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**RECORD MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL
ADMINISTRATION**

BY

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the usefulness of record management in Nigerian Secondary Schools. Record keeping is one of the administrative principles in secondary school administration and it cannot be overemphasized in any organisation. The continuity of any school organisation depends on availability of useful records of past activities. In a complex organisation like the schools, it is not possible to keep every information in the brain because the volume of information is heavy. Therefore, records must be kept. Accurate information of all the activities going on in schools are kept for effective decision making and if they are well documented, the decision-making process is further made easier. This paper therefore addressed the following areas: the concept of record management, purpose and benefits of records management, qualities of a good school record-keeping; types of records kept in schools; problems facing records management in schools; and strategies for effective record managements in. Nigerian Schools.

Key words: Record Management, Secondary Schools and Nigeria**Introduction**

Information is every organisation's most basic and essential asset, and in common with any other business asset, recorded information requires effective management. Records management ensures information can be accessed easily, can be destroyed routinely when no longer needed, and enables organisations not only to function on a day to day basis, but also to fulfil legal and financial requirements.

In the past, 'records management' was sometimes used to refer only to the management of records which were no longer in everyday use still needed to be kept – 'semi-current' records, often stored in basements or offsite. More modern usage tends to refer to the entire 'lifecycle' of records – from the point of creation right through until their eventual disposal. In fact, record management is defined as the "the field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records, including the process for capturing and maintaining *evidence* of and *information* about *business* activities and transactions in the form of records".

Record management is one of the most importance administrative elements of any school organisation in which the school administrator/principal must adhered to. It is impossible to plan and administer any formal organisation effectively in which records are not kept or mismanaged. To successfully achieve this, record must be safely kept and managed. It should be borne in mind that management is an essential function within all organisations, a tool that is needed within every human association for the attainment of common goals. The emphasis placed on record keeping in schools was aptly elucidated by Nakpodia (2006) who observed those two decades ago, there were few schools then which did not have the desired records at the primary and secondary school levels. In view of the importance of school records to effective planning and implementation of instructional and administrative activities in the schools, the study investigated the state of record keeping in secondary schools in Nigeria.

The school administrator at all levels of learning in Nigeria is constantly pre occupied with the job of adequately utilising available human, material and financial resources to obtain maximum level of teaching – learning activities in the institution. It is important for the administrator to apply quality in output. However, to adequately make

decisions involving the proper mix of resources to obtain optimum results, the required data must be available, properly kept, accessible and utilized.

Records are imperative for meaningful decisions in social systems and the educational setting in particular. Okeke (2001) observed that school records, when properly kept serve as information bank from which the principal and staff can recall stored information when needed. Furthermore, good school records provide information for teachers, counsellors, curriculum planners and instructional supervisors for planning and implementing instructional and administrative activities, (Egwuyenga, 2000).

The unforeseen explosion in pupils' enrolment figure during the 1976 University Primary Education Scheme (U.P.E) has been blamed on planning based on inaccurate data base. Similarly, the failure of the implementation of the National Policy on Education was blamed on the inadequate data base in which the programme was planned. Nwagwu (1984) identified the first problem in the implementation of the National Policy on Education as the inability of the educational functionaries to obtain detailed and up-to-date needed for effective planning of the educational system. Therefore, the educationist solicited the implementation Task Force of the National Policy on Education to obtain accurate data of school enrolment from the nation's primary and secondary school levels. In view of the importance of records management to effective planning and implementation of instructional and administrative activities in the schools, the study investigated the state of records management in secondary schools in Nigeria.

The Concept of Records Management

Records management is the systematic control of an organisation's. Records and record keeping constitute the arteries that supply life-sustaining blood through the system and sub-systems of organisations and institutions (Nwagwu, 1995). It will definitely be an impossible task to plan and administer any known organisation in which records are not kept, or are carelessly or fraudulently kept. The education system as a social organisation has numerous sub-systems or levels that are managed to ensure some coherence and continuity. To successfully achieve this, records must be safely kept and managed.

Infact, records that are kept in any educational system are numerous. Some are mandatory and others are optional or discretionary (Egwuyenga, 2000). As important as

it is to keep records in an organisation, Nigeria as a country has not fully acquired the culture of record keeping, especially in the school system. This according to Makinde (1991) accounts to a great extent for our inability to plan and administer our educational system without tears and serious embarrassment from time to time.

In addition, Ajayi (1992) points out that materials for record keeping are: Filing, Cabinets, Duplicating Machines, Photocopy Machine, Computers (if fund is available), Cash saves, Perforators, Office pins, File jackets, File tags and Stationery. Hence, record management is the practice of maintaining the records of an organisation from the time they are created up to their eventual disposal. This may include classifying, storing, securing and destruction of records. It is primarily concerned with the evidence of an organisation's activities and is usually applied according to the value of the records than their physical formats. Records must be identified and *authenticated*. This is usually a matter of filing and retrieval; in some circumstances, more careful handling is required. If an item is presented as a legal record, it needs to be authenticated. Forensic experts may need to examine a document or *artefact* to determine that it is not a *forgery*, and that any damage, alteration, or missing content is documented. In extreme cases, items may be subjected to a *microscope*, *x-ray*, *radiocarbon dating* or chemical analysis. This level of authentication is rare, but requires that special care be taken in the creation and retention of the records of an organisation.

Records must be stored in such a way that they are accessible and safeguarded against environmental damage. A typical paper document may be stored in a filing cabinet in an office. However, some organisations employ file rooms with specialised environmental controls including *temperature* and *humidity*. Vital records may need to be stored in a disaster-resistant safe or vault to protect against fire, flood, earthquakes and conflict. On the other hand, tracking the record while it is away from the normal storage area is referred to as circulation. Often this is handled by simple written recording procedures. However, many modern records environments use a computerized system involving *bar code scanners*, or Radio-Frequency Identification Technology (RFID) to track movement of the records. These can also be used for periodic auditing to identify unauthorised movement of the record.

Purpose of Records Keeping in Nigerian Schools

According to Chapman (1991), the purpose of records keeping and management in schools are:

1. To facilitate research activities that will promote efficiency and effectiveness of the school system.
2. To ensure that accurate and proper record of students' achievements and growth during their school days are kept.
3. To ensure that an up-to-date information on any school matter of students is made available to users when requested for.
4. To provide useful information to the educational planners and administrators
5. To provide useful information to an employer of labour who may want to recruit pupils for jobs as required in testimonials, transcripts, Certificates and reference letters.

Infact, systematic management of records allows organization to:

- a. Know what records they have, and locate them easily
- b. Increase efficiency and effectiveness
- c. Make savings in administration costs, both in staff time and storage
- d. Support decision making
- e. Be accountable and
- f. Protect the interest of employees, clients and stakeholders.

Records management offers tangible benefits to organizations from economic good practice in reducing storage costs of documents to enabling legislative requirements to be met. An unmanaged record system makes the performance of duties more difficult, costs organisation time, money and resources and makes them vulnerable to security breaches, prosecution and embarrassment. In an unmanaged records environment, up to 10% of staff time is spent looking for information.

On the other hand, organisations are also producing increasingly large amounts of information and consequently greater volumes of records, in both paper and electronic form. It is essential that information is captured, managed and preserved in an organised system that maintains its integrity and authenticity. Records management facilitates control over the volume of records produced through the use of disposal schedules,

which detail the time for which different types of records should be retained by an organisation.

Qualities and Principles of Good Records Management

School records are valued only if they satisfy the following conditions as opined by Makinde (1991).

1. **Record must be complete:** Records will be complete if they are kept regularly. If they are not, the information will be incomplete. Such information may therefore be unreliable.
2. **Record must be honestly kept:** Information must not be distorted, that is, records must be honest and representation of facts. Event must be recorded as they occur and in their perspective.
3. **Records must be retrievable:** Record that cannot be recalled will not serve a useful purpose to anyone. Retrieval of records must be easy so as to save time.
4. **Records must be usable:** Records are kept for the purpose of future usage. There is no sense in keeping useless records.
5. **Records must be original:** Records that are kept should be backed up by original documents where necessary. Such documents include invoices, bills and cheque counterfoils.

On the other hand, the guiding principles of record management are to ensure that information is available when and where it is needed, in an organised and efficient manner, and in a well maintained environment. Organisations must ensure that the records are:

Authentic:

It must be possible to prove that records are what they purport to be and who created them, by keeping a record of their management through time. Where information is later added to an existing document within a record, the added information must be signed and dated. With electronic records, changes and additions must be identified through audit trails.

Accurate

Records must accurately reflect transactions that they document.

Complete

Records must be sufficient in content, context and structure to reconstruct the relevant activities and transactions that they document.

Effective

Records must be maintained for specific purposes and the information contained in them must meet those purposes. Records will be identified and linked to the business process to which they are related.

Secure

Records must be securely maintained to prevent unauthorized access, alteration, damage or removal. They must be stored in a secure environment, the degree reflecting the sensitivity and importance of the contents. Where records are migrated across changes in technology, the evidence preserved must remain authentic and accurate.

Types of Records in the School System

Record system is essentially a core of any administrative office. All information need for both day-to-day decisions and for longer term planning are found in the different types of records we keep. The following types of records have been identified by Nwagwu, (1995), and Nakpodia (2000)

1. **Admission Register:** This register shows the list of students enrolled each year. It is a historical document and contain the data on all pupils who had been admitted into any school since its inception. An example of admission register is shown below in table 1.

Table 1: Admission Register

Admission number	Pupil's name	Sex	Date of Birth	Date of Adm.	Home Address	Cause of leaving
191001	Esmond Louis	M	18/8/86	15/11/04	2,Otorho Road Abraka	Personal Request
191005	Nikori John	M	11/12/97	12/2/04	10, College road Abraka	Illness

2. **Log Book:** This is one of the basic records a school most keep. It is a historic book. Log book contains all reports and important documents, and

is mostly kept by the school head. Is an official record of events of significant importance which take place when the school is in session. All important events that are of significant effects in the school and during holidays in the session are entered into. The book is a major source of information. It is usually kept under lock by the head of school with heavy protection from fire, rain etc. The record of events must be kept in strict confidence.

3. **The Budget Book:** This book contains the schools budgets (past and present). It contains details of income and expenditure for each accounting year. Auditors and Inspectors and usually interested in this record.
4. **Scheme and Record of Work Book:** This is the record of the teacher's plan of work to be covered during the term. Most authorities provide some kinds of scheme of work, which breaks up the syllabus into teaching units. It is the responsibility of the teachers to break down the syllabus for each day giving the outline of the topics to be covered on weekly basis.
5. **Lesson Note-Book:** The should be kept by the teacher and should be made available for examination to the education officials at any time.
6. **Terminal Report Card/Sheet:** This is the school record, which shows the pupils scholastic performances and conduct for each term. It helps the teachers to keep the parents informed about their children's progress in school.
7. **Movement Book:** This book indicates the movement of staff during official hours. Individual teacher is expected to fill the movement book when he/she is about to move out of the school premises and also signed her/her name after he/she might have resumed.
8. **Time Book:** This is another important record book to be kept in school to know the actual time the individual teacher reports for duty in the morning and the time he/she closes finally The teacher time book shows how punctual and regular the teachers are. It is always kept in the school office where every teacher will see it, write his name, the time of his arrival and append signature; it also records the time the teacher leaves the school either before the school closes for the day or after. The headmaster checks

the time book at the end of the day and enters his remarks. The following figure shows a typical entry in a time book.

Table 2: Time Book

Date	Name	Time in	Signature	Time out	Signature	Remarks
12/0/05	Esiaga G.	7.35a.m	-----	2.05p.m	-----	-
„	Usman M.	7.38P.M	-----	11.00a.m	-----	Games meeting at Odeda (by H.H.)
„	Okotie P.O	-	-	-	-	Sick-got a sick leave for 3 days

9. **The Stock Book:** This is the record that shows the supply of equipment and other school property. The main purpose of this type of record is to keep a careful check to the supply of equipment, furniture and other materials to school with a view to reducing theft. **School Cash Book:** This is a record of income and expenditure of the school prepared in daily basis on items of receipts (grants-in-aid, school fees, craft sales, donation from PTA and other levies) and items of expenditures (stationeries, repairs, transportation, electricity bills, water rate etc). The school bursar usually keeps this record
10. **Punishment Book:** Punishment book is kept in school so as to record various offences committed by pupils, the nature of punishment given, data and the name of the school officer administering the punishment. An example of punishment book is shown below in table 3.

Table 3: Punishment Book

Date	Pupil's name	Sex	Age	Class	Offence	Punishment	By whom given	Headmaster's Remark
3/8/80	Okoro Peter	M	12	IA	Fighting and injuring Umukoro John	6 stroke and a field to ent	Asst. Head-Mr. Samson	As a deterrent

Problems Facing Records Management in Schools

In Nigeria, getting accurate and reliable data has been a long teething problem. Agbaje (1982) pointed out that Nigeria has been muddling without facts and figures in schools. Poor statistical system, many schools starved with competent teachers, ill-equipped and ill-supplied facilities are products of poor record keeping in our school system. Amongst the problems facing records management in schools are:

1. Transfer and Retirement of Officers

When an officer/school head with a particularly schedule of duty is transferred from one office or school to another without an immediate replacement with a competent officer, a gap is created. There is likely to be distortion in the flow of information and record management. In some cases, transferred officer may not carry out adequate handing over of records and other matters still pending. This lapse may apparently constitute a problem for the new officer who is now assigned his duty.

2. Inadequate Storage Space

This hampers effective record management. It is a common place to see files in piles from the floor up the walls in many offices because of lack of space. Adequate provision is not usually made for storing files in some offices and schools.

3. Undurable and Bulky Materials for Records

Files used for keeping materials are usually made from inferior materials such as cardboard. Within a short period of handling the files, they begin to wear out. If such files are not replaced, materials or records in them can get lost. Also, planks susceptible to termites attack are often used as file racks, shelves and cupboards. These damage easily and result in dislocation of records.

4. Carelessness of Officers Handling the Records

At the school level, both the school heads and teachers do not keep records accurately. The most abused is the attendance register. They do not keep their diaries and record of workbook up-to-date. In some cases, when students withdraw or drop out from the school/class, teachers continue to mark them present.

5. Inexperienced Officers

Newly recruited officers who are left uninducted tend to gamble with movement of documents and files. Such officers can put documents into wrong files or cabinets. At times the inexperienced officer may not be aware of the importance and urgency of a document thereby putting it in an irrelevant file.

6. Involvement of Manual Operations in Records Management

Manual operation of records can lead to misplacement of file loss of vital documents by unscrupulous officers. Officers often times feel hesitant to carry files from one office to another because of laziness or bulkiness and undurability of the files; hence, information may not get to the right place at the appropriate time.

Strategies for Effective Record Management

The following strategies may help to reduce some of the constraints on record management in the school system.

- 1. Induction Courses:** When new staffs are recruited or school heads just promoted to leadership position, they should be trained in the management of records. They should also be made familiar with relevant offices, lines of communication, records available in each office and officers managing the offices.

2. **Refresher Courses:** Officers managing records who have spent up to 3 years on the job should be encouraged to attend refresher courses on record management. This can help to upgrade their skills.
3. **Introduction of Computer Technology:** Computer hardware and software should be gradually introduced into Nigerian school system for adequate storage, manipulation, utilisation and retrieval of records. The use of computer technology will reduce the manual task of managing records.
4. **Reduction in Size of Record Materials:** The files and papers used for record management in the school system are often so wide and heavy that they occupy too much space. The size of files and papers should be reduced to half the present size. This could solve the problem of bulkiness of record materials.
5. **Adequate Supervision and Inspection:** The school head should endeavour to conduct periodic checking of stored records to ensure proper management practices amongst the staff responsible for handling records. Adequate inspection of files, and other storage facilities will help check missing of documents and improper filing of records materials.

Conclusion

Record keeping is the life wire of school administration and proper keeping and management of it will enhance a smooth running of the schools in Nigeria. On this basis therefore, the following suggestions are considered essential for proper school record management:

1. The school principals should regularly monitor the available records in our schools.
2. School records must be well protected and stored to prevent damages that might be caused by water, fire and insects.
3. For efficient record keeping in schools, the following equipment must be provided and made functional: filing cabinets, computers, duplicating machines, and photo-copying machines.
4. The head must be familiar with various filing systems and adopt the appropriate one at the appropriate time.

5. The head should be aware of various school records, both the ones required by law and those that merely aid the smooth running of the school.

Competence in handling or managing school records must be improved upon through in-service training and induction courses especially in the area of data processing and computer application. Workshops and seminars on data management should be organised at regular intervals for teachers and their heads.

Finally, the danger of misplacing important record should always be averted. Hence, it is recommended that an alternative approach to school record keeping or management in Nigerian School System is the computerization of necessary educational information or data.

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