

Full Length Research Paper

Management of university records for effective administration of universities in North Central Nigeria

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This study assessed the management of records for effective administration of universities in North Central Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was adopted in carrying out the study. Questionnaire was used in the collection of data. The results of the study, among others, showed that alphabetic and subject filing systems are the two major filing systems employed. Equally, records creation, records retrieval, records scheduling, filing and correspondence management were done manually. Cupboard, wooden shelves/cabinets, steel shelves, drawers for flat file, box file and top of tables are storage facilities made available. Compliance with international standard, adequate storage facilities under good environment, computerization of all universities records, periodic check to ensure proper management are all identified as strategies that will enhance the effective management of records. The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study; adequate filing systems like alphabetic, numeric and alphanumeric filing systems should be adopted. Adequate space, security devices and storage facilities in a good atmospheric condition that will extend the life of records should be provided. All personnel handling records in the universities should be trained and retrained especially in ICT application and records management, in order to operate in a digital environment.

Key words: Management, university records, North Central.

INTRODUCTION

Record-keeping occupies a strategic position in the efficient and effective management of the university system. In fact, it is central in the administration of institutions of learning because it documents the planning and implementation of appropriate course of services allowing proper monitoring of work. In conventional paper-based organizations, such as the universities, paper continues to be viewed as the material for records in administrative documentations (Igwoku, 2008).

The term 'record' derived its origin from the Latin word

'recordari' meaning to be mindful of, or to remember (Esse, 2002). It refers to recorded information, regardless of form or medium, received and maintained by an agency, institution, organization or individual in pursuance of its legal obligations or in the transaction of business of any kind (Charman, 1990). The National Archives Decree (1992) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has provided a most encompassing definition of records as: all papers, registers, printed matter, books, plans, maps, photographs, microfilms, cinematographic

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films, sound recording or other documentary materials regardless of physical forms or characteristics made or received by public or state office or by business houses or companies, private bodies and individuals in pursuance of their legal obligations or in connection with the transaction of their proper business. P.21.

Similarly, Usanga, (2007) submitted that records can be said to be any information or communication captured and retained in some reproducible media. Records in this case become the object, the document or medium, which carries the information. Records therefore, are information media created and valuable enough to be retained. Most records are paper-based: that is to say that the information was captured on paper. However, the media for information carriage can also be in other forms like machine readable disks, graphics, images, diskettes, flash drives and pictorial media, be they photographic or/not.

Records are important historical and legal tools and are necessary for the smooth running of an institution. Records constitute an essential instrument of administration without which operational processes and functions cannot be executed. For example, a successor to a position needs available records to find his bearing when he takes over from another or when he has to fill vacancy created by resignation, transfer, retrenchment or death. Using such records as a springboard, the successor can decide on whether to continue with, modify or change certain techniques or practices (Ijaduola, 2006).

Records play immeasurable roles in administration because managers and administrators employ them on routine basis for carrying out diverse administrative duties especially in decision making. The information contained in records helps to enlighten and educate administrators on issues relevant to the institution.

Records are also used as important sources for strategic planning and successful implementation as well as good policy formulation and implementation (Umar, 2005). In addition, records are primary sources of information for research, which can serve as reference, as well as evidence. According to Popoola (2000) what actually keeps the civil service going in any modern system of government is recorded information called "record" which is used for planning, decision-making and controlling. This assertion is true because, for any effective planning, decision-making and controlling to take place, there must be timely access to records. Universities in Nigeria create, maintain and use records for their daily administrative and other purposes.

According to Atulomah (2011), decision-making in the university system is an administrative function and invariably requires information in the form of records. Information is very vital to any decision-making. Decision-making is the backbone of managerial /administrative functions. This is because decisions direct actions (Igwe, 1995). Good and effective decisions can only be made when the right information is made available at the right

time to the right recipient.

Universities today need to pay more attention to the management of records in their custody for efficiency and effectiveness. Information in form of records reduces uncertainties and facilitates decision-making. University possesses huge amounts of records. Examples of records available in universities are: correspondences, accounting documents, personnel files, pay roll, minutes of meetings (senates, university council, faculty and departmental boards meetings) students' registration, students' admissions and examination records, inventory of facilities, budgetary information, list of courses offered, time-tables for lectures, speeches, legal documents, deeds, financial records, letters (appointment, confirmations, admissions, sick leave, queries) and so forth. Accurate and timely availability and use of the records on these would reduce the common problems of management in universities, such as:-

1. Difficulty in finding information needed to take a decision or to respond to inquiry
2. Delays in payment of staff emoluments and fringe benefits
3. Piling up of administrative matters causing discontent among staff, students, parents etc.
4. Improperly registered students in school registers and records
5. Inaccurate demographic figures resulting in either lack of places/spaces for students or wastage of spaces/places available
6. Inability to forward students reports/records or release results on schedule (Nwankwo, 1985).

Management, according to Hornby (2001), is the act of running and controlling a business or similar organization to ensure success and continuity of any organization.

In addition, Brophy (2005) is of the view that management is concerned with the organization and directing of different kinds of resources for specific purposes. Agabi (1999) tried to see management as the organization and mobilization of all human and material resources in a particular system for the achievement of some specified organizational objectives in the most rational manner.

Adequate management as can be seen from the above definitions involves five principles: planning, organization, staffing, supervision and control. Planning involves determining the aims of the university services, setting targets for attaining the aims and preparing realistic decisions to ensure that the objectives will be reached through rational and reasonable use of available resources (Penna, 1964). It also involves policy formulation, stating objectives and goals of the university, budgeting, preparation of programme of services as well as procedure and methods. Organization implies organizing both the human and material resources together towards the actualization of the set objectives or goals. This will help to give one sense of direction. That is

placing the right resource in the right place at the right time for the execution of the university goal.

Staffing relates issues in terms of personnel, their adequacy, training and ethical conduct. The fourth principle, supervision involves inspecting the job performance of the staff, instructing and guiding, correcting and advising the subordinate staff. Control, on the other hand entails ensuring quality of the services provided by the records personnel in the university. It also involves conformity with laid down standards in records management. According to Popoola (2000), information and records management are the bedrock of business activity. If there is no information, the management is crippled in its planning and decision making processes. Information is the factor input in achieving rational organizational decision-making and high quality service delivery. It is needed to develop, deliver and assess the effectiveness of organizational policies, make information choices between alternative courses of action, provide the basis for openness and accountability, protect individual rights and enforce legal obligations.

The idea of records management has to do with the control of records passing out of current and semi-current stages into archival care. Management of records is therefore concerned with the creation, appraisal, retention, preservation, conservation, description and arrangement, accessioning and access to records. Obiora (1995) described records management as the application of systematic analysis and scientific control of records from their creation through processing, maintenance, protection and final disposition. Unuigbo (1990) defined records management as a control over the quality and cost of records and the procedure, systems, operations, space, equipment and staff requirement to administer records. It is therefore, the key to modern organization. Managing records entails proper and adequate storage, filing procedures, retrieval tool and retention/disposal schedules (Iwhiwhu, 2005).

To guarantee efficiency, effectiveness and to enable organizations like university to survive in the accountability period in which we live, records must be actively managed throughout their life. This needs to be done via a records management programme which is the main implementation vehicle for the records management policy whose aims and objectives must be aligned with those of the organization to which it refers, (Popoola 2000).

Research Hypothesis

The hypothesis was tested in this study.

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of staff of Federal and State universities on the adequacy of staff needed for records management to enhance effective administration of universities in the North Central Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

Records are very vital instrument in every society, organization or institution especially in reference, decision-making or administrative, research among others. Information contained in records and records management are the pillars of business activities. In the absence of information, management is incapacitated in its decision-making processes. The demand for appropriate, adequate and timely information for management decisions in Nigerian universities appears challenging. The university system is expanding at an unprecedented rate, so do their problems of planning, organization, administration, monitoring and control. Accordingly, there is the need for increased records management among educationists, administrators, planners and policy makers (Nwankwo, 1985).

Records in the university suffer from arbitrary or random destruction, unprotected from disaster, heaps of files without proper arrangement. There is also lack of management principles which cover records from their creation through their use to their final disposition. The absence of management principles in the university gives more doubt as how university administrators and other professionals have been handling and taking administrative decisions.

It is therefore, necessary to look at the management of university records, in order to find a way forward. The problem of this study put as a question is: how are the records managed to enhance effective administration of universities in North Central Zone of Nigeria?

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study

1. What types of filling, retention, and disposal methods are being used to enhance effective management of records administration in universities in the North Central Nigeria?
2. To what extent is the staff needed for records management to enhance effective administration of universities in the North Central Nigeria adequate?
3. What are the types of storage facilities made available for records management to enhance effective administration of universities in the North Central Nigeria?
4. What areas of the records management in the universities are automated to enhance effective administration of universities in the North Central Nigeria?
5. What programmes are the staff exposed to, for records management in the universities to enhance effective administration of universities in the North Central Nigeria?

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study to assess the opinions of record personnel in universities in North Central Nigeria. The population consists of university administrators, deans, heads of departments, records personnel

Table 1. Frequency and percentage of the responses on the types of filing, retention, and disposal methods being used.

Filing systems	Not used		Used		Remark
	Freq	Percent (%)	Freq	Percent (%)	
1. Alphabetic	231	45.0	282	55.0	Used
2. Alphanumeric	396	77.2	117	22.8	Not Used
3. By code number	369	71.9	144	28.1	Not Used
4. Numeric	341	66.5	172	33.5	Not Used
5. By Subject	191	37.2	322	62.8	Used
6. Colour Code	495	96.5	18	3.5	Not Used
7. Inventory/Stock taking	500	97.5	13	2.5	Not Used
8. Appraisal	405	78.9	108	21.1	Not Used
9. Burning	445	86.7	68	13.3	Not Used
10. Pulverizing	183	35.7	330	64.3	Used
11. Pulping	84	16.4	429	83.6	Used
12. Selling	445	86.7	68	13.3	Not Used
13. Shredding	474	92.4	39	7.6	Not Used
14. Incineration	373	72.7	140	27.3	Not Used
15. Maceration (soften by soaking)	374	72.9	139	27.1	Not Used

and clerical officers who handle records in the universities in all the ten federal and state universities in North Central Nigeria. There is a total of 1051 university staff made up of 395 academic staff and 656 administrative staff. Six universities representing each of the states in the zone were purposively selected from the ten federal and state universities. Hence, all 801 university staff made up of 284 academic staff and 517 administrative staff in the selected universities were involved in the study.

The instruments used for generating data for this study were the questionnaire, and oral interview schedule. The questionnaire is captioned "University Records Management Questionnaire (URMQ)" and was developed by the researcher.

Copies of the questionnaire were administered directly by the researcher with the aid of six trained research assistants. A total number of 513 questionnaire were completed and returned representing 64%. The interview schedule was conducted by the researcher or the assistants in universities where the researcher was not able to visit, and copies of the instruments were collected back from the respondents. Data for the research were analyzed in line with the research questions and hypothesis that guided the study. Data analyzed were presented using frequency tables, percentages, Mean scores (\bar{x}) and Standard Deviation for research questions. The interview discussion was summarized and organized based on the purposes of the study. Inferential statistics was employed to test the hypothesis, specifically; t-test was used for testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Results have been presented in line with the research questions and the hypothesis.

Research question 1

What types of filing, retention, and disposal methods are

being used to enhance effective management of records administration in universities in the North Central Nigeria?

Table 1 shows frequency and percentage responses on the types of filing, retention, and disposal methods being used to enhance effective management of records administration in universities in the North Central zone Nigeria. The results show that only Alphabetic (55%) and By Subject (62.8%) are methods used for filing. Pulverizing (64.3%) and Pulping (83.6%) methods are used for disposal. The other methods like alphanumeric, code numbers, numeric, appraisal, selling, shredding, maceration are not popular methods for filing, retention, and disposal, because they have less than 50%.

The university registrars interviewed unanimously confirmed the use of alphabetic and subject filing systems because they ease the retrieval of data. The researcher also gathered that there is no standard policy in the universities on retention and disposal of records

Research Question 2

To what extent is the staff needed for records management to enhance effective administration of universities in the North Central Nigeria adequate?

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of the responses on the adequacy of the staff needed for records management to enhance effective administration of universities in the North Central Nigeria. From the results, records managers' in-charge of various units of

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation of the responses on the adequacy of the staff needed for records management (N = 513).

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
1. Records managers in-charge of various units of the university	2.89	0.95	Adequate
2. System analysis programmers	2.73	0.94	Adequate
3. Clerical officers	2.81	0.99	Adequate
4. Records officers and records assistants for handling non-professional duties	2.71	0.93	Adequate

Table 3. Frequency and percentage of the responses on the types of storage facilities made available for records management.

Items	Not Available		Available		Remark
	Freq	Percent (%)	Freq	Percent (%)	
Cupboard	188	36.6	325	63.4	Available
Wooden shelves/cabinets	91	17.7	422	82.3	Available
Steel shelves	128	25.0	385	75.0	Available
Drawers for flat file	119	23.2	394	76.8	Available
Box files	248	48.3	265	51.7	Available
Top of tables	248	48.3	265	51.7	Available
The floor	269	52.4	244	47.6	Not Available
Central storage	302	58.9	211	41.1	Not Available
Air conditional (s)	247	48.1	266	51.9	Available
Proper handling	176	34.3	337	65.7	Available
Duplication	228	44.4	285	55.6	Available
Dispersal (Placement of copies in several locations)	270	52.6	243	47.4	Not Available
Security guards	216	42.1	297	57.9	Available
Smoke detector	375	73.1	138	26.9	Not Available
Fire extinguisher	284	55.4	229	44.6	Not Available
Water sprinkler	382	74.5	131	25.5	Not Available
Close circuit system	399	77.8	114	22.2	Not Available
Electronic detector	406	79.1	107	20.9	Not Available

the university, system analysis programmers, clerical officers, and records officers and records assistants for handling non-professional duties are all adequate. This is because, each of the mean is the within 2.50 and 3.49. Using the limit of real numbers, the range corresponds to Adequate.

Research Question 3

What are the types of storage facilities made available for records management to enhance effective administration of universities in the North Central Nigeria?

Table 3 shows the frequency and percentage of the responses on the types of storage facilities made available for records management to enhance effective administration of universities in the North Central Nigeria. Results on the table revealed that cupboard (63.4%), wooden shelves/cabinets (82.3%), steel shelves (75%), drawers for flat file (75.8%), box file (51.7%) and top of

tables (51.7%) are available storage facilities. Other facilities such as central storage and floor are not available as such, because each has percentage less than 50%.

For storage and preservation of records, the university registrars interviewed mentioned cupboards, wooden shelves, iron cabinets as storage facilities made available for records in their universities. Fire extinguishers and security guards are also in place for the security and preservation of records in their universities.

Research Question 4

What areas of the records management in the universities are automated to enhance effective administration of universities in the North Central Nigeria?

Table 4 shows frequency and percentage on the areas of the records management in the universities that are automated to enhance effective administration of universities in the North Central Nigeria. Results revealed

Table 4. Frequency and percentage of the responses on the areas of records management in the universities that are automated.

Items	Not Automated		Automated		Remark
	Freq	Percent (%)	Freq	Percent (%)	
Records Creation	308	60.0	205	40.0	Not Automated
Record Retrieval	348	67.8	165	32.2	Not Automated
Records Scheduling	407	79.3	106	20.7	Not Automated
Filing	324	63.2	189	36.8	Not Automated
Correspondence Management	317	61.8	196	38.2	Not Automated

Table 5. Frequency and percentage of the responses on the training programmes to which the staff are exposed to records management.

Items	Not Attended		Attended		Remark
	Freq	Percent (%)	Freq	Percent (%)	
Seminars	191	37.2	322	62.8	Exposed to
Workshops	219	42.7	294	57.3	Exposed to
Symposia	463	90.3	50	9.7	Not Exposed
Conferences	332	64.7	181	35.3	Not Exposed to
Orientation	356	69.4	157	30.6	Not Exposed to
Others (Fellowships)	426	83.0	87	17.0	Not Exposed to

that none of the areas listed (records creation (40.0%), record retrieval (32.2%), records scheduling (20.7), filing (36.8%), and correspondence management (38.2%)) is automated.

The interview conducted with university registrars indicated that automation of records particularly that of the students are ongoing in the universities under study.

Research Question 5

What programmes are the staff exposed to, for records management in the universities to enhance effective administration of universities in the North Central Nigeria?

Table 5 shows frequency and percentage of the responses to the programmes to which the staff are exposed to records management in the universities to enhance effective administration of universities in the North Central Nigeria. Results revealed that majority of staff are exposed to seminars (62.8%) and workshops (57.3%). However, few staff are exposed to symposia (9.7%), conferences (35.3%), orientations (30.6%) and fellowships (17.0%).

The interviews conducted with university registrars as confirmed the above that staff handling records in the universities are not properly trained in records management practices. Only newly employed staff are given orientation on how to handle records.

Hypothesis 1 (HO₁)

There is no significant difference between the mean of the responses of staff of Federal and State universities on the adequacy of staff needed for records management to enhance effective administration of universities in the North Central Nigeria.

Table 6 shows the mean, standard deviation and t-test for the adequacy of staff needed for records management to enhance effective administration of universities in the North Central Nigeria. The results revealed that the t-value for the overall is 6.30; this t-value is significant at 0.00 and equally significant at 0.05. This is because 0.00 is less than 0.05 ($p = 0.00$; $p < 0.05$). Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected, hence, there is significant difference between the mean of the response of Federal and State universities on the adequacy of staff needed for records management to enhance effective administration of universities in the North Central Nigeria.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Types of filing, retention and disposal methods of records

It has been revealed that only two types of filing system out of seven are used by universities in North Central Nigeria. The filing systems are alphabetic and subject

Table 6. Mean, standard deviation and t-test for the adequacy of staff needed for records management.

Items	Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)																																												
Item36	Federal University	318	3.03	0.92	4.43	511	.000																																												
	State University	195	2.66	0.95				Item37	Federal University	318	2.92	0.90	6.02	511	.000	State University	195	2.43	0.92	Item38	Federal University	318	3.05	0.83	7.48	511	.000	State University	195	2.42	1.10	Item39	Federal University	318	2.77	0.90	1.85	511	.064	State University	195	2.61	0.98	Overall	Federal University	318	2.94	0.70	6.30	511	.000
Item37	Federal University	318	2.92	0.90	6.02	511	.000																																												
	State University	195	2.43	0.92				Item38	Federal University	318	3.05	0.83	7.48	511	.000	State University	195	2.42	1.10	Item39	Federal University	318	2.77	0.90	1.85	511	.064	State University	195	2.61	0.98	Overall	Federal University	318	2.94	0.70	6.30	511	.000	State University	195	2.53	0.76								
Item38	Federal University	318	3.05	0.83	7.48	511	.000																																												
	State University	195	2.42	1.10				Item39	Federal University	318	2.77	0.90	1.85	511	.064	State University	195	2.61	0.98	Overall	Federal University	318	2.94	0.70	6.30	511	.000	State University	195	2.53	0.76																				
Item39	Federal University	318	2.77	0.90	1.85	511	.064																																												
	State University	195	2.61	0.98				Overall	Federal University	318	2.94	0.70	6.30	511	.000	State University	195	2.53	0.76																																
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filing systems. This suggests that both the federal and state universities see this arrangement as a useful method to gain access to the subject content of their records. This conforms with Umar (2005) who noted that without the existence of filing aid, one would waste a whole day searching without being able to trace a single required records. The study also agrees with the study of Attah-Udoh (1997) when she observed that maintaining large quantities of records without any form of order would be as bad as having no records.

Disposition of records, pulping and pulverizing are the major ways of disposing records in the universities. The finding suggests that other forms of disposal of records are not used by both federal and state universities. These methods of disposition (Pulping and pulverizing) conforms with the study of Brumm (1996) when he said that records that have satisfied their retention requirement can be shredded, pulverized or incinerated.

Records disposition, which is the third phase of records management programme is a critical phase. It is through records disposal processes that records of permanent value are retained and transferred to the archives while those that have no value for permanent preservation are eliminated or disposed of in any other way mandated by the governing records schedule.

Adequacy of records management staff

Academic and administrative staff indicated that records managers in-charge of various units of the university, system analysis programmers, clerical officers, records officers and records assistants are all adequate. This is because each of the mean is within 2.50 and 4.49.

The result of the study therefore, showed that records staff engaged in records management in the universities are adequate. This finding is in line with the requirement

of the Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA, 1987).

Types of storage facilities

It was found that cupboard, wooden shelves/cabinets, steel shelves, drawers for flat file, and top of tables are available storage facilities.

The results of the study, therefore, revealed that the universities relied heavily on wooden shelves for records storage while the floor was the least. This finding is in line with that of Popoola (2000) who reported the prevalence of these records storage equipment in Oyo State civil service. The importance of good storage cannot be overlooked. The purpose of good storage, as observed by Child (1991), "is to provide conditions which minimize or prevent deterioration, while still allowing access to the records". Fire extinguisher, smoke detector and electronic detector are not available in the universities. The absence of these devices poses serious threat to records.

Functions of records management in the universities that are automated

The study reveals that all areas of records management in the universities operations are not automated. This finding is in line with Iwhiwhu (2005) when he observed that though the records in some department in the university are computerized, the entire universities records are not put in database. This finding shows that the operation of Nigerian universities in the North Central with respect to records management is predominately based on traditional methods and what it implies is that Nigerian universities are still far away from the opportunities operating in the global records environment.

Programmes to which staff are exposed to enhance records Management

The result reveals that majority of staff are exposed to seminars and workshops. However, few staff are exposed to symposia, conferences, orientations and fellowships.

The result of this study, therefore, showed that staff engaged in records management in the universities in North Central Nigeria are not exposed to other forms of training. This finding is in line with the study of Nworgu (2006) who observed that in many organizations, employees usually learn on the job. Highlighting the importance of staff training, Abioye (2006) submitted that records management is a specialized field. As such, those in charge of the programme in any organization should be formally trained in the nitty-gritty of records management. He further mentioned that the erroneous notion in many organizations, particularly in Nigeria is that a fair knowledge of clerical duty is good enough for the management practices of these organizations. This is responsible for the poor records management practices of these organizations.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Records play immeasurable roles in administration because managers and administrators employ them on a routine basis for carrying out diverse administrative duties especially decision making. The information contained in records helps to enlighten and educate administrators on issues relevant to the university.

Based on the findings of the study, recommendations for improvement were made. The major recommendations are: adequate filing system should be adopted for filing records so that they can be retrieved quickly when needed. Proper appraisal, retention and disposal of records should be done. There is need for records managers or officers to retool and re-skill themselves, in order to offer needed services. Universities should provide adequate storage and security facilities for records to avoid damage and loss of records. Finally, provision of adequate space, funds and the use of information technology in storage and retrieval of records in the universities would facilitate faster access and use of available data.

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