficulties, while 28.6% disagreed, and 9.5% were neutral. The majority agreement confirms studies that suggest that limited training and outdated knowledge are key barriers to effective financial leadership, and low management capacity often correlates with financial inefficiencies (Adu-Gyamfi & Attipoe, 2023).

The survey data reveal that 55.6% of respondents agreed that lack of transparency is a significant internal source of financial management challenge, while 33.3% disagreed, and 11.1% remained neutral. The majority agreement confirms that many schools struggle with transparency due to weak internal controls and inadequate training for financial managers. Transparency failures may arise from inconsistent financial reporting, lack of stakeholder involvement, or deliberate concealment of financial information. According to Amponsah and Boateng (2023), these practices erode trust among stakeholders and create an environment prone to mismanagement and misuse of funds. Johnson and Lee (2019) suggest that transparency is a key determinant of financial sustainability in schools, and this internal measure has to be enforced for effective financial management.

The table also shows that 54.0% of respondents agreed that weak internal controls present a significant internal source of financial management challenges, with 38.1% disagreed and 7.9% neutral. Schools with robust internal control systems demonstrate better financial accountability and resource management. Boateng and Agyemang (2023) argue that

inadequate controls often result from limited training and insufficient oversight. At the global front, the importance of internal controls is important in preventing financial irregularities, emphasizing that their absence can lead to systemic inefficiencies (Maxwell and Hughes, 2020)

With the data collected, 60.4% of respondents agreed that failure to submit accounting support documents on time is a major internal source of financial management challenge. 33.3% disagreed, and 6.3% were neutral. This confirms Amponsah and Boateng's (2023) observation that untimely submission of documents often results in bottlenecks in the financial management process, increasing the likelihood of errors and inefficiencies. Late submissions disrupt financial workflows, resulting in inefficiencies and reduced transparency. This challenge can lead to delays in reconciling accounts, preparing accurate reports, and making informed financial decisions. Amponsah and Boateng (2023) observe that untimely submission of documents often results in bottlenecks in the financial management process, increasing the likelihood of errors and inefficiencies. On the contrary, the 33.3% disagreement highlights that some schools may have established protocols to ensure timely submission. These protocols might include regular training for staff, clear communication of deadlines, and the use of digital systems to track submissions. However, the 6.3% neutrality suggests that some respondents may lack direct involvement in or understanding of the submission process. Maxwell and Hughes (2020) advocate for digital solutions that enable real-time tracking and submission of financial documents, thereby reducing delays and improving accountability.

Inadequate supervision and monitoring data indicate that 44.4% of respondents agreed that it's a financial management challenge. Conversely, 30.2% disagreed, while 25.4% were neutral on the issue. Although the majority agreed (44.4%), it does not seem to be a significant, persistent problem of internal control mechanisms within schools. Nevertheless, a lack of oversight often leads to inefficiencies and mismanagement of funds (Owusu-Agyeman & Aheto, 2022), and the same concern is raised by Johnson and Lee (2019), who highlight that poorly defined

supervisory structures contribute to financial mismanagement. The 30.2% disagreement suggests that some schools may have sufficient monitoring structures in place, likely due to the implementation of regular internal audits or clearly defined supervisory roles. Effective financial management requires robust supervision and monitoring to ensure compliance with financial regulations, reduce the risk of errors, and prevent fraud.

Disregarding or failing to implement audit recommendations, survey data reveal that 55.5% of respondents acknowledged that it is an internal source of financial management challenge. Meanwhile, 36.5% disagreed, and 7.9% were uncertain about this issue. The audit findings and recommendations contained in the audit reports, which were discussed with the Heads of the institutions and their comments, where appropriate, were incorporated in management letters issued to them after each audit.

Issues of concern without sufficient justification are brought to the attention of Parliament in accordance with Article 187(5) of the 1992 Constitution (Auditor General Report, 2021). Johnson and Lee (2019) argue that non-compliance often stems from a lack of institutional accountability and weak enforcement mechanisms. Amponsah and Boateng (2023) also identified resource limitations and lack of training as major barriers to implementing audit recommendations in educational institutions in Ghana. Osei and Tuffour (2021) highlight that schools with robust internal control systems demonstrate better financial accountability and resource management. Amponsah and Boateng (2023) observe that untimely submission of documents often results in bottlenecks in the financial management process, increasing the likelihood of errors and inefficiencies.

Generally, the heads revealed that low financial management capacity, lack of transparency, weak internal control mechanisms, failure by activity initiators to submit relevant accounting support documents on time, inadequate supervision and monitoring, and disregarding or failing

to implement audit recommendations were identified by heads of SHSs as major internal sources of financial management challenges.

From the auditors' perspective, internal sources of financial management challenges include low financial management capacity, weak internal control mechanisms, inadequate budgetary planning and budgeting systems, inadequate supervision and monitoring, and disregarding or failing to implement audit recommendations. Lack of payment of rent was also another cause identified. They hold the view that many school heads have low financial management capacity, which is a lack of formal training in financial management, making it difficult for them to handle budgets, audits, and financial policies effectively. One auditor noted:

“They don't have training when they are appointed, that is, capacity-building training on financial management; they lack it, and that contributes to the financial management challenges.” (Interview data, Auditor 3)

An Auditor added,

“I can say that the heads in the Central Region, we have a few heads who did business, and those who did business manage the schools' expenditure better. But they are few. Some of them can't do petty financial records like petty cash unless they have been in the headship position for some time.” (Interview data, Auditor 2)

Another internal source noted by auditors is the lack of budgetary planning and budgeting systems. Some school heads fail to follow structured financial plans, non-adherence to expenditure guidelines, leading to debt accumulation and mismanagement.

An auditor noted:

“The secondary schools do not have budget lines. The secondary schools' headmasters do not have any issue in preparing the budget, but we are not considered when it comes to the implementation of the budget.” (Interview data, Auditor 1)

“A school should have a strict budget plan. If you don't follow it strictly, there will be poor financial management” (Interview data, Auditor 2).

Again, the auditors admitted inadequate supervision and monitoring by them as a body mandated to provide financial checks and balances at the school as a contributing factor to the school's financial management challenges. Some schools are audited annually, while others are audited twice a year. The limited number of internal auditors in the Ghana Education Service (GES) exacerbates financial mismanagement issues. This shortfall results in irregular audits, allowing financial mismanagement to persist undetected.

One auditor commented, "Auditors are not sufficient, especially internal auditors in the Ghana Education Service" (Interview data, Auditor 3).

Another stated, *"The schools are audited annually. So, it is done once in a year, which is not sufficient" (Interview data, Auditor 1).*

Disregarding or failing to implement audit recommendations was another noted source identified. The respondents noted that audit findings are often not addressed promptly by higher authorities. This failure to act on audit reports limits the effectiveness of financial oversight mechanisms.

One interviewee lamented, "That is the challenge, I would rather report to my director, and they don't respond" when we write or report an issue, they don't respond" (Interview data, Auditor 1).

The auditor noted, *"A school should have a strict budget plan. If you don't follow it strictly, there will be poor financial management" (Interview data, Auditor 2).*

According to the directors, internal financial challenges include low financial management capacity, lack of professional norms or codes of conduct, which result in procurement breaches and non-competitive bidding, weak internal control mechanisms, which result in unearned salaries and payroll mismanagement, inadequate budgetary planning and budgeting systems, and disregarding or failing to implement audit recommendations. A director emphasized that most school heads lack formal financial training; they develop financial competency through experience. Most of the heads did not pursue a financial management-related course at the higher level of education, and the appointment of a head to manage a school does not strictly

depend on accounting background, so some really struggle to cope with the challenges confronted with managing finances, especially within the first year of appointment. One director noted:

“Most heads are not financially trained, but they do have some financial competency due to their career progression...” (Interview data, Director 2)

Directors also identified audit as a major issue. This implies that some school heads lack a comprehensive understanding of auditing processes, making it difficult for them to comply with audit requirements and respond to audit recommendations promptly. One director stated:

“Yes, it is a challenge, because sometimes, the knowledge of auditing is not known fully by the heads... They come for audit, and so many issues arise.” (Interview data, Director 4)

The directors added that many financial irregularities in schools stem from a lack of professional norms or codes of conduct, which result in procurement breaches and non-competitive bidding, tax compliance, and improper documentation. One Director pointed out procurement as a frequent source of financial mismanagement:

“At times they have to go through procurement, and sometimes the quotations that they are to look for, they don't get the right quotations, and sometimes too they go by sole sourcing, which auditors don't want.” (Interview data, Director 3)

Another director further explained how bureaucracy slows down procurement:

“You know there are certain things we need them for, but I cannot easily give approval without following the laid-down procedures, which can also delay.” (Interview data, Director 4)

The director also highlighted weak internal control mechanisms, which result in unearned salaries and payroll mismanagement as a persistent financial challenge. They emphasized that delayed detection and retrieval of unearned salaries create administrative and financial challenges.

“People will be paid, and they will not be at post, and this will affect teaching and learning ... when auditors detect it, you will go to the Public Accounts Committee to justify or to make sure those monies are retrieved” (Interview data, Director 1)

The directors' inadequate budgetary planning and budgeting systems equally cause most of the SHSs to operate with limited control over funds, making it difficult to address pressing school needs. One Director stated:

“Funds are not enough, so we do this budget, and we are unable to meet our target.”
(Interview data, Director 4)

Furthermore, the directors identified disregarding or failing to implement audit recommendations. Delays in submitting financial records create audit infractions. Some school heads lack a comprehensive understanding of auditing processes, making it difficult for them to comply with audit requirements and respond to audit recommendations promptly.

“Reporting time is one of the causes of financial challenges; when given the money, submitting reports on time becomes a challenge.” (Interview data, Director 3)

“Yes, it is [a challenge], because sometimes, the knowledge of auditing is not known fully by the heads... They come for audit, and so many issues arise.” (Interview data, Director 4)

Generally, the heads of schools identified key internal financial management challenges, including low financial management capacity, lack of transparency, weak internal control mechanisms, delays in submitting accounting documents, and inadequate supervision and monitoring. From the editors' perspective, the major internal financial challenges included low financial management capacity, weak internal controls, poor budgeting systems, inadequate supervision, and failure to implement audit recommendations. Additionally, non-payment of rent by school staff was highlighted as a concern. The directors confirmed similar issues, emphasizing a lack of professional financial norms, procurement breaches, non-competitive bidding, weak internal controls leading to unearned salaries and payroll mismanagement, poor budgeting systems, and disregard for audit recommendations.

Table 14 concerns the data collated about external sources of financial management challenges faced by heads of SHS.

Table 14: External Source Financial Challenges

Sources	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Delay in releasing funds by the government	11(17.5%)	9(14.2%)	43(68.3%)
Absence of clear financial regulations	23(36.5%)	7(11.1%)	33(52.4%)
Absence of an approved annual procurement plan	39(61.9%)	11(17.5%)	13(20.6%)
Influence of sponsors and other stakeholders	22(34.9%)	15(23.8%)	26(41.3%)
Inflation fluctuation	13(20.7%)	6(9.5%)	44(69.8%)
Inadequate financial management knowledge of the Board of Governors	25(39.7%)	4(6.3%)	34(54.0%)
Irregular auditing	32(50.8 %)	9(14.3%)	22(34.9%)
Strict financial policies	22(34.9%)	7(11.1%)	34(54%)
Poor implementation of financial policies	19(30.2%)	16(25.4%)	28(44.4%)
Forged signatures	32(50.8%)	12(19.0%)	19(30.2%)

Source: field data (2024)

Out of the 10 items soliciting views from heads about external sources of financial management challenges, the head of SHS, the respondents disagree with 3 of them, which are the absence of an approved annual procurement plan, irregular auditing, and forged signatures.

The survey data reveal that 68.3% of respondents agreed that delays in the release of government funds are a significant external source of financial management challenge. On the contrary, 17.5% disagreed, and 14.2% were neutral. According to Tuffour et al (2022), late disbursement of funds forces school heads to adopt ad hoc measures, such as seeking credit or reducing essential expenditures, which can lead to debt accumulation and reduced educational outcomes. The high proportion of agreement (68.3%) emphasizes the systemic nature of delayed funding as a pervasive issue affecting senior high schools in Ghana. Delays disrupt financial planning, hinder operational efficiency, and compromise the delivery of quality

education. Agyapong and Adjei (2023) argue that financial delays are a critical barrier to achieving operational efficiency in educational institutions and force institutions into unsustainable debt cycles (Maxwell & Hughes, 2020). Boateng and Agyemang (2023) emphasize the need for policy reforms to ensure consistent and reliable funding mechanisms.

According to the data, 52.4% of respondents agreed that the lack of clear financial regulations is a challenge. 36.5% disagreed, while 11.1% remained neutral. Research highlights the critical role of clear financial regulations in improving accountability and transparency in educational institutions. When regulations are unclear or poorly communicated, they create room for financial mismanagement, corruption, and According to the survey data, 41.3% agreed that the influence of sponsors and other stakeholders is a challenge, 34.9% of respondents disagreed, and 23.8% were neutral. The mixed responses reflect the complex role that sponsors and stakeholders play in school financial management. Agyapong and Adjei (2023) noted that while stakeholders often bring valuable resources, their involvement can also lead to conflicts when their expectations clash with the school's strategic goals. Similarly, a lack of clear guidelines on stakeholder roles contributes to financial challenges in many Ghanaian schools. For instance, stakeholder-driven demands for unplanned expenditures or preferential resource allocation may disrupt school budgets, and there is an importance of balancing stakeholder influence with the financial autonomy of school leaders to minimize conflicts and ensure efficient use of external resources (Johnson and Lee, 2019).

The data indicate that 69.8% of respondents agreed that inflation fluctuations are a significant external source of financial management challenges. In contrast, 20.7% disagreed, and 9.5% were neutral. Maxwell and Hughes (2020) state that inflation creates financial uncertainty, reducing the ability of school administrators to meet operational costs effectively. This highlights the pervasive impact of economic instability and undermines the purchasing power of schools, leading to difficulties in maintaining budgets and meeting operational costs. Rising

prices of essential supplies such as teaching materials, food for boarding students, and maintenance services result in budget overruns. Osei and Tuffour (2021) observed that inflationary pressures strain the financial stability of schools, forcing administrators to make trade-offs that often compromise quality education. Kwame et al. (2022) argue that government support is critical in buffering schools from the adverse effects of economic instability.

Out of the total respondents, 54.0% of them agreed that inadequate financial management knowledge of the Board of Governors is a challenge. Meanwhile, 39.7% disagreed, and 6.3% as neutral. This affirms Boateng and Agyemang's (2023) observation that many school boards lack structured training in financial management, leading to weak oversight and challenges in implementing financial policies. Johnson and Lee (2019) emphasize the role of financial education for school boards, noting that institutions with financially literate boards tend to perform better in managing resources. Thus, Boards with insufficient knowledge in financial management may fail to provide appropriate guidance or oversight, leading to ineffective decision-making.

The evidence from the survey data reveals that 54.0% of respondents agreed that strict financial policies are an external source of financial challenges. 34.9% disagreed, and 11.1% were neutral. This is in line with findings that delays in fund disbursement due to rigid bureaucratic processes can impede school operations, especially in resource-constrained settings (Amponsah & Boateng, 2023). Strict financial policies are a double-edged sword in financial management. While they promote accountability, they can also limit flexibility, particularly in contexts with limited resources or inefficient bureaucratic systems (Kwame et al., 2022). Maxwell and Hughes (2020) highlight the importance of tailoring policies to the specific contexts of educational institutions, particularly in low-resource settings.

The data shows that 44.4% of respondents agreed that poor implementation of financial policies is an external challenge to financial management, while 30.2% disagreed, and 25.4% were

neutral. This means that the majority agreed that the issue is a challenge. Boateng and Agyemang (2023) argue that without proper enforcement mechanisms, even well-designed policies fail to achieve their intended outcomes. Poor implementation of financial policies often stems from gaps in oversight, lack of enforcement mechanisms, and limited capacity of school heads and staff to adhere to established guidelines (Owusu & Mensah, 2021). inefficiencies (Amponsah & Boateng, 2023). In addition, Johnson and Lee (2019) assert that regulatory frameworks are particularly vital in resource-constrained environments where financial oversight is limited. These findings underscore the need for comprehensive and accessible financial regulations to guide school financial management.

The heads, per the table above, agreed that delay in releasing funds by the government, absence of clear financial regulations, influence of sponsors and other stakeholders, inflation fluctuation, inadequate financial management knowledge of the board of governors, strict financial policies, and poor implementation of financial policies are the major external sources of financial management challenges.

Auditors also admitted that delays in releasing funds by the government, strict financial policies, budgetary constraints, irregular fund disbursement, and inflexible financial policies are major external sources of financial management challenges. The auditors noticed that the delay in releasing funds by the government is one of the major causes of financial management challenges, as schools depend solely on government funding, which is often delayed in disbursement or insufficient, making it difficult to manage school finances effectively and forcing administrators to make ad-hoc financial decisions, sometimes leading to deficits. One auditor explained,

“The monies that are coming into the school, we have one for recurrent expenditures and one for the Free SHS feeding, but the recurrent is not coming, it will affect administration.” (Interview data, Auditor 2)

“The money comes, but it doesn’t come regularly” (Interview data, Auditor 1).

Another Auditor linked financial delays to resource shortages:

“More often than not, the financial sources are not sufficient, and the suppliers are afraid to sell these items to the school.” (Interview data, Auditor 3)

Again, Auditors explained that strict and inflexible financial policies limit school heads' ability to respond to urgent financial needs, causing administrative inefficiencies.

An Auditor stated,

“The financial policies are so rigid that it becomes difficult for heads to make their way out” (Interview data, Auditor 3)

Auditors added that there is poor adherence to budget plans, as many school heads fail to adhere strictly to budget plans, leading to financial mismanagement and accumulation of debt. An auditor noted,

“A school should have a strict budget plan. If you don't follow it strictly, there will be poor financial management” (Interview data, Auditor 2).

Directors equally confirmed that the delay in releasing funds by the government and inflation fluctuation are the main sources of financial management challenges. They also identified restrictions to PTA assistance and Procurement Issues and VAT Compliance as equally important factors. Directors again indicated that one of the biggest sources of external financial challenges facing schools is delayed government funding, which disrupts school operations. A director lamented,

“The release of funds to the schools is not very regular. The very time you expect funds to be released, then the funds will not come, and you have to struggle through.” (Interview data, Director 4)

Another Director explained how schools lose financial independence due to restriction to PTA Support and over-reliance on government funds.

“They were having the opportunity of raising funds for the school with the PTA, but now the PTA—they can’t go near them at all, so when you are in dire need of something, they have to wait for the government, which may not come at the right time.” (Interview data, Director 2)

One director lamented how schools struggle with financial planning due to inflation and rising costs of goods and services.

*“The schools need to buy teaching and learning materials (TLMs) to support teaching, and if the time to buy them is delayed, prices go up, and you end up buying at a higher price.”
(Interview data, Director 4)*

The directors raised concerns about procurement infractions and tax non-compliance as another source of the challenge. One director stated:

“At times, they forgo withholding tax, which is a serious issue because after purchasing goods, they need to pay withholding tax” (Interview data, Director 3)

Generally, the heads of SHSs admitted that delay in releasing funds by government, absence of clear financial regulations, influence of sponsors and other stakeholders, inflation fluctuation, inadequate financial management knowledge of board of governors, strict financial policies and poor implementation of financial policies are the major external source of financial management challenges, Auditors also identified delay in releasing funds by government, strict financial policies, budgetary constraints and irregular fund disbursement, inflexible financial policies as major external source of financial management challenges and Directors affirmed that delay in releasing funds by government and inflation fluctuations are sources of financial management challenges. They also identified restrictions to PTA assistance, procurement issues, and VAT Compliance as equally important factors. Hallack and Poisson (2000) explained that there are both internal and external factors that contribute to financial mismanagement in organizations. Low management capacity and lack of control mechanisms are factors that lead to mismanagement of finances, such as diversion or embezzlement of funds.

4.4 Question Three: What are the effects of financial management challenges on senior high schools in the Central Region?

This question solicited views from the respondents about the effect of financial management challenges on the academic performance of the schools. Table 15 indicates the response to the invitation of SHS heads by the Public Accounts Committee.

Table 15: Invitation by the Public Accounts Committee

Invitation	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	48	76.2
No	15	23.8
Total	63	100

Source: field data (2024)

The survey data indicate that 76.2% of schools have been invited by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), with 23.8% stating they have not. This suggests that a majority of senior high schools face significant scrutiny from PAC. Amponsah and Boateng (2023) highlight that scrutiny often stems from lapses in financial accountability and weak oversight mechanisms. The PAC scrutiny underscores the broader effects of financial management challenges on school heads, which include stress and burnout; thus, frequent financial audits and public scrutiny may lead to significant stress for school heads and reduce their effectiveness as leaders.

The heads agree that a majority of senior high schools face significant scrutiny from the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). Also, both Auditors and Directors affirmed that the schools under their supervision have been invited to PAC before

One auditor stated,

“Yes, PAC has invited us several times (Interview data, Auditor 2)”

This was confirmed by the directors,

“Yes, I have four schools and almost all four schools have appeared before the Public Account Committee before” (Interview data, Director 3)”

Generally, the heads, auditors, and directors affirmed that the majority of senior high schools face significant scrutiny from PAC. PAC scrutiny underscores the broader effects of financial

management challenges on school heads, which include stress and burnout; thus, frequent financial audits and public scrutiny may lead to significant stress for school heads and reduce their effectiveness as leaders. Amponsah and Boateng (2023) highlight that scrutiny often stems from lapses in financial accountability and weak oversight mechanisms.

Table 16 is a response to the frequency of invitations by the Public Accounts Committee.

Table 16: Frequency of invitation by the Public Accounts Committee

Number of times	Frequency	Percentage
Once	23	47.9
Twice	14	29.2
Thrice	08	16.7
More than Thrice	03	6.2
Total	48	100

Source: field data (2024)

The survey data reveal that out of 48 respondents who had been invited before, 47.9% had been invited once, 29.2% have been invited twice, 16.7% have been invited three times, and 6.2% have been invited more than three times. This means that 52.1 % of the schools for the study had appeared before the PAC more than once.

The heads confirmed that a greater number of the schools had appeared before the PAC more than once. This was affirmed by the auditors and directors that the schools under their jurisdiction have been invited by PAC more than once. One Director said,

“Yes, they have been invited more than three times” (Interview data, Auditor 3)

“Yes, two out of the three secondary schools have been invited twice, but the other one is a new school, so they have yet to face the public accounts committee. Even just last week, one school appeared before PAC.”

(Interview data, Director 2)

So generally, the majority of schools have been invited more than once to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), according to heads, Auditors and Directors. According to Osei and Tuffour (2021), consistent external oversight interventions, such as PAC, often reflect deeper systemic failures in the financial administration of the school. Schools with weak internal controls and financial accountability frameworks are more likely to attract scrutiny from external regulatory

bodies, and the reputational damage associated with such scrutiny can have long-term effects on school-community relationships (Boateng & Agyemang, 2023).

Table 17 presents results about heads of senior high schools' perception of effects of financial management challenges in running the school, using mean and standard deviation for the analysis and discussion. The decision rule of a mean of 2.50 is used in the discussion; therefore, all values above 2.50 mean the challenge has an effect, and values less than 2.50 mean they don't believe that it has an effect.

Table 17: Heads' Perception of Effects of Financial Knowledge Challenges

Financial management challenges can lead to.....	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std Dev.
funds misappropriation	9(14.2%)	15(23.8%)	24(38.1%)	15(23.9%)	(2.86)	1.08
insufficient instructional materials in schools	7(11.1%)	8(12.7%)	32(50.8%)	16(25.4%)	(2.90)	0.92
shortage of foodstuffs	10(15.9%)	2(3.2%)	42(66.7%)	9(14.2%)	2.79	0.87
shortage of logistics at the school	7(11.1%)	9(14.2%)	33(52.5%)	14(22.2%)	(2.86)	0.887
ineffective teachers' work performance	6(9.5%)	15(23.8%)	34(54.0%)	8(12.7%)	(2.80)	0.81
Poor student academic performance	6(9.5%)	12(19.1%)	37(58.7%)	8(12.7%)	2.75	0.79
school debt	9(14.3%)	12(19.1%)	27(42.7%)	15(23.8%)	2.76	0.98
Inefficient administrative duty of a head	12(19.1%)	13(20.6%)	30(47.6%)	8(12.7%)	2.54	0.94
social stigma about the school image	11(17.5%)	12(19.1%)	32(50.7%)	8(12.7%)	2.59	0.92
loss of the head's leadership position	6(9.5%)	6(9.5%)	35(55.6%)	16(25.4%)	(2.97)	0.86
emotional stress on the head	7(11.1%)	6(9.5%)	23(36.6%)	27(42.8%)	(3.11)	0.98
emotional stress on staff	24(38.1%)	15(23.8%)	18(28.6%)	6(9.5%)	2.10	1.00
Grand mean/Standard Deviation					2.75	0.92

Source: field data 2024 Decision rule: Mean of 2.50

The responses in Table 17 show that the mean of 2.86 and the standard deviation of 1.08 indicate that the financial challenges lead to misappropriation. This is because the mean is above the cutoff of 2.50. This finding is supported by prior research, which indicates that weak financial controls, delays in the disbursement of funds, and inadequate financial oversight often result in misallocation and misappropriation of school resources (Owusu & Asare, 2022). The issue of financial challenges leads to a shortage of instruction received, with a mean of 2.90

and a standard deviation of 0.92, implying it is a problem as the mean is above the threshold (2.50). This finding aligns with research, which highlights that inadequate financial resources often result in a shortage of essential teaching and learning materials, negatively affecting educational outcomes (Mensah & Agyapong, 2021).

The data collected also indicate the mean of (2.86), which suggests that respondents generally agree that inadequate financial management contributes to logistical shortages in SHSs. The standard deviation of 0.887 indicates a moderate level of variability in responses, implying that while most respondents agree, some have differing views on the extent of the impact. The existing research confirms this finding, emphasizing that financial constraints, delayed disbursement of funds, and poor budgeting practices often result in schools struggling to acquire essential logistics for smooth operations (Adu-Gyamfi & Adjei, 2021).

Furthermore, the responses of perception of school heads regarding the effects of financial management challenges, specifically, ineffective teachers' work performance, show a mean of 2.80 and a standard deviation of 0.81. The results suggest that respondents generally agree that financial constraints negatively impact teachers' effectiveness. The standard deviation of 0.810 indicates a moderate level of variation in responses, meaning that while most respondents agree with this assertion, others may believe that additional factors, such as teacher motivation, leadership, or policies, also play a role in teachers' effectiveness. This finding is consistent with previous studies, which highlight that inadequate financial resources often lead to delays in salary payments, a lack of teaching incentives, and poor working conditions. It also corresponds with the study by Vito and Postrano (2025) revealing that teachers experienced a moderate level of financial challenges and that these challenges were significantly associated with lower levels of teaching effectiveness, as financial stress adversely affected their energy, focus, professional growth opportunities, and overall classroom performance, thereby underscoring a clear empirical link between financial constraints and diminished teacher performance. Sometimes, these challenges can lead to loss of the head's leadership position,

which is confirmed with a mean of 2.97 and a standard deviation of 0.86. The mean (2.97) suggests strong agreement among respondents. The standard deviation (0.86) indicates moderate variability in responses. School heads are required to follow strict financial policies and guidelines, and non-compliance or mismanagement may lead to audits and sanctions, including dismissal (Mensah & Owusu, 2022). In cases of financial mismanagement, they may face disciplinary actions, including dismissal (Owusu & Asare, 2022).

Again, the mean score of 3.11 and standard deviation of 0.98 confirm that financial management challenges are widely perceived as a major cause of emotional stress among school heads. The standard deviation suggests moderate to high variation in responses, meaning that while most respondents agree, some may have different views based on their specific experiences. Financial mismanagement, whether intentional or due to systemic issues, can lead to disciplinary actions, legal consequences, or loss of leadership positions (Owusu & Asare, 2022). Heads of schools often handle multiple responsibilities, including administrative duties, financial oversight, and academic leadership. This work overload, lack of support, coupled with inadequate financial resources and financial accountability pressure make it difficult to delegate tasks effectively, increasing their stress levels (Mensah & Owusu, 2022).

The heads of SHSs admit that financial management challenges have a significant effect on misappropriation of funds, insufficient instructional materials in schools, a shortage of logistics in schools, ineffective teachers' work performance, and emotional stress on the head.

The auditors also outlined the effect such as teaching and learning quality, infrastructure and facility deterioration, poor student academic performance, increased debt accumulation and financial instability, Public Accounts Committee (PAC) investigations, legal sanctions, decline in school reputation, and enrolment. They lamented

“Teachers don't get teaching and learning materials, which makes lesson preparation difficult.” (Auditor 3)

“Some suppliers refuse to give credit to schools because previous bills have not been paid.”
(Auditor 3)

Sometimes the head has to go and borrow to solve a pressing case, and it's so stressful.
(Interview data, Auditor 2)

The directors equally affirmed that the financial management challenges have an effect on teaching and learning quality, infrastructure and facility deterioration, poor student academic performance, increased debt accumulation and financial instability, PAC investigations and legal sanctions, decline in school reputation, and enrolment.

“Once the school is facing financial management challenges, it trickles down to affect the students because what the school needs to give to the children will not be there to support them.” (Interview data Director 3)

“It affects teaching and learning because teachers will not get the needed teaching resources, likewise the students, at the right time.” (Interview data Director 3)

“It was this withholding tax and other things, like some activities that were not properly backed with appropriate receipts, and VAT invoices.” (Interview data Director 4)

“Auditing may create a bad image of the school. Sometimes they inform me that they are being invited for PAC, and they complain that they are troubling us.” (Director 3). *“It was withholding taxes and procurement issues, like activities that were not properly backed with receipts.”* (Interview data Director 4)

From the table, the heads of SHSs admit that financial management challenges have an effect on misappropriation of funds, insufficient instructional materials in schools, a shortage of logistics at the school, ineffective teachers' work performance, and emotional stress on the head. The auditors also identified that financial management challenges will have an effect on teaching and learning quality, infrastructure and facility deterioration, poor student academic performance, increased debt accumulation and financial instability, PAC investigations, legal sanctions, decline in school reputation, and enrolment. They lamented

“Teachers don't get teaching and learning materials, which makes lesson preparation difficult.” (Auditor 3)

“Some suppliers refuse to give credit to schools because previous bills have not been paid.”
(Auditor 3)

*Sometimes the head has to go and borrow to solve a pressing case, and it's so stressful.
(Interview data, Auditor 2)*

The directors equally affirmed that the financial management challenges have an effect on teaching and learning quality, infrastructure and facility deterioration, poor student academic performance, increased debt accumulation and financial instability, PAC investigations and legal sanctions, decline in school reputation, and enrolment.

“Once the school is facing financial management challenges, it trickles down to affect the students because what the school needs to give to the children will not be there to support them.” (Interview data Director 3)

“It affects teaching and learning because teachers will not get the needed teaching resources, likewise the students, at the right time.” (Interview data Director 3)

“It was this withholding tax and other things, like some activities that were not properly backed with appropriate receipts, and VAT invoices.” (Interview data Director 4)

Heads are unable to meet their targets... They plan to do A, B, C, D, but because of the lack of funds, they are unable to achieve the targets.” (Director 4)

“Auditing may create a bad image of the school. Sometimes they inform me that they are being invited for PAC, and they complain that they are troubling us.” (Director 3). “It was withholding taxes and procurement issues, like activities that were not properly backed with receipts.” (Interview data, Director 4)

“Heads are unable to meet their targets... They plan to do A, B, C, D, but because of the lack of funds, they are unable to achieve the targets.” (Interview data, Director 4)

Generally, the heads, auditors, and directors admit that financial management challenges affect misappropriation of funds, insufficient instructional materials in the schools, a shortage of logistics to the school, ineffective teachers' work performance, poor student academic performance, increased debt accumulation and financial instability, PAC investigations and legal sanctions, emotional stress on head, decline in school reputation and enrolment.

These findings align with research, which highlights that inadequate financial resources often result in a shortage of essential teaching and learning materials, negatively affecting educational outcomes (Vito and Postrano, 2025)

4.5 Question Four: What support systems are available for heads in managing the school finances of senior high schools in the Central Region?

Table 18 is the data collated from the respondents on financial management support systems available for heads in senior high schools in the central region, Ghana.

Table 18: Frequency of financial management support available to heads of SHS

SUPPORT SYSTEM	NEVER	SOME TIMES	OFTEN
Regular auditing	6(9.5%)	21(33.3%)	36(57.2%)
Prompt audit feedback	11(17.5%)	15(23.8%)	37(58.7%)
Assistance from teachers with financial management knowledge	37(58.7%)	20(31.8%)	6(9.5%)
Assistance from non-teaching Staff (Account Staff, Domestic Bursars, etc.)	13(20.6%)	17(27%)	33(52.4%)
MMD Director of Education support	31(49.2%)	26(41.3%)	6(9.5%)
Financial knowledge by the Board of Governors to support the head	26(41.3%)	28(44.4%)	9(14.3%)
Relevant CPD on financial management	18(28.5%)	35(55.6%)	10(15.9%)
Efficient procurement and tendering committee	18(28.5%)	20(31.8%)	25(39.7%)
Stock security control (protection of stock)	15(23.8%)	24(38.1%)	24(38.1%)

Source: field data (2024)

Out of the 9 test items indicating the various support system that might be available to the heads of SHSs, the data from 7 indicate that heads never or seldom receive assistance from teachers with financial management knowledge, MMD Director of Education support, financial knowledge by board of governors to support head, procurement and tendering committee and stock security control (protection of stock). This confirms with several studies that have highlighted the inadequacies in financial management support systems available to heads of Senior High Schools (SHSs) in Ghana. A study by Amankwah (2021) found that while school heads are expected to oversee financial activities, many do not receive adequate guidance from the Ghana Education Service (GES) on financial policies and best practices. Agyapong and Mensah (2020) also confirmed this finding in their study that over 60% of board members in their study lacked formal training in financial management, leading to poor budgetary controls and ineffective monitoring of school funds. These findings indicate that many heads of SHSs

struggle with financial administration due to insufficient assistance from trained financial personnel, among others.

However, the survey data reveal that 57.2% of respondents indicated that auditing is often available, 33.3% reported its availability sometimes, and 9.5% noted it's never available. This means the majority of respondents acknowledged that regular audits are often conducted in their school. This suggests that regular auditing is a common practice in many schools. Regular auditing is crucial for ensuring transparency and accountability in financial management within educational institutions. This is in support of the Public Financial Management Act, 2016 (Act 921), along with its accompanying regulations, provides the legal framework governing public financial management in Ghana, mandating regular audits of public institutions, including SHSs (Public Financial Management Act, 2016). Additionally, the Audit Service Regulations, 2011, empower the Audit Service to conduct audits beyond the regular financial audits, further ensuring thorough oversight (Audit Service Regulations, 2011). Research by Nartey Menzo (2024) highlights the effectiveness of internal audits, financial regulations, and audit committees in enhancing financial governance and fraud prevention in Ghana's public institutions, including educational establishments. The Auditor-General's report for the financial year ending December 31, 2023, indicates that out of 855 educational institutions audited, only 37 failed to submit their financial statements within the statutory period, underscoring the comprehensive nature of these audits (Ghana Audit Service, 2023).

The data indicate that 17.5% (11) of respondents never received prompt audit feedback, 23.8% (15) of respondents indicated they sometimes receive prompt audit feedback, and 58.7% of respondents (37 schools) reported that they often receive prompt audit feedback. This suggests that a significant proportion benefits from a reliable audit feedback mechanism. The Auditor-General's report for the financial year ending December 31, 2023, indicates that out of 855 educational institutions audited, only 37 failed to submit their financial statements within the

statutory period, underscoring the comprehensive nature of these audits (Ghana Audit Service, 2023).

Johnson and Lee (2019) emphasize that timely audits enhance transparency and accountability, reducing financial mismanagement risks. Additionally, Agyemang and Osei (2022) found that institutions with regular audit feedback experience improved financial planning and decision-making. These findings also align with Maxwell and Hughes (2020), who advocate for technology-driven auditing systems to enhance efficiency and reduce feedback delays. The statutory financial frameworks and practices collectively ensure that SHSs in Ghana are frequently audited, promoting transparency and accountability in the management of public funds.

From the survey data, 20.6% of respondents stated they never received assistance from non-teaching staff, 27% reported sometimes receiving assistance, while 52.4% stated they often received assistance. Thus, the majority of respondents (52.4%) indicate that they often receive financial management assistance from non-teaching staff. According to Agyemang and Boateng (2023), financial management in schools improves significantly when skilled account staff collaborate effectively with school heads. Furthermore, research by Mensah and Agyapong (2020) suggests that schools where account staff frequently assist heads in financial decision-making experience better compliance with government financial policies and reduced financial mismanagement risks. This is a positive indication of the reliance on skilled personnel, such as accountants and bursars, to support heads of schools in financial operations. Schools with competent financial support personnel demonstrate higher levels of financial accountability and efficiency, and effective school leadership is contingent upon the availability of skilled support personnel. This allows school heads to focus on broader leadership roles while ensuring financial integrity (Agyemang & Boateng, 2023; Johnson & Lee, 2021; Mensah & Ofori, 2022; Osei & Tuffour, 2021).

The heads identified regular auditing, prompt audit feedback, assistance from non-teaching staff (account staff, domestic bursars, etc.), stock security control (protection of stock) as the support system available to them to manage financial challenges. Auditors admitted that regular auditing, financial knowledge by the Board of Governors to support heads, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) on financial management, and parental support and community assistance are relevant support systems available to the heads of SHSs to reduce the effect of financial management challenges. PA assistance was also mentioned.

One Auditor noted,

“We provide capacity-building workshops on financial management to heads of SHS”
(Interview data, Auditor 3).

Another Auditor stated,

“The board ensures that the budget for the school is prepared, examined, and approved, as well as securing additional funding” (Interview data, Auditor 3).

The auditors highlighted that training workshops are provided to school heads to improve financial management by auditors during the heads' conferences (CHASS), stressing the need for continuous financial management training for school heads. One Auditor explained,

“Workshops are organized every six months to train school heads on financial management and compliance with financial regulations” (interview data, Auditor 3)

One auditor highlighted that the PA and old students also contribute towards infrastructure and other school needs.

“Every semester, every parent pays an amount to support the school feeding”
(Interview data, Auditor 2)

The directors also confirmed regular auditing, financial knowledge by the Board of Governors to support the head, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) on financial management, and parental support and community assistance are relevant support systems available. They explained that financial oversight is provided at multiple levels. Their role, as the head of internal auditors, involves monitoring school finances. One said:

“We as supervisors ensure that funds available to the school are utilized judiciously and do not create any offensive records for the school.” (Interview data, Director 2)

The director emphasized the importance of accountants and account staff, domestic bursars, etc., in preventing financial infractions.

“The accountant is the head of all the non-teaching staff, and once in a while, he is supposed to organize refresher courses for all these accountants and experts. He also works closely with the head in all financial matters in the school” (Interview data, director 1)

The Directors added that the board of governors approves the budget and supervises responsible expenditure at the school level. The respondent noted:

“The board is like a quasi-Public Account that serves as a check on the totality of the school’s operations... Some of their members are also financially inclined, so they help in that respect.” (Interview data, director 2)

“The school cannot run without the board, so the budget of the school is approved by the Board of Governors before the management of the school can run.” (Interview data, Director 3)

“The Municipal Assembly also demands accountability for whatever amount that comes into the school so that they can also see how best to offer any other support to them.” (Interview data Director 3)

Generally, the heads, auditors and directors are affirming that regular auditing, prompt audit feedback, assistance from non-teaching staff (account staff, domestic bursars etc), stock security control (protection of stock) as the support system available to them in to manage financial challenges, financial knowledge by Board of Governors to support head, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) on financial management and parental support and community assistance are relevant support system available to for the heads of SHSs to reduce the effect of financial management challenges. PA assistance was also mentioned, and parental support and community assistance are relevant support systems available.

According to Ayim (2023), strict internal auditing and external financial oversight help improve financial discipline in schools. Ghana Audit Service (2023), Internal Audit Agency (IAA) – oversees internal audit processes in public institutions. Research suggests that

capacity-building programs enhance budget execution, procurement processes, and overall financial accountability (Asiedu, 2021).



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the study summary, which includes the key findings, the conclusions derived from the research findings, and the recommendations, which are drawn from the conclusions. The chapter also presents suggestions for further research.

5.1 Summary of the Study

5.1.1 Summary of the Research Process

The study investigated financial management challenges facing heads of senior high schools in the Central Region, Ghana. The study specifically focused on examining financial management challenges facing heads of the senior high schools; sources of the challenges; the effect of the challenges; and available support systems for the heads to mitigate the challenges to improve the overall financial management practices within these schools. The research paradigm for this study was a pragmatic approach and adopted a mixed-method design that applied both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The study employed the concurrent triangulation design. The target population was Heads of Government Assisted Senior High Schools within the Central Region in Ghana, and Zonal Internal Auditors.

The research relied on primary sources of data using a structured questionnaire for heads and a semi-structured interview guide for auditors and the directors to collect data. These instruments were designed and used to capture their responses on various financial management challenges, sources of those challenges, their effects, and the support systems available. Validity and reliability were used to check the worthiness of the quantitative research instrument, while trustworthiness was used to improve the quality of the qualitative aspect of the work.

5.1.2 Key findings

The first objective sought to examine the financial management challenges in the public senior high schools in the region. The findings of the study revealed that the heads, auditors, and directors affirmed that procurement, accounting, audit infractions, budgetary inefficiencies, professional incompetence, and financial policy were major financial management challenges the heads encountered in the schools. With the procurement challenges, poor stock security control, and ineffective weekly procurement and tendering committee, as expressed by the respondents, can lead to loss or misapplication of resources, which will eventually affect the school scarcity resource. The main accounting challenges were irregular provision of school financial statements, delay in releasing funds by the government, inadequate accounting resources, and theft and fraud, and these contribute significantly to financial management challenges in schools. They emphasized much on unearned salary, high levels of fraud within schools compromise financial integrity and can reduce the funds available for essential school activities, thereby affecting educational quality and student outcomes. Overspending of budgeted funds, fluctuation in inflation, and influence from sponsors and other stakeholders were identified as the major budgetary challenges confronting. Auditors stressed the absence of budget lines as a critical issue affecting financial management, while directors reinforced budgetary constraints as a major challenge and emphasized that funding delays hinder financial planning by the heads of secondary schools. Again, respondents expressed their frustration about the heads' limited knowledge of auditors and their refusal to respond to audit recommendations. This leads to financial inefficiencies, and often some mistakes reported earlier are repeated by the heads over and over again. Heads acknowledged that conflicting policies, frequent changes in policies, inflexible government policies, and delays in policy implementation are the major financial Policy challenges that confront their financial management, and auditors and directors affirmed them. More so, the results disclosed that

general professional financial competence is a challenge for the heads of financial management of the school.

Objective two determined the sources of the financial challenges, and the results revealed that the academic background and headship demand, inadequate financial management knowledge and skill, inadequate education and training on financial management, long stay in schools, and doubling roles of head as administrator and financial manager are major professional competencies challenges. These are significant internal sources of the challenges the heads of the school faced. With the external sources of financial management challenges, the respondents admitted that delay in releasing funds and irregular fund disbursement by the government, absence of clear financial regulations, influence of sponsors and other stakeholders, inflation fluctuation, inadequate financial management knowledge of the board of governors, poor implementation of financial policies, budgetary constraints, and inflexible financial policies.

Objective three analyzed the effect of financial management challenges on school academic performance in general. The results revealed that the majority of senior high schools studied face significant scrutiny from the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and that the majority of schools have been invited more than once to the PAC, which often stems from lapses in financial accountability and weak oversight mechanisms. Effects included misappropriation of funds, insufficient teaching and learning materials, poor teacher performance, reduced student achievement, public audit scrutiny, and emotional stress on heads. The grand mean (2.75) indicates that the challenges significantly affect school academic performance and management efficiency.

The fourth objective sought to find out financial management support systems available to the heads. The results show that regular auditing, prompt audit feedback, assistance from non-teaching staff (account staff, domestic bursars, etc.), Board of Governors approves school

budget, internal auditors are involved in monitoring school finances were support system that heads are available but not received frequently and uniformly across all schools.

5.2 Conclusions

5.2.1 Financial Management Challenges

The study revealed that school heads face several financial management challenges, including issues with procurement, accounting systems, audit infractions, budgetary inefficiencies, lack of professional competence, and conflicting financial policies, tendering structures, delayed government funding, theft, and irregular financial reporting, inability of heads to comply with audit recommendations, as well as limited training and financial literacy. These challenges compromise the financial integrity of schools, reduce resource availability for core academic functions, and can potentially expose schools to legal and reputational risks. It implies an urgent need for capacity building and institutional reforms to strengthen financial systems in senior high schools.

5.2.2 Sources of Financial Management Challenges

The study identified both internal and external sources of financial management challenges. External sources include delayed fund disbursement, inflation, and inflexible government policies. Internally, lack of financial knowledge, administrative overload, and inconsistent implementation of policies were noted. These findings suggest that improving financial management requires collaborative action between school leadership and government agencies. Addressing systemic issues such as delays in funding and inconsistent policies is critical to empowering heads to manage school finances effectively.

5.2.3 Effects of Financial Management Challenges

The results revealed that a lot of senior high schools face significant scrutiny from the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and that the majority of schools have been invited more than once to the PAC, which often stems from lapses in financial accountability and weak oversight

mechanisms. The findings showed a strong relationship between financial management challenges and poor school outcomes. Effects included misappropriation of funds, insufficient teaching and learning materials, poor teacher performance, reduced student achievement, public audit scrutiny, and emotional stress on heads. The grand mean (2.75) indicates that the challenges significantly affect school academic performance and management efficiency. This reinforces the necessity for timely funding, professional training, and policy coherence to prevent a decline in education quality. The emotional and professional toll on school heads may also affect their leadership effectiveness and job retention, which can have long-term effects on school performance.

5.2.4 Available Support Systems

The study found that support systems such as internal audits, assistance from accounting staff, CPD programs, and support from the Board of Governors exist, although these are not uniformly accessible or effective. While support mechanisms exist, their inconsistent availability suggests the need for institutionalized and mandatory support structures such as regular CPD programs, standardized financial management manuals, and policy clarification workshops. Strengthening these systems can enhance school heads' competence and accountability.

The study concludes that while senior high schools in the Central Region of Ghana face multifaceted financial management challenges, addressing these requires a holistic approach. This includes improved capacity development for heads, institutional support, timely resource allocation, and systematic policy implementation. By strengthening both internal controls and external support systems, school leadership can be better positioned to ensure effective financial governance and improved academic outcomes.

5.3 Recommendations

In light of the findings of the study and the conclusions made, the following recommendations are proposed to various stakeholders to enhance financial accountability, efficiency, and overall school performance:

- ❖ The study shows that late disbursement of funds by the Government of Ghana through the Ministry of Education. The ministry should streamline the disbursement of funds to ensure timely and regular release to schools to enhance effective planning and reduce the reliance on credit or delayed projects.
- ❖ It emanated from the study that most heads lacked financial management capability. Ghana Education Service, through Regional and District Education Directorates, should organize regular capacity-building workshops and seminars in collaboration with the Ghana Audit Service on topics such as budgeting, procurement, and financial reporting. The service should introduce a financial management training programme as part of the qualification or induction process for school heads. Authorities need to supervise and monitor the implementation of audit recommendations to be more effective. Heads should be supported with a checklist or follow-up mechanism to ensure compliance and continuous improvement.
- ❖ The SHS head had insufficient knowledge in auditing so Ghana Internal Audit Service should provide tailored audit training to school heads to demystify audit procedures and build a positive culture of financial accountability. The service should establish a proactive audit feedback system that allows for early detection of financial mismanagement and guides corrections while creating user-friendly audit guidelines specific to schools, including simplified templates and financial reporting formats.
- ❖ The SHS heads had to combine administrative and financial management duties. It is recommended that the SHS heads should delegate and collaborate more closely with non-teaching financial staff, such as bursars and accountants, to ensure professional

handling of school finances. They must commit to responding to audit queries and implementing recommendations promptly to avoid repeated infractions and PAC investigations. The heads must engage in self-initiated professional development on financial management, including online courses, peer learning, and consulting with financial experts.

- ❖ The Board members did not have adequate financial management knowledge hence board members should be trained in basic financial governance to enhance their supervisory role and assist in financial decision-making. They should encourage more active involvement in budget planning, approvals, and financial oversight, ensuring that policies and expenditures align with school goals.

5.4 Suggestions for further research

Although this study has provided valuable insights into the financial management challenges facing heads of senior high schools in the Central Region of Ghana, several areas remain open for further exploration:

- **Comparative studies across regions**
This study focused specifically on the Central Region. Future research could be conducted in other regions of Ghana to determine if they also face similar financial management challenges.
- **Impact of Financial Management Training on Heads' Competence**
Since the study identified inadequate financial management knowledge and professional incompetence as key challenges, future research could assess the impact of financial management training programs on improving the competence and efficiency of school heads.
- **Gender and Financial Management Challenges**

An interesting angle for future inquiry would be to examine whether gender plays a role in how school heads experience and manage financial challenges, especially in terms of leadership style, resource management, and coping strategies.

- Board of Governors' Involvement in Financial Oversight

While the study noted the support of Boards of Governors in approving school budgets, future studies could evaluate the extent to which Boards are involved in strategic financial oversight and how their involvement influences financial transparency and accountability



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APPENDICES

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE (quantitative research)

(For heads)

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is designed to gather data on *financial management challenges facing heads of senior high schools in the Central Region, Ghana*. The questionnaire is designed to assist the researcher in making an objective assessment of the issue under research. This study is purely for academic purposes in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of a Master of Philosophy degree in Educational Administration and Management. Your response will be completely anonymous and will be used by the researcher for this study only. All information in this questionnaire is confidential.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FOR RESPONDENT

Please tick () in the appropriate box

1. Sex. Male () Female ()
2. Age: Below 40years (), 41 -50 years (), above 50 years ()
3. Rank: A. Assistant Director II () C. Assistant Director I () D. Deputy Director ()
E. Director ()
4. Indicate your highest academic qualification
A. Bachelor's Degree () B. Second Degree () C. PhD ()
5. What is the area of academic specialization.....
6. How many years have you served as Head of SHS?.....
A. 5 years and below () B. 6-10 years () C. 11-15 years () D. 16-20 years () E.
above 25 years ()
7. For how many years have you served at your current school? A. 5 years and below ()
) B. 6-10 years () C. 11-15 years () D. 16-20 years () above 20 years ()

SECTION B: THE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

Please indicate the extent of agreement with the statements by ticking 1 (disagree) up to 3 (Agree)

		Disagree 1	Neutral 2	Strongly Agree 3
	<i>The Procurement Challenges</i>			
1	Procurement irregularity			
2	Poor procurement procedures			
3	Skewed Tendering			
4	Stock security control (protection of stock)			
5	Weak procurement and tendering committee			
	ACCOUNTING CHALLENGES			
1	Weak internal accounting control mechanisms			
2	Activity initiators' inability to submit accounting documents on time			
3	Irregular provision of the school's financial statement			
4	Delay in releasing funds by the government			
5	Inadequate range of books for accounts			
	Theft and fraud			

	BUDGETARY CHALLENGES			
1	Overspending of budgeted funds			
2	Under-spending of budgeted funds			
3	Fluctuation in Inflation (prices of goods and services)			
4	influence from sponsors and other stakeholders			
5	Exaggerated prices			
	AUDITING CHALLENGES			
1	Delay in audit feedback			
2	Delay in the audit report			
3	Inadequate audit support			
4	Disregarding or failing to implement an audit recommendation			
	FINANCIAL POLICY			
1	Conflicting policies			
2	Frequent changes in policies			
3	Inflexible Government policies			
4	Delay in policy implementation			
	PROFESSIONAL INCOMPETENCE			
1	Academic background and headship demand			

2	Inadequate financial management and knowledge skill			
3	Inadequate Education and training on financial management			
4	Inexperienced financial management and skills			
5	Lack of competent accounting staff			
6	Doubling the roles of head as administrator and financial manager			
7	Long stay in schools.			

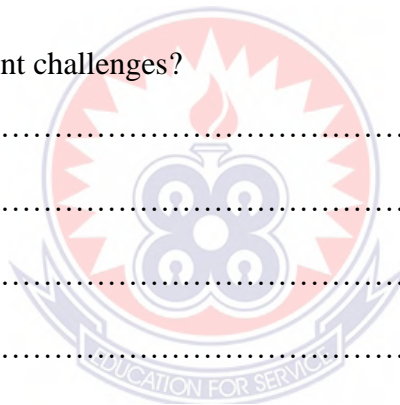
Any other financial management challenges?

.....

.....

.....

.....



SECTION C: SOURCES OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

Please indicate the extent to which *the following could be a Source of financial management* to the head by ticking 1 (disagree) up to 3 (agree)

	<i>Disagree</i> <i>1</i>	<i>Neutral</i> <i>2</i>	<i>Agree</i> <i>3</i>
Sources of financial challenges on			
Internal sources			

1.	low management capacity			
2.	Heads inadequate audit knowledge			
3.	Poor financial accountability			
4.	lack of budgetary programme planning and budgeting systems			
5.	Poor budget evaluation			
6.	lack of professional norms or codes of conduct			
7.	breakdown in communication between the head and the account staff			
8.	lack of transparency			
9.	Weak internal control mechanisms			
10.	<i>Failure by activity initiators to submit relevant accounting support documents on time</i>			
11.	Inadequate supervision monitoring			
12.	Disregarding or failing to implement an audit recommendation			
	<i>External source</i>			
<i>1.</i>	Delay in releasing funds by government			
<i>2.</i>	absence of clear financial regulations			
<i>3.</i>	Absence of an approved annual procurement plan			

4.	influence from sponsors and other stakeholders			
5.	Inflation fluctuation			
6.	Inadequate Financial Management of the Board of Governors			
7.	Irregular auditing			
8.	Too strict of policies			
9.	Poor implementation of Government financial policies			
10.	Forged signatories			

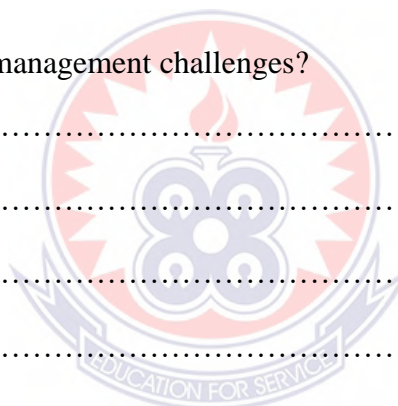
Any other source of financial management challenges?

.....

.....

.....

.....



SECTION D: THE EFFECT OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

1. Has your school ever been invited by the Public Accounts Committee? Yes () No ()
2. If yes, how many times 1 () 2 () 3 () more than 3 ()

Please indicate the extent of agreement with the statements by ticking 1-4

		Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Agree 3	Strongly Agree 4
	Financial management challenges can lead to.....				
1 funds misappropriation				
2Insufficient instructional				

	materials in schools				
Shortage of foodstuffs				
3	... logistics to the school				
4ineffective teachers' work performance				
5	... poor student academic performance				
6School debt				
7inefficient administrative duty of a head				
8 Social stigma about the school image				
9	... loss of the head's leadership position				
10 emotional stress on the head				
11 emotional stress on staff				

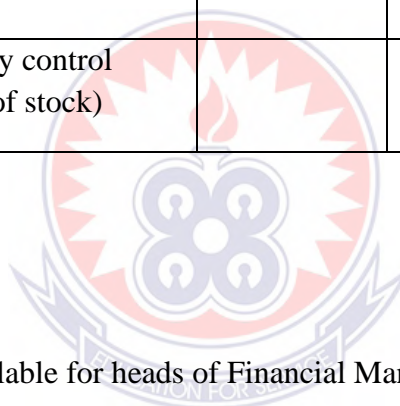
SECTION E: SUPPORT SYSTEMS AVAILABLE FOR HEADS

Please indicate the extent to which you receive the following financial management support by ticking 1 to 3

I received support from the following source which equipped me to handle financial management challenges adequately:

		NEVER 1	SOMETIMES 3	OFTEN 4
	SUPPORT SYSTEM			
1	Personal higher-relevant academic leadership pursuit			
2	Regular auditing			
3	Prompt audit feedback			

4	Assistance from Teachers with financial management knowledge			
5	Assistance from non-teaching Staff (Account Staff, Domestic Bursars)			
6	MMD Director of Education support			
7	Sufficient financial knowledge by the Board of Governors to support the head			
8	Relevant CPD on financial management			
9	Efficient procurement and tendering committee			
10	Stock security control (protection of stock)			



Any other support system available for heads of Financial Management

.....

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.....

**RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE (QUALITATIVE RESEARCH)
(For GES Zonal Internal Auditors and MMD Directors)**

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is designed to gather data on *financial management challenges facing Heads of senior high schools in the Central Region, Ghana*. The questionnaire is designed to assist the researcher in making an objective assessment of the issue under research. This study is purely for academic purposes in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of a Master of Philosophy degree in Educational Administration and Management. Your response will be completely anonymous and will be used by the researcher for this study only. All information in this questionnaire is confidential.

Interview guide

Semi-structured interview

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FOR RESPONDENT

Please tick () in the appropriate box

8. Sex. Male () Female ()
9. Age: Below 40years (), 41 -50 years (), above 50 years ()
10. Rank: A. Director (), B. Director 1(), C. Director II (), Auditor: D, Deputy Chief Internal Auditor (), E. Chief Internal Auditor F (),
11. Indicate your highest academic qualification
B. Bachelor's Degree () B. Master's Degree () C. PhD ()
12. What is your current position in GES? A. MMD Director () B. Zonal Internal Auditor ()
13. How many years have you served in your position? A. 1 (), B. 2(), C. 3 (), D. 4() E. 5 and above ()
14. How many schools are under your supervision? A. 1 (), B. 2 (), C. 3 (), D. 4 () E. 5 and above ()

SECTION B: THE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

1. What are the perceived challenges of heads in financial management?
.....
.....
2. What are the Accounting Challenges on school financial management?
i.....
3. What are the Budgetary Challenges on school financial management?
ii.....
4. What are the Auditing Challenges on school financial management?
iii.....
5. What are the effects of inflexible Financial Policy on school financial management?
iv.....
6. What are the Professional Incompetence on school financial management?
v.....
7. Any other financial management challenges?
.....

SECTION C: SOURCES OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

What are the sources of financial management challenges for heads?

.....

Internal source

.....
.....

Prompt 1

.....

Prompt II

.....
.....

External source

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

Prompt I

.....
.....

Prompt II

.....
.....



SECTION D: THE EFFECT OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

1. Have any of the schools under your supervision ever been invited by the public accounts committee? Yes () No ()
2. If yes, how many schools? 1 () 2 () 3 () more than 3 ()
3. When was the last time any of the school?.....
4. What was the query?,.....
 - i.
 - ii.
5. What was the outcome?
 - i.

Prompt

I.....

Prompt

II.....

6. What are the effects of financial management challenges on the provision of logistics to the school?

- i.
- ii.

Prompt1

.....

Prompt II

.....

7. What are the effects of financial management challenges on insufficient instructional materials in schools?

- i.
- ii.

Prompt1

.....

Prompt II

.....

8. What are the effects of financial management challenges on teachers' school performance?

- i.
- ii.

Prompt1

.....

Prompt II

9. What are the effects of financial management challenges on student academic performance?

- i.
- ii.

Prompt1

.....

Prompt II

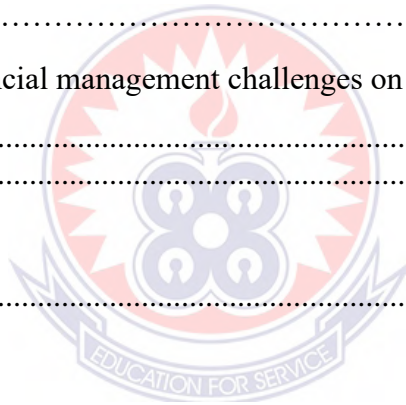
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10. What are the effects of financial management challenges on your administrative duties as a head?

- i.

Prompt

- i.



11. What are the effects of financial management challenges on school infrastructure?

- i.....
-

Prompt1

.....

Prompt II

- i.

12. What are the effects of financial management challenges on the shortage of foodstuffs

- i.....
- ii.....

Prompt1

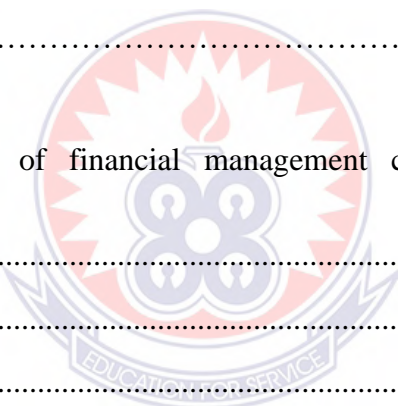
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Prompt II

- i.

13. What are the effects of financial management challenges on overall school performance?

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



14. What do you think are the effects of financial management challenges on overall school reputation?

- i.

Prompt1

- ii.

Prompt II

.....

SECTION E: SUPPORT SYSTEMS AVAILABLE FOR HEADS

1. Do you provide support to heads on financial management challenges?

.....

2. If yes, what support system do you offer to heads of financial management?

.....

3. How regularly is the school audited?

- i.
- ii.

Prompt I

.....
4. How prompt do you give audit feedback to the heads?
i.

Prompt I

i.
5. How do you handle audit findings of financial management challenges?
i.

6. What support does the Board of Governors give to the head in financial management?
i.

7. What Continuous Professional Development workshops have you organized for heads on financial management
i. ?.....

8. Any other support system available for heads of Financial Management
i.

