

Strategies Employed by Heads of Schools in Managing Capitation Grants in Public Secondary Schools

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Abstract

This study examined strategies used by Heads of schools in Managing Capitation Grants in Public Secondary Schools. The study employed a mixed method research approach with a concurrent research design. The target population of the study was heads of schools, Town Secondary Education Officers and teachers. The study comprised a sample of 63 participants who were selected by using purposive and random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting heads of schools and town secondary education officers while simple random sampling techniques were employed in selecting teachers. The methods for data collection were interviews, questionnaire and documentary reviews. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive analysis, presented in tables in form of frequencies and percentages. The qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis. The findings revealed that, heads of schools employed various strategies in managing capitation grants which included; monitoring, evaluating financial resources, budgeting, ability to work in line with the school vision and mission as well as ensuring accountability and transparency in financial transactions. To strengthen the impact of heads of schools' strategies for capitation grant management on the provision of quality education, it is recommended that heads of schools receive ongoing training in financial management to enhance their capacity in budget oversight.

Keywords: grants, capitation grant, quality education, management, head of school

1.0 Introduction

The capitation grant plays a significant role as a primary funding source aimed at enhancing school operations and reducing the financial burden on parents (Rupia & Michael, 2022). Public secondary schools rely heavily on government funding to meet their operational needs, with the capitation grant being a significant source of financial support (Nathaniel, 2019). Introduced as part of the Education and Training Policy, the capitation grant aims at subsidizing educational costs, reduce the financial burden on families, and improve the overall learning environment by covering expenses such as teaching materials, examination fees, and other essential resources.

The efficiency and effectiveness of heads of schools in managing funds can greatly influence the quality of education provided (Phylisthers, Mulwa & Kyalo, 2018).

Despite the intended benefits, the management of capitation grants in public secondary schools has faced numerous challenges for instance, delays in disbursement, misallocation of funds, inadequate financial oversight, inadequate training for school heads and teachers on financial management (Stanley, 2020) and a lack of transparency and accountability, undermining the effectiveness of the grant in achieving its intended purpose (Laurie, Nonoyama-Tarumi, Mckeown & Hopkins, 2016). Over time, the government has implemented various reforms to improve the efficiency of capitation grant management, such as establishing clearer guidelines, enhancing monitoring mechanisms, and providing capacity-building programs for school administrators. Consequently, the ability of heads of schools to effectively manage these funds is undermined.

Globally, the management of capitation grants by heads of schools is increasingly seen as a critical component of effective school governance and the provision of quality education (Wanjala, Wamocha & Sang, 2020). In many countries, there is a growing emphasis on decentralizing financial management to school leaders, empowering them with more autonomy and responsibility over budgetary decisions. This approach aims to make resource allocation more responsive to the specific needs of schools, improve accountability, and enhance educational outcomes (Idris, 2018). Best practices include regular financial training for school heads, robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and the involvement of stakeholders such as parents and the community in financial oversight.

Historically, in Tanzania teachers' capitation grant management dates back to the early 2000s, when the government introduced capitation grants as part of the Primary Education Development Program (PEDP) and later extended it to secondary education through the Secondary Education Development Program (SEDP) (Rupia & Michael, 2022). The capitation grant was designed to provide schools with funds to cover essential operational costs, including teaching and learning

materials, minor repairs, and other basic needs, thereby reducing the financial burden on parents and improving access to quality education (Nathaniel, 2019).

Initiatives have been made to address management of capitation grant through policy reforms, capacity-building initiatives, and the establishment of clearer guidelines and accountability mechanisms (Kuluchumila, 2014). Despite these initiatives, the management of capitation grant has continued to face obstacles, including inconsistent funding and limited oversight, which have impacted the overall effectiveness of the grant in meeting its intended goals (Haki Elimu, 2009). As a result, there remains a need for ongoing improvements in the management practices to ensure that funds are used effectively to support quality education in Tanzania.

In Njombe Town Council, like in many other regions of Tanzania, the responsibility of managing capitation grant falls on the heads of schools, who are tasked with making critical decisions on the allocation and utilization of funds (URT, 2018). Their role is not just administrative but also strategic, as they must balance limited resources with the growing demands of their institutions. The gap highlighted by the study is the strategies employed by heads of schools in managing capitation grant and the extent to which they can impact the overall provision of quality education. This gap underscores the need for targeted analysis to better understand the unique challenges and successes within this region, ultimately guiding more effective interventions and support mechanisms tailored to the needs of local schools.

2.0 Materials and Methods

2.1 Research Approach and Design

This study employed a mixed method research approach which involves integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods to comprehensively explore strategies by heads of schools in managing capitation grants. The use of a mixed method research approach was justified by the need to capture both the depth of individual experiences and the breadth of data required for generalization (Kothari, 2019).

A concurrent research design was utilized, to capture a comprehensive view of the strategies heads of schools use in managing capitation grants. This design allows for the collection of both

quantitative and qualitative data at the same time, facilitating a more nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in school management. By using this approach, the researcher triangulated findings from different data sources, enhancing the validity and richness of the results. Additionally, the concurrent design enabled timely insights that inform immediate educational policy and practice, addressing the challenges faced by schools in real-time.

2.2 Participants

The target population comprised heads of schools, the town secondary education officers, and teachers, with a sample size of 63 participants. The sampling techniques which were used in selecting the participants of the study were simple random sampling for teachers and purposive sampling for heads of schools and the education officer.

2.3 Data Collection Methods

The methods which were used in collecting data include questionnaires, interviews and documentary reviews. Questionnaires were used in collecting quantitative data which were administered to teachers. Documentary review was used in collecting secondary data for historical and contextual understanding, and interview guides to gather in-depth qualitative data from key informants.

2.4 Data Analysis and Ethical Considerations

Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29.0. This facilitated the generation of descriptive statistics and identifying patterns in responses, while qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis to draw out key themes and insights (Creswell, 2018).

Ethical issues were also considered in which confidentiality and informed consent were maintained. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity data, several steps were taken. Respondents were assured that their identities would be protected and that their responses would be used solely for research purposes. Personal identifiers were removed from the data during the initial processing phase. Unique codes replaced any identifying information to link responses without revealing respondent identities. Access to the data was restricted to authorized research personnel

only, and data were stored securely, both physically and digitally. Additionally, findings were reported in aggregate form to prevent any individual respondent from being identified.

3.0 Results and Discussion

The findings revealed that, heads of schools exhibited strategies in the management of capitation grant in public secondary schools. Such strategies ranged from monitoring, evaluating financial resources, working diligently budgeting, ability to work in line with the school vision and mission of the school as well as ensuring accountability and transparency in financial transactions. The results are summarized on Table 1.

Table 2: Teachers’ Responses on the Heads of Schools’ Strategies in Managing Capitation Grant for Provision of Quality Education (N=54)

	Statement	Disagree	Agree
i	Heads of schools are regularly monitoring and evaluating financial resources	13(24%)	41(76%)
ii	Heads of schools work diligently to become effective in monitoring and evaluating school budget	10(18%)	44(82%)
iii	Heads of schools’ capitation grant management is associated with settled vision and mission of the school	10(18%)	44(82%)
iv	Heads of schools ensure accountability and transparency when monitoring, evaluating and auditing capitation grant	12(22%)	42(78%)

Source: *Field data (2024)*

3.1 Regularly Monitoring and Evaluating Financial Resources

Table 1 indicates that, 76% of the teachers who responded to the questionnaires agreed with the statement heads of schools were regularly monitoring and evaluating financial resources. Also, the findings obtained through the interview conducted to heads of schools and town council secondary education officers (TSEO) it was observed that heads of schools used strategies in

managing capitation grant since they regularly monitored and evaluated its transactions as Head of School “C” said: *“We closely monitor our financial resources to ensure we can meet our educational goals effectively. Regular evaluations help us make informed decisions for the benefit of our students* (Interview: HoS C, 21st February, 2024).

Similarly, HoS A said this: *“Managing finances in an educational institution is crucial for its sustainability. We conduct thorough evaluations to allocate resources wisely and prioritize areas that need attention”* (Interview: HoS A, 16th February, 2024).

Also, HoS G had this to say:

As educators, we understand the importance of financial stewardship. By monitoring and evaluating our resources regularly, we can identify any inefficiencies and reallocate funds to areas where they are most needed, ultimately enhancing the quality of education we provide. Our responsibility extends beyond just teaching; we must also ensure the financial health of our institution. Through ongoing assessments of our resources, we can make strategic decisions that support the long-term sustainability of our school and benefit our students (Interview: HoS D, 22nd February, 2024).

On other hand, in the interview with the TSEO indicated that it is inevitable for HoS to monitor and evaluate capitation grant and other financial resources in the provision of quality education.

TSEO was quoted saying:

It is imperative for heads of schools to monitor and evaluate financial resources consistently. This practice ensures transparency, accountability, and optimal utilization of funds for the overall improvement of the education system. Effective financial management is the cornerstone of a well-functioning education system. Heads of schools play a pivotal role in this process, and their commitment to monitoring and evaluating

financial resources contributes to the overall success of our schools and the students they serve (Interview: TSEO, 18th March, 2024).

The interviews with HoS and TSEO revealed that heads of schools evaluated and monitored capitation grant. The strategy of heads of schools to regularly monitoring and evaluating financial resources involves the continuous oversight and assessment of the school's financial activities to ensure that funds, particularly those from capitation grants, are used efficiently and effectively. This process includes tracking income and expenditures, ensuring adherence to budgets, and verifying that financial practices align with set policies and objectives. Regular monitoring helps identify any discrepancies or misuse of funds early on, allowing for corrective actions to be taken promptly. Evaluation, on the other hand, involves reviewing the outcomes of financial decisions to assess their impact on school operations and educational quality. By consistently monitoring and evaluating financial resources, heads of schools can enhance transparency, accountability, and the overall financial health of the institution, ultimately supporting the provision of quality education.

All the respondents emphasized the importance of allocating resources effectively to support educational goals. This suggests recognition that financial decisions directly impacted the quality of education provided to students. The findings through both questionnaires and interviews found that HoS evaluated and monitored financial resources regularly. This process was found to be very important as similarly found in Kumar (2017) who explained that regular monitoring and evaluation of financial resources facilitate smooth and proper financial reports prepared for any school. Preparing such statements at least on the monthly basis created measures, of addressing the financial challenges and resolved them ahead of time.

The findings underscored the role of educators as stewards of financial resources. They acknowledged the responsibility to manage funds efficiently and transparently, ensuring they are used to benefit students and the institution as a whole. They emphasized the long-term sustainability of the institution, indicating that financial decisions should not only address immediate needs but also consider future implications. This reflects a strategic approach to

financial management. The TSEO emphasized the importance of transparency and accountability in financial management. This suggests a broader institutional commitment to ensuring that financial practices align with ethical and regulatory standards.

3.2 Working Diligently to Become Effective in Monitoring and Evaluating School Budget

The findings show that 44 (82%) respondents agreed with the statement that Heads of schools worked diligently to become effective in monitoring and evaluating school budget. During interview sessions with HoS and TSEO, the findings revealed the perspective of both school leaders and district authorities on the importance of diligent budget monitoring and evaluation. HoS E had this to say: *“Monitoring the school budget is crucial for ensuring resources are utilized effectively to benefit our students. Regular evaluation of the budget helps us identify areas for improvement and ensures transparency in financial matters”* (Interview: HoS E, 25th February, 2024).

Another HoS had this to say: *“Monitoring and evaluating the school budget is very important for ensuring resources are used efficiently. I constantly review our expenditures to identify areas where we can cut costs or reallocate funds to better serve our students”* (Interview: HoS H, 10th March, 2024).

Heads of Schools demonstrated dedication to monitoring and evaluating school budgets, resulting in better resource allocation and educational outcomes. Also, TSEO on the other hand demonstrated that collaborative efforts to handle school budget was an important thing as monitoring and evaluation. TSEO had this to say:

Heads of Schools play a pivotal role in budget monitoring, contributing to the overall efficiency of the education system. Effective budget monitoring and evaluation enable us to make informed decisions about resource allocation across schools. Regular assessments of budget utilization help us identify trends and address any financial discrepancies promptly. Collaboration on the capitation management is important (Interview: TSEO, 18th March, 2024).

The findings highlighted the commitment of both HoS and TSEO to ensuring effective monitoring and evaluation of school budgets. Working diligently to become effective in monitoring and evaluating the school budget involves their commitment to developing the skills and practices necessary for thorough financial oversight. This includes setting clear budgetary goals, regularly reviewing financial reports, and ensuring that expenditures align with planned priorities. Diligence in this context means actively engaging with the budgetary process, seeking to understand financial data, and making informed decisions that promote efficient use of resources. It also entails fostering a culture of accountability within the school, where all stakeholders are aware of financial expectations and responsibilities. By striving to improve their effectiveness in budget monitoring and evaluation, heads of schools can better manage funds, reduce wastage, and ensure that financial resources are directed towards enhancing the quality of education.

The HoS emphasized the importance of reviewing expenditures to optimize resource utilization within their respective institutions. Similarly, a study by Kumar (2017) asserted that schools heads must work diligently to become effective in monitoring and evaluation of the school budget. This was one of the most important duties of school heads, demanding them to manage scarce available school resources through proper management at all levels while focusing on school priorities. This reflects a proactive approach to financial management, where cost-saving measures are sought, and funds are reallocated to prioritize student needs.

On the other hand, the TSEO underscored the broader significance of budget monitoring and evaluation in informing resource allocation decisions across schools. This indicates a systemic perspective, wherein financial data from individual schools are aggregated and analyzed to identify trends and address any irregularities promptly. Such an approach ensures equitable distribution of resources and fosters accountability within the education system. Generally, the findings suggested a collaborative effort between school administrators and district-level officials to ensure prudent financial management and effective utilization of resources for the benefit of students.

3.3 Associating Settled Vision and Mission of the School

Regarding to HoS capabilities on capitation grant management, HoS' capitation grant management is associated with settled vision and mission of the school. The findings from Table 2 indicate that, 82% of teachers believed that HoS' capitation grant management is associated with settled vision and mission of the school.

Also, during interview sessions with HoS and TSEO, the findings revealed that the management of capitation grant was associated with a settled school vision and mission as HoS F said: *"I believe effective management of the Capitation Grant is closely tied to a clear vision and mission for our school. When our goals are well-defined, we can allocate resources efficiently to support our students' needs"* (Interview: HoS F, 2nd March, 2024).

Also, HoS D had this to say: *"Our school's vision and mission guide every decision we make, including how we utilize the Capitation Grant. It ensures that every penny is spent in alignment with our educational objectives"* (Interview: HoS D, 22nd February, 2024).

In the interview with TSEO, the following comments were provided: *"Schools with a settled vision and mission tend to demonstrate better Capitation Grant management. It's evident that when schools have a clear direction, they can strategize better and utilize resources effectively"* (Interview: TSEO, 18th March, 2024).

The findings highlighted the importance of having a clear vision and mission in managing the capitation grant effectively. Settled vision and mission of the school emphasizes aligning financial decisions and resource allocation with the school's overarching goals and values. Effective management of capitation grants involves prioritizing expenditures that directly support the school's vision, such as improving academic performance, enhancing learning environments, and supporting student development. By ensuring that the use of funds reflects the school's mission, heads of schools can strategically guide financial resources towards initiatives that foster educational quality and institutional growth. This alignment helps maintain focus on long-term objectives, reinforcing the school's commitment to its core purpose and ensuring that all financial actions contribute to achieving its strategic goals.

Schools that had a well-defined purpose and direction were better equipped to allocate resources in a manner that supported their educational objectives. This alignment ensured that the capitation grant is utilized efficiently to meet the needs of the students and the school community. The findings concur with Radzi, Ghani, Siraj and Afshari, (2015) who found that heads of schools' capability in managing capitation grant was associated with the well settled of school mission and vision. Proper school vision and mission serve as a school driver for members to improve the school finance plan and allocate school resource utilization in the achievement of school identified vision and mission.

Also, Gurley (2014) argued that HoS must emphasize the adaptation and implementation of shared school mission and vision intending to catalyze unifying school stakeholders in financial management and provision of quality education delivery to all students. Thus, school leaders must be recognized on the ground of their ability to deal with school financial management as well as freedom for school decision making.

The correlation between a settled vision and mission of a school and effective capitation grant management highlights the significance of strategic planning in educational institutions. When schools have a clear understanding of their goals and objectives, they can prioritize expenditures, invest in areas that directly contribute to student success, and track the impact of their spending more effectively. Additionally, a strong vision and mission create a sense of purpose and direction for the entire school community, fostering a collaborative environment where stakeholders work towards common goals. Therefore, it is imperative for school leaders to prioritize the development and communication of a clear vision and mission, as it is not only shaping the educational experience but also influences the efficient utilization of financial resources such as the capitation grant.

3.4 Ensuring Accountability and Transparency When Monitoring, Evaluating and Auditing Capitation Grant

The findings from Table 1 revealed that 78% of teachers believed that HoS ensured transparency and accountability in managing capitation grant. On the same vein, during interview sessions with HoS and TSEO, the findings revealed that accountability and transparency was very

important for the use of allocated capitation grant in the required expenditure. HoS therefore prioritized accountability and transparency in managing capitation grant as HoS A said:

As the head of the school, I prioritize accountability by regularly reviewing financial records and ensuring they align with the allocated capitation grant. Also, transparency is crucial in our monitoring process. We conduct open discussions with staff and parents regarding how the grant is utilized (Interview: HoS A, 16th February, 2024).

Also, TSEO said: *“We oversee the auditing process to ensure compliance with regulations and standards. Regular site visits and meetings with heads of school’s help maintain transparency and address any issues promptly”* (Interview: TSEO, 18th March, 2024).

The findings obtained through questionnaires and interviews emphasized the importance of accountability. Ensuring accountability and transparency when monitoring, evaluating, and auditing capitation grant involves maintaining open, honest, and responsible financial practices. This includes accurately recording and reporting all financial transactions, adhering to established guidelines and regulations, and regularly sharing financial information with relevant stakeholders, such as school boards, parents, and the community. Transparency ensures that the flow and use of funds are visible and understandable, which builds trust and reduces the risk of mismanagement or misuse. Accountability means that heads of schools are answerable for their financial decisions and actions, taking responsibility for the proper use of funds. By fostering both accountability and transparency, heads of schools can safeguard the integrity of financial management processes, thereby supporting the effective and efficient use of capitation grants to enhance the quality of education.

The HoS highlighted their role in reviewing financial records, while the TSEO mentioned overseeing the auditing process. This indicates a shared responsibility between school-level and district-level authorities in ensuring funds are used appropriately. Open discussions and site visits are cited as methods to promote transparency. This suggests a commitment to keeping stakeholders informed about the allocation and utilization of the capitation grant.

The findings of this study were similar with Laurie, Nonoyama-Tarumi, Mckeown, & Hopkins, (2016) who stipulated that during monitoring, evaluation and auditing, school heads as an

internal financial manager ensured accountability and transparency of using school funds and preparing financial-based reports for remedial measures. Audit reporting of school finances continued to be a crucial process for determining the efficiency and effectiveness of school funds acquisition and utilization as one of the measures for providing quality education in a particular institution. It helped also, to provide feedback on whether the allocated resources had been utilized as intended. School heads were able to systematically prepare financial reports and made an analysis based on an accurate system of recording financial transactions. Such financial records for example receipt books, bank documents and cash books facilitate proper management of financial resources, which also ensured sustainable development in terms of quality education provision in secondary schools.

The findings suggest a concerted effort by both HoS and TSEO to promote accountability and transparency in managing capitation grant. However, challenges such as ensuring accurate record-keeping and addressing discrepancies may still exist. Collaborative efforts between schools and district authorities, along with regular monitoring and evaluation, are essential to mitigate these challenges and ensure effective use of resources for the benefit of students and education in large. Ongoing training and support for school administrators may also be necessary to enhance financial management practices and strengthen accountability mechanisms.

The findings highlighted a commitment to fostering accountability and transparency in the monitoring, evaluation, and auditing of capitation grants. Both levels of authority acknowledged their roles in ensuring the appropriate use of funds, with an emphasis on reviewing financial records, conducting site visits, and fostering open discussions. Despite these efforts, challenges may persist, necessitating ongoing collaboration, training, and support to strengthen financial management practices and enhance accountability mechanisms. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of continuous oversight and collaborative efforts to optimize the impact of capitation grants on educational outcomes.

4.0 Conclusions

The effective management of capitation grant by heads of schools is crucial for enhancing the quality of education and improving students' academic performance in public secondary schools.

The heads of schools play a pivotal role in ensuring that financial resources are used effectively by regularly monitoring, evaluating, and auditing expenditures to align with the school's vision and mission. Their diligence in budget management, commitment to transparency, and accountability are fundamental in fostering a positive educational environment that directly impacts student outcomes. When heads of schools effectively oversee financial resources, they can address the specific needs of their institutions, thus supporting academic achievement and the overall development of students.

5.0 Recommendations

To strengthen the impact of capitation grant management on students' academic performance, it is recommended that heads of schools should receive ongoing training in financial management and strategic planning to enhance their capacity in budget oversight. Additionally, implementing more robust systems for monitoring and evaluating the use of funds can further promote accountability and transparency. Involving stakeholders such as teachers, parents, and the community in financial decision-making processes can also help ensure that expenditures are responsive to the actual needs of the school. Finally, regular audits and feedback mechanisms should be established to provide continuous improvement in the management of capitation grant, ensuring that every shilling spent contributes to the advancement of educational quality and student success.

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