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Assessment of School Governance Practices in Senior High Schools in Ghana

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Abstract:

Corporate governance is a crucial component to any institutional management and it is, therefore, a requirement for any learning institution. In Ghana, the educational institutions are organised, controlled and managed by the school governing bodies. However, financial irregularities, poor leadership and mismanagement of such institutions has been cited over the years. The purpose of this study was to assess school governance practices in public senior high school in Cape Coast Metropolis, Ghana. The study was guided by agency and stakeholder theories of corporate governance development. Descriptive, cross-sectional survey was utilised in the study. The study population was all members of school governing bodies in public senior high schools in Cape Coast Metropolis, Ghana. The study sample was 150 school governing bodies which comprised 30 headmasters, 10 secretaries, 20 accountants and 90 teachers. Census technique was used in selecting headmasters, secretaries and accountants while simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the teachers. Questionnaire was used in collecting primary data. The instrument was validated by two experts review in order to ensure face and content validity. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the data. The study found that leadership practices, strategy and value and financial management practices are incorporated and implemented to a moderate extent in the senior high schools in Ghana. The study recommended that the school governing bodies should fully incorporated and implemented school governance principles (leadership practices, strategic and value, and financial management) in the senior high schools in Ghana. Finally, Ministry of Education in partnership with other agencies should organise seminars, conferences, training and workshops for all members of school governing bodies so that their knowledge and skills will be upgraded in school governance.

Keywords: Assessment, financial management, leadership, senior high schools, school governance, strategy and value

1. Introduction

The socio-economic development of any society and the nation at large fundamentally depends upon the quality of education available to its citizens. Remarkably, Education is an imperative institution in our society. Therefore, it is important that their activities are of the uppermost superiority and that they are well managed and governed. This implies that quality education, effective school administration and management largely rest on the school leadership or governing bodies (SGBs). A plethora of research has indicated that school leadership and management are pivotal and indispensable to school effectiveness (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Gaziel, 2007).

Globally, school governance is considered as the pillar of institutional management. School governance in senior high schools describes the manner in which the institutions are owned, organised, controlled and managed and also how they meet their responsibility towards external stakeholders and the relationship among these entities. According to OECD (2004), corporate governance is the system by which institutions are directed and controlled. Relatedly, Knell (2006) views corporate governance as systems, structured processes, defined policies and institutions that influence the way an institution is directed, administered or controlled. From these definitions, we see, school governance as a set of policies, responsibilities and structures designed and implemented by the school governing bodies (SGBs) to provide a strategic direction for the school. This helps to ensure that the school objectives are achieved, resources are used effectively with accountability and transparency.

It is important to underscore that the way in which corporate governance incorporated and practiced differs from school to school and from one country to another. This could be associated to their economic, political and social situations. Nevertheless, the ultimate aim of any educational institutions is to shape the students in academic, co-curricular and socio-economic development. This purpose is enshrined in the school curriculum which requires effective school governance for its successful implementation. The school governance describes the framework about how power is distributed and shared, how policies are formulated, how priorities set and how stakeholders made responsible and

accountable. The school corporate governance specifies the distribution of rights and responsibilities of the SGBs (e.g. principals, teachers, parents, educators and community members).

In Ghana, according to the Education Act, 1995, Act 506, the school board of management (BOM) is mandated to govern the schools. The Act spells out the composition of the board. The board is, therefore, legitimately and lawfully expected to ensure there is accountability, responsibility and transparency for the best interest of all the stakeholders and overall performance of the learning institutions (Education Act, 1995, Act 506). Nevertheless, it appears that many headmasters/principals and some school board of management members are not adequately trained on school governance principles and practices before taking up positions (elected or promoted). This seems to hinder their performance in the administration and management of the schools negatively. Universally, it is worth noting that ineffective school governance derails and disorganises educational standards leading to inefficiency in service delivery, poor student' and teachers' performance and rampant school corruption. Ineffective school governance practices create mismanagement and misappropriation of finances in public secondary schools which in the long-run also have a direct influence on quality (Mobegi, Ondigi & Simatwa, 2012).

In Ghana, an audit report by Transparency International (TI) in Ghana indicated that poor school governance and management are risking efforts to provide quality education in the country. The report further indicated that inefficiencies in financial management of most public senior high schools reduce the quality of Ghanaian educational sector (Transparency International, 2011). Correspondingly, the Auditor-General's report on pre-university schools in Ghana has indicated massive financial irregularities and misappropriations in several aspects over the past years (see Auditor-General, 2011, 2012, 2013). Similarly, Ministry of Education [MoE] (2015) reported that poor school leadership or governance in secondary schools has led to a lot of ineffectiveness in school management. This has led to a decline and inconsistencies in educational sector performance. It has also led to financial irregularities, massive loss of school funds by corrupt and non-accountable administrators. This governance gap has ultimately compromised general student performances in most secondary schools (MoE, 2015).

From these reports, it could be inferred that the flourishing nature of financial mismanagement and misappropriation indicates poor leadership practices, ineffective strategic planning and financial controls. These challenges could be attributed to poor school governance incorporation and practices. This in the long-term might negatively affect school performance. In light of these, the school governing bodies are, hence, called upon to provide sound leadership and good institutional governance in schools to help improve school effectiveness and facilitate economics development and eradication of poverty (MoE, 2012). Good governance practices has been known to go a long way in curbing mismanagement, demonizing corruption and ultimately improving overall efficiency in offering educational services (Akinyi, 2013). Good governance practices support schools by helping them manage their resources so they can deliver quality education. Effective school governance helps to reduce financial irregularities (Acquah, 2017).

Extant researchers indicated that school effectiveness and performance largely depends on strong good governance practices (Harris, Day, Hopkins, Hadfield, Hargreaves, Chapman, 2003; Agezo, 2010). This is true because effective governance practices provide internal control over both administrative and financial reporting by setting a standard for ethical behaviour (Agezo, 2010). From these perspectives, it could be argued that good governance practices in Ghanaian senior high schools might help promote efficient, effective and sustainable institutions that contribute to the welfare of society; responsive and accountable corporations; legitimate corporations that are managed with integrity and transparency; recognition and protection of stakeholders' rights. Despite the prominence and significance of good school governance practices, it is evident that the work of many school management and leadership (school governors) has not received satisfactory attention in the Ghanaian school system due to financial irregularities, abysmal performance of the students and teachers over the years.

To the best of the knowledge of the researchers', it appears that no studies have been conducted to assess the school governance practices in public senior high schools in Ghana. Most of the studies conducted on corporate governance practices in Ghana focused on other sector like banks, manufacturing firms, SMEs among others (Arthur, 2015; Fiador, 2015; Yankah, 2015; Sam, 2016; Amankwatia, 2017; Kyereboah, 2017), the tertiary level (university and polytechnics) (Otu, Bempah, & Amoako-Ohene, 2014; Bingab, Forson, Mmbali & Baah-Enumh, 2015; Prempeh, Twumasi, & Kyeremeh, 2015), the basic school (Bush & Oduro, 2006; Agezo, 2010) and financial control practices in the senior high schools (Akyaa, 2011; Tetteh, 2014; Acquah, 2017). On this basis, the research problem for this study is stated as "to what extent is school governance practice in public senior high schools in Ghana".

1.1. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to assess school governance practices in public senior high schools in Ghana. Specifically, the study was guided by the following objectives.

- To examine the extent to which leadership is practiced in the senior high schools in Ghana.
- To explore the extent to which strategy and value is practiced in the senior high schools in Ghana.
- To investigate the extent to which financial management is practiced in the senior high schools in Ghana.

1.2. Research Questions

- To what extent is leadership practiced in the senior high schools in Ghana?
- To what extent is strategy and value practiced in the senior high schools in Ghana?
- To what extent is financial management practiced in the senior high schools in Ghana?

1.3. Significance of the Study

The findings of this study provide valuable information on the extent to which school governance (leadership, strategy and value and financial management) is practiced in the senior high schools in Ghana. The outcome of this study will provide inputs for policy makers and guide to administrators on good governance practices in various senior high schools in Ghana. The findings serve as a springboard for policy makers to design, implement, monitor and evaluate policies meant to create safe schools and enhance good governance practices in the schools. The findings of the study are expected to provide insight to secondary school headmasters, teachers, students, parents, guardians, education officials and the teaching fraternity on the potential influence of school governance practices on school performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Concept of Corporate Governance

The concept of corporate governance has been professed contrarily by diverse individuals. OECD (2008) defined corporate governance as the system by which business corporations are directed and controlled. This view was extended by Demaki (2011) that corporate governance is an institutional arrangement that checks the excesses of controlling managers. Also, Adeusi, Akeke, Aribaba and Adebisi (2013), explained that corporate governance is a set of rules and incentives through which the management of an organization is being directed and controlled.

From the numerous explanations, we see corporate governance as the code of conduct through which institutions are directed and controlled. It is a combination of policies, laws and instructions influencing the way an institution is managed and controlled. The corporate governance structure specifies the distribution of rights and responsibilities among different participants in the corporation, such as, the board, managers, shareholders and other stakeholders, and spells out the rules and procedures for making decisions on corporate affairs. By doing this, it also provides the structure through which the company objectives are set, and the means of attaining those objectives and monitoring performance.

Effective school corporate governance promotes efficient, management of learning institutions; responsive and accountable managements; legitimate institutions that are managed with integrity and transparency (Omondi & Nyenyi, 2016). School corporate governance is important in the management of financial resources of the school (Arimoto, 2004). School corporate governance; grants transparency and fairness in the relationship between the institution and the management, aims at achieving fairness, responsibility, accountability and transparency in the governance of institutions/organizations, and helps to curb mismanagement, demolishes corruption and improves overall efficiency in offering educational services.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

This section reviews some of the theories underpinning corporate governance. A plethora number of theories exist that attempt to bring out the aspect of corporate governance in the institutions; this include agency theory and stakeholders' theory.

2.2.1. Agency Theory

This theory hypothesizes that in the modern corporation, in which share ownership is widely held, managerial actions depart from those required to maximize shareholders returns (Mallin, 2007). This theory sees stakeholders of education as the principals and members of school governing bodies as their agents. In agency theory, school leaders or managers may not act in the best interest of the stakeholders. They may have different interests and risks preferences. In conclusion, agency theorists recommend that corporate governance mechanisms are needed to reduce these agency conflicts and to align the interests of the agent with those of the principal. This therefore brings the aspect of leadership and interaction among various stakeholders within the school environment, that is, the principal; teachers; parents; and BOM members among others.

2.2.2. Stakeholders Theory

This theory states that the institution is a system of stakeholders operating within a larger system of the society which provides the required legal and market infrastructure for the organisation to thrive. According to Freeman, Wicks and Parmar (2004), stakeholder theory basically aims at striking a balance between the interests of a corporation, stakeholders and their satisfaction. It tries to identify the purpose of the firms or institutions. Identification of the firm's purpose therefore becomes the driving force underlying its activities (Freeman et al, 2004). By highlighting the institution's responsibility to its stakeholders, it pushes management to design and employ appropriate methodologies to determine the nature of relationship between interested parties and management in order to deliver on their purpose.

The above theories are fundamental to this study because agency theory practically explains corporate governance and school performance where the basic tenet of corporate governance is to protect the interests of stakeholders who are also the principal of the management. Stakeholders' theory impact into institutions' communication, strategy and goals and financial accountability as brought out by the study.

2.3. Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework is a graphical representation of concepts to be studied. The conceptual framework in Figure 1 summarizes the governance practices within the senior high schools.

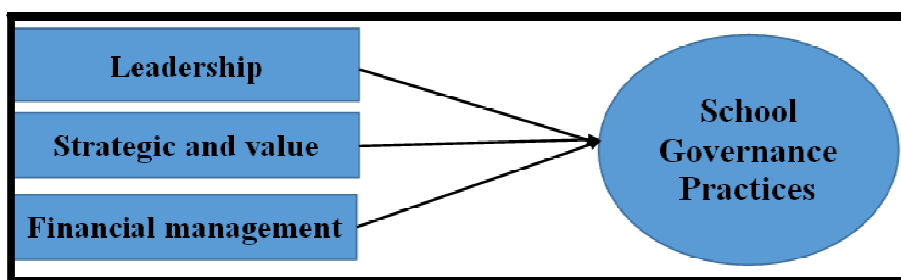


Figure 1: Corporate Governance Practices in Senior High Schools
 Source: Authors' Own Construct (2018)

The study was guided by three corporate governance practices; leadership, strategic and value and financial management. Leadership practice is about how the school leadership and management (school board) operates. The school managers and the chairman need leadership skills. The school board desires to have a strategic sense, the ability to analyse and understand and foresee changes in the environment. School target setting is moreover a strategic tool for floating expectations and standards. The school governance role of accounting information contributes openly to economic performance by managing the resources of the firm efficiently and reducing the expropriation of the wealth of investors by managers. Financial reporting and disclosure are an important means by which management communicates firm performance and corporate governance to outside investors.

2.4. Empirical Studies

Studies have been conducted in the area of corporate governance. For example, Farrell and Law (1999) explored the issue of governors and accountability and found that governing bodies see their role in terms of providing support and advice to schools, rather than in terms of acting strategically and enhancing accountability. They also found that issues of accountability tend to arise only when something goes wrong. Conversely, a study undertaken by Ofsted (2002) reported that generally, corporate governance practices are less effective in schools in disadvantaged setting. Confirming Ofsted (2002) findings, studies in South Africa revealed that most school governing bodies lacked skills in drafting of budgets, writing financial and policy statements, control of finance and petty cash, initiative and innovation as well as accountability and this was accredited to illiteracy and lack of training (Mestry, 2004; Nombasa, 2004). Conflicting these findings, Ranson, Arnott, McKeown, Martin and Smith (2005) found that school governance practices are closely associated with higher performance because they exercise functions of scrutiny, strategy and accountability. In a related study, Mulili (2011) explored the corporate governance practices adopted by public universities in Kenya. The study found that the school boards or governors performed the following functions: sourcing funds, approving policies, overseeing the use of university resources, approving development projects, recruiting top management, approving all staff recruitments and promotions, and providing direction for universities. Supporting these findings, Akyaa (2011), undertook a study in New Juaben Senior High Commercial School in Ghana to ascertain the financial control practices and found that the school has put in place effective control practices such that financial transactions were backed by supporting documents.

A study by Mobegi et al. (2012) found that most of the secondary schools' principals and BOM members lacked the necessary technical skills and capacity to understand and interpret financial reports in making decisions and also offer guidance. However, Achieng (2013) investigated the influence of corporate governance practices on the students' academic performance in Kenya Secondary Certificate of Education in Rachuonyo South District, Homa Bay County and found that school governance practices (monitoring, monetary incentives, use of letters of recommendation and setting of performance targets) enhance the performance of students in national examination. Similarly, Akinyi (2013) determined the influence of governance practices on students' performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in Bondo district, Kenya and revealed that effective governance practices has a significant influence on school performance. The study further indicated that good governance practices in terms of monetary rewards for teachers improved learners' performance. In synchronising these results, Tetteh (2014), in Ghana, found that the school had put in place effective control practices such that financial transactions were backed by supporting documents. However, Otu et al. (2014) in Ghana concluded that governance practices in the Koforidua Polytechnic was weak and ineffective because the school lacked records on management policy and programme structure for managing records was weak.

Disagreeing with Otu et al. (2014) findings, Prempeh et al. (2015) in Ghana, assessed the financial control systems of polytechnics in Ghana and found out that three (3) major financial control systems (preventive, directive and detective control systems) are practiced within the Sunyani Polytechnic. The study further revealed that the school board established realistic budgets and results are actively monitored. The study also discovered that there was existence of internal financial controls regulated by Financial Administration, Procurement, Internal Audit Agency Acts and indirect application of Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Tread way Commission (COSO). Similarly, Ackom-Wilson (2015) in Ghana, examined financial management practices of Senior High Schools (SHS) in Techiman Municipality in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana. The findings of the study revealed that the procurement system of the schools is regulated by procurement board which is mandated to ensure that the procurement of goods and services within the schools follow laid down procedure. The study further found that the budgets of the schools represent the main financial planning framework around which incomes and expenditures are managed. In a related study, Kiilu (2015) investigated the influence of the boards of management's governance practices on teachers and job satisfaction in secondary schools in

Tana River County, Kenya. The study concluded that the Boards of Governance practices played a major role in teachers' job satisfaction. Correspondingly, Kalungu (2015) investigated the influence of board of managements' financial management on public secondary schools in Westlands District, Nairobi County, Kenya. The findings indicated that level of education, professional status, gender, and the nature of jobs of Board of Management members had positive influence on the effectiveness of their financial management.

More recently, Akter and Giridharan (2016) examined the implementation of good governance in secondary school of Bangladesh. The study found that corporate governance practices or implementation was less effective. The findings of the study clearly emphasized the negative impact of corruption on the education sectors especially, secondary schools due to the lack of good governance, reduced efficiency of SMC and the head teacher, distortion of the decision making process and undermining of the social value as well as the ethical phenomena. In a related study, Omondi and Nyenyi (2016) explored the adoption of corporate governance practices in public secondary schools in Kisumu Central sub-county, Kenya. The study found out that leadership; institution's communication; and strategy and values were found to be incorporated to a large extent. Appointment to the board and financial accountability were found to be practiced to a small extent. Equally, Mutindi, Kanori and Kalai (2016) investigated the influence of board of management governance practices on students' performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in Athi River Sub-county, Kenya. The findings revealed that provision of incentives to teachers, provision of rewards to students, involving teachers in target setting and provision of learning resources were found to be satisfactory variables in explaining students' performance. Provision of incentives, rewards, target setting and students' performance were also positive and significant.

In a related development, Mwaura (2017) determined the influence of corporate governance on financial management in tertiary institutions in Nakuru County, Kenya. The study found that tertiary institutions in Nakuru County practiced various forms of leadership which led to substantive improvement of financial management. The study also found that there was greater adherence to legal responsibilities and it is likely to result in moderate enhancement in financial management in tertiary institutions. Finally, the study inferred that transparent governance, transparent faculty, and transparent remuneration system influenced financial management in tertiary institutions in Nakuru County. Harmoniously, Ajwang (2017) investigated the impact of corporate governance on financial management of public secondary schools in Kenya. The findings revealed that presence of accounting knowledge was vital in order to improve financial management in schools and the board had illustrated governance expertise in the last five years. Congruently, Ndanu, Kanori and Njagi (2017) investigated the influence of corporate governance practices on the management of public Technical Training Institutes in Nairobi City County. The results of the study indicated that the Technical training institutes where the Board of Management's selection criteria was effective managed schools better than those whose selection criteria were not effective. Further, TTIs where financial record keeping was fair was characterized by fair management than those institutes that had a better financial record keeping.

Similarly, Omondi and Nyenyi (2017) assessed the effect of corporate governance practices on performance of secondary schools in Kisumu Central Sub-county. The findings indicated that education of teachers and leadership practices have significant effect on the performance of schools. In Ghana, Acquah (2017) established the relationship between governance, financial controls, and financial irregularity in senior high schools in Ghana. The results showed that there was significant correlation between school governance and financial irregularities. Likewise, there were significant correlations between financial control and financial irregularities. Furthermore, Kyereboah (2017) examined the effect of elements of corporate governance on employee performance at St. Dominic Hospital, Akwatia. The study found that corporate governance practices have direct influence on the performance of employees. Again, the study found that there is a moderate significant relationship between employees' performance and leadership style. Moreover, it was found that there is a significant relationship between employees' performance and internal systems and control and organisational culture.

3. Research Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey design, which enabled in depth search of information on school governance practices in the senior high schools in Ghana. The study area was all public senior high schools in Cape Coast Metropolis, Ghana. The study population was all members of school governing bodies (SGBs) in public senior high schools in Cape Coast Metropolis, Ghana. However, the target population was members of SGBs in the public senior high schools in Cape Coast Metropolis. This comprised of headmasters, school secretaries, accountants and teachers. There are ten (10) public senior high schools in Cape Coast Metropolis, Ghana. The sample size of the study was 150 SGBs which comprised 30 headmasters, 10 secretaries, 20 accountants and 90 teachers. Census method was used to all the headmasters, secretaries and school accountants. This was used because the population size for headmasters, secretaries and accountants were small and it is realistic to include all of them in the study in order to accurate and reliable information. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 90 teachers. This was used to give each teacher an equal opportunity to participate in the study. Self-developed questionnaire tag school governance practice questionnaire (SGPQ) was used to collect primary data from the respondents. To ensure face and content validity, the instrument was validated by two experts in the Department of Management, University of Cape Coast. The questionnaire was pretested in two schools outside the study area. The reliability coefficient of the instrument using Cronbach's Alpha was 0.823. This implied that the instrument was reliable (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Ethical protocol was followed during the actual data collection. The data collected processed using SPSS version 22.0. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations). For ease of analysis of the research question 1-3, a mean of 1.0-2.40 was regarded as low practice of school governance,

2.50-3.00 was regarded as moderate practice of school governance and 3.10-4.00 was regarded as high practice of school governance (leadership, strategy and value and financial management).

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results, interpretation and discussion of the findings. The results and discussions are based on the three research questions that guided the study. The results were presented in Table 1, 2 and 3.

4.1. Research Question One

To what extent is leadership practiced in the senior high schools in Ghana?

The main objective of this research question was to examine the extent to which leadership as a component of school governance is practice in the public senior high schools in Ghana. The result was presented in Table 1.

SN	Statements	Mean	SD
1	The school leadership and management is effective	2.65	0.71
2	The school board takes correct action with regards to the assets of the school and to keeps the school on a strategic path	2.88	0.62
3	The school board is able to justify their decisions and actions to general public/shareholders	2.92	0.74
4	The school board gives fair consideration to the legitimate interests and expectations of all stakeholders	2.72	1.03
5	The school board discloses information in a manner that enables stakeholders to make an informed analysis of the school's performance and sustainability	2.63	1.01
6	There is a strong cooperation between the principals and teachers within the school	2.55	0.67
7	There is effective communication between the headmasters/boards and the teachers	2.74	0.73
8	There is proper consultation between the staff members and the board	2.43	1.02
9	The school board supervises and monitor the activities within the school	3.37	0.59
10	The school board conduct performance assessment among teachers	2.77	0.65
11	The school board recognises teachers' performance over terms/years	3.21	0.83
12	The school board shares school vision and long-term strategic plan for the school	2.87	1.03
	Mean of Means/SD	2.81	0.80

Table 1: The Extent of Leadership Practices in the Senior High Schools
Source: Field Data, 2018

Table 1 indicates the mean ratings of the respondents' concerning the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements on "school leadership practices" as a mechanism of school governance. From Table 1, the statement "the school board supervises and monitor the activities within the school" had the highest mean score (M=3.37; SD=0.59) while the statement "there is proper consultation between the staff members and the board" had the lowest mean rating (M=2.43; SD=1.02). On the average, the mean of means score (MM=2.81; SD=0.80) indicated that the majority of the respondents agreed with the statements (sub-scale) concerning school leadership as a school governance principle to a moderate extent. These results imply that school governance in terms of "school leadership" is reasonably practiced in the Senior high Schools in Ghana. This could mean that the school board are responsible, accountable, fair and transparent in the management and controlling of the school activities. Good school governance is fundamentally about effective and fruitful leadership (Table 1).

This effective leadership could be used as an instrument to craft applicable processes, systems and controls as well as the suitable behaviour and performance to guarantee sustainability and long term continuity in a school. In addition, it could help to certify that decisions are made in the best interests of the school and its stakeholders. Improved school leadership has the potential to significantly enhance the quality of the education offered, expand its growth, and enhance its financial stability and teachers' job satisfaction and performance. The results of the current study confirmed the findings of previous studies on school leadership practices in relation to school governance (Leithwood et al. 2004; Marzano et al. 2005; Ranson et al. 2005; Gazieli, 2007; Kiilu, 2015; Omondi & Nyenyi, 2016; Kyereboah, 2017; Omondi & Nyenyi, 2017; Mwaura, 2017). However, the findings of the current study disagreed with the findings of most studies that leadership practices in school were ineffective (Farrell & Law, 1999; Ofsted, 2002; Mestry, 2004; Nombasa, 2004; Akter & Giridharan, 2016). Effective school leadership is a matter of how the board functions, hence, ineffective leadership could collapse the school system. The result of the current study are in agreement with the finding of Bauer, Guenster and Otten (2004) who argued that weak governance practices and lack of supervisory systems could collapse of most institutions (Table 1).

4.2. Research Question Two

To what extent is strategy and value practiced in the senior high schools in Ghana?

The main objective of this research question was to assess the extent to which strategy and value as a component of school governance is practiced in the public senior high schools in Ghana. The result was presented in Table 2.

SN	Statements	Mean	SD
1	The school has a well formulated vision, mission, goals and core values	2.84	0.94
2	The school has a well formulated strategic plan for the accomplishment of its vision, mission and goals	2.78	1.04
3	The school board determines good strategies and tactics to help achieve school objectives and plans	2.66	1.02
4	There is proper application and enactment of school strategies and tactics in enhancing its goals, mission and the general vision	2.59	1.01
5	The school board develops strategy that is aligned with the purpose and values of the school as well as the legitimate interests and expectations of stakeholders	2.53	1.01
6	The school has an enabling environment and culture suitable for implementation of school core values	2.89	0.67
7	The school board sets targets for teachers and students	2.94	0.55
8	The teachers discuss and agree on academic performance targets of the students	2.57	0.72
	Mean of Means/SD	2.73	0.87

Table 2: The Extent of Strategy and Value Practices in the Senior High Schools

Source: Field Data, 2018

The results presented in Table 2 reveals the mean ratings of items administered to explore the extent to which strategy and value in terms of school governance is practiced in public Senior High Schools in Ghana. As evident in Table 2, the mean ratings of the respondents show that the respondents scored up to 2.50 and above. These results proved that majority of the respondents agreed with the statements (sub-scale) concerning strategy and value as school governance principles within the schools. The overall mean of means score (MM=2.73; SD=0.87) indicated that strategy and value as principle of school governance are implemented to a moderate extent. It is concluded that the school governing bodies practice and implement strategy and value principles in the Senior High Schools in Ghana. From these results, it is clear that the principal constituents of strategic planning are the vision, mission, goals and objectives, linked with strategies and action plans for the implementation and evaluation process. These results suggest that strategy and value practices in the Senior High Schools in Ghana could be a management tool that would serve the purpose of helping any school to do a better job, because a strategy and value practices focuses on the energy, resources, and time of everyone in the organization in the same direction (Table 2).

Effective school strategy and value practices are perceived to be a significant tool that positively influence school performance. Therefore, the school governing bodies in the senior high schools in Ghana should identify the purpose and values of the school, determine the strategy to accomplish that purpose and enact its values in order to warrant that it survives. Aldehyyat, Al Khattab, and Anchor (2011) pointed out that a school that formulates and implements strategic plans derives benefits such as having negotiated and agreed clear goals and objectives, communicating the set goals to various stakeholders and providing a base upon which progress can be measured. The results of the current study confirmed the findings of Omondi and Nyenyi (2016) who found that strategies and values were implemented to a large extent in public secondary schools in Kisumu Central sub-county, Kenya. The results of the current study also collaborates with the findings of most studies on strategic planning in schools (Okwako, 2013; Chukwumah, 2016). Conversely, the results of the current study were dissimilar to the finding of Ikediugwu and Chukwumah (2015) who found that schools monitoring of implementation of strategic plans was to a low extent (Table 2).

4.3. Research Question Three

To what extent is financial management practiced in the senior high schools in Ghana?

The main objective of this research question was to investigate the extent to which financial management as a component of school governance is practiced in the public senior high schools in Ghana. The result was presented in Table 3.

SN	Statements	Mean	SD
1	The school has good accounting and financial management system that helps prevent misappropriation of funds	2.87	0.82
2	The school provides proper accountability of financial and non-financial resources	2.68	1.01
3	The school follows a clear laid down policies and procedures for procurement process	2.74	0.92
4	The school has independent and active internal audit committee that helps to prevent financial errors	3.35	0.53
5	The school practices budget review where actual expenditure is compared with budgeted expenditure	2.81	0.94
6	The school puts in places internal control measures to prevent financial irregularities	2.77	0.88
7	The school engages the staff to keep proper records of the activities carried out and the decisions made to ensure accountability	2.89	0.73
8	The school ensures proper policies and procedures in financial management	2.91	0.69
	Mean of Means	2.88	0.82

Table 3: The Extent of Financial Management Practices in Senior High Schools

Source: Field Data, 2018

Table 3 indicates the mean ratings of the respondents' concerning the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statement on "financial management practices" as a component of school governance practices. From Table 3, the statement "the school has independent and active internal audit committee that helps to prevents financial errors" had the highest mean score ($M=3.35$; $SD=0.53$) while the statement "the school provides proper accountability of financial and non-financial resources" had the lowest mean rating ($M=2.68$; $SD=1.01$). Overall, the mean of means score ($MM=2.88$; $SD=0.82$) indicated that the majority of the respondents agreed with the statements (sub-scale) concerning financial management practices as a component of school governance to a moderate extent. These results imply that school governance practices in terms of "financial management" is reasonable practiced in the senior high schools in Ghana. Financial management is a major task of educational administration that involves the utilization of all available financial resources in an effort to achieve the objectives for which educational institutions are established. It is inferred from these results that the school governing bodies had some knowledge and skills in school budgetpreparation, drafting financial policy statement and establishing internal control mechanism for effective financial management and accountability, yet, these skills are not adequate for effective school governance practices in the schools. The growth and development of any educational sector solely depends on the effective management of its finances. Ineffective management of the school finance could result in financial misappropriation, embezzlement, diversion of finance for different projects, to mention but a few.

It is important to note that every school board needs to plan their school budget either termly or annually to achieve optimal school objectives and for the effective management of finance. The results of the current study are consistent with the findings of most studies on financial management and internal controls of public secondary schools (Mulili, 2011; Akyaa, 2011; Tetteh, 2014; Ackom-Wilson, 2015; Prempeh et al., 2015; Nyaga, 2016). Akyaa (2011) and Tetteh (2014) in Ghana, found that school have put in place effective control practices such that financial transactions are backed by supporting documents. The findings of the current study which confirmed the study of Ackom-Wilson (2015) found that the procurement system of the schools is regulated by procurement board and the school budgets represent the main financial planning framework around which incomes and expenditures are managed. Similarly, Prempeh et al. (2015) found that polytechnics in Ghana implement three financial control measures (preventive, directive and detective control systems) and the school board established realistic budgets and results are actively monitored (Table 3).

Correspondingly, Nyaga (2016) concludes that many schools have put in place internal control mechanisms to ensure effective financial management. Also, the results of the current study are similar to the finding of Omondi and Nyenyi (2016) which concluded that financial accountability is practiced in public secondary schools in Kisumu Central sub-county, Kenya. However, the results of the current study contradict the findings of other researchers (Mestry, 2004; Nombasa, 2004) who indicated that most schools' governing bodies lacked skills in drafting of budgets, writing financial and policy statements, control of finance and petty cash, initiative and innovation as well as accountability, and this was accredited to illiteracy and lack of training. A study by Mobegi et al. (2012) found that most of the secondary school principals and BOM members lacked the necessary technical skills and capacity to understand and interpret financial reports in making decisions and also to offer guidance. Otu et al. (2014) in Ghana concluded that governance practices in the Koforidua Polytechnic was weak and ineffective because the school lacked records on management policy and programme structure for managing records was weak (Table 3).

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

School governance is the system by which schools are controlled, directed and managed. The main purpose of the study was to assess school governance practices in the senior high schools in Ghana. From the results of the study, it is concluded that the school governance principles (leadership, strategy and value and financial management) are incorporated and implemented by the school governing bodies to a moderate extent. Leadership practices, strategic and

value, and financial management practices are crucial doctrines and principles of the said institutions as shown by the respondents' agreement that they are being incorporated and practiced to a moderate extent. It is worth noting that these school governance practices of the school governing body within the school might positively influence the performance of the school. These school governance structures might help schools to create value and provide accountability and control systems. Based on the findings and conclusions, the study recommends that the school governance principles (leadership, strategic and value, and financial management) should be fully incorporated and implemented by the school governing body within the senior high schools in Ghana. It is recommended that the school governing body in the senior high schools should intensively engage in effective leadership practices, formal strategic planning and financial management and control to help establish strategic direction and align resources to meaningful strategies to develop competitive advantage. The Ministry of Education in collaboration with other agencies should organise, training, conferences, workshops and seminars for school board of management for the purpose of illuminating them on effective school governance principles and practices. This would enable them to discharge their duties effectively and professionally. Finally, a study should also be carried out to explore the challenges facing the implementation of the components of corporate governance practices in the senior high schools in Ghana.

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