

Excellent School Records Behaviour for Effective Management of Educational Systems

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Abstract School records include books, documents, diskettes and files that contain information on what goes on in school as well as other relevant information pertaining to the growth and development of the school. This article theoretically debated the role school record to effective educational management, the importance of keeping records in school, types of school records, and characteristics of good record management in schools. This article aims to offer an excellent package to support stakeholders in educational management and/or administration. It is comprehensive and thorough, yet flexible and encompassing. Stakeholders can both learn about and develop skills in school record keeping aimed at enhancing school management, planning and supervision. We conclude that poor records management results in difficulties in administering, development and supervision of educational systems. In fact, poor school records management and the lack of staff development with regards to the entire information cycle are responsible for a number of management and policy implementation problems in schools.

Keywords Record Keeping, Effective Management, Education, School System, Nigeria

1. Introduction

As enrollment in schools increases globally on a daily bases, the available resources may become over-stressed. The situation becomes even more frightening when universal education program in Nigeria is been implemented. Therefore, adequate record keeping of the human and material resources is needed to address the issue of ever-increasing enrollment. As well as the need to provide schools with human and material resources that can help them achieve sustainable educational objectives. Additionally, according to Ololube (2012) the rising cost of running school systems leaves some schools with low quality and inadequate human and material resources. This is because there is no cheap education the world over. Thus, the need for alternative ways of utilizing slim resources to attain set objectives makes school record keeping imperative. The complexity in school administration, its constraints, contingencies, and other difficulties also make recording keeping a necessity (Nwaoku, 2005; Obi, 2005; Ololube, 2011). The scarce resources in schools may be wasted if their utilization and underutilization is not properly recorded (Usen, Udofia, & Offiong, 2012; Ololube, 2009).

There is a need to keep record of all school activities as

part of effective school administration. Record keeping and the management of records is a vital responsibility of the school administrator because of the indispensable role of records and information in the day-to-day activities of the school system. School managers rely on the short and long-term data captured in records to make effective decisions about immediate issues and more comprehensive school policies (Okpetu & Peretomode, 1995).

Ibara (2010) asserts that without records there can be no accountability. He further maintains that quality performance, task accomplishment, and measurable outcomes are increasingly important responsibilities, all of which depend on the accessibility of usable records. Without access to records, it is virtually impossible to determine responsibility for actions and to hold individuals accountable for their actions. According to Osakwe (2011), school records are official documents, books and files containing essential and crucial information of actions and events which are kept and preserved in the school office for utilization and retrieval as needed. Such records are kept by principals, teachers, counselors and administrative staff.

The purpose of record keeping for effective school management is to ensure that accurate and proper records are kept of student achievement and growth, school activities and matters that will promote school efficiency and effectiveness (Akanbi, 1999). Record keeping other wise known as storage of information is important functions of both the administration and teaching staff of a school. Additionally, school records include those pertaining to

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personal details of pupils, along with those of their academic performance; assessments and examination results; school policies; minutes of school-based meetings; including information received from Ministries of education and other education bodies, solicitors, press organisations and public bodies (Department of Education, n.d). According to Ololube (2013), school records can thus be said to comprise all existing and accessible records, books, files and other documents containing useful information that relates to what goes on in the school system. These records may also be in the form of reports, letters, memos, pictures, films, journals, diaries, and so on.

Significance/Purpose of the Study

Contemporary challenges in the field of educational management require extraordinarily developed problem solving, decisive thinking and interpersonal skills if these complex and multi-dimensional challenges are to be productively surmounted. Approaching record keeping in school systems from a theoretical perspective provides an opportunity for educational managers, supervisors, planner, students and practitioners to explore education issues in an environment that is conducive for their respective professional development and reflections.

This article aims to offer an excellent package to support stakeholders in educational management and/or administration. It is comprehensive and thorough, yet flexible and encompassing. Concepts are explained and applications are discussed. From this source, stakeholders can both learn about and develop skills in school record keeping aimed at enhancing school management, planning and supervision.

This model is both flexible and yet defined enough to ensure positive outcomes for the Nigerian educational system when it is applied fully and correctly. This referenced work is a required reading for all education professionals; it serves as an important vehicle for educating professionals in the field of education to the potentials and issues surrounding educational management. It satisfies a great need for up-to-date learning materials for the rapidly growing education professionals. It is a valuable source of information for education managers, planners, designers, policy makers, researchers, students and teachers. This theoretical based article explores the nature of interaction between school record keeping and educational management, planning and supervision and factors that influence educational success.

2. Importance of Record Keeping

Record keeping generally concerns the administrative activities that are concerned with achieving cost-effectiveness and efficiency in the creation, maintenance, use and disposal of the records of educational institutions throughout their entire life cycle and in making the information they contain accessible in support of the

school business administration (UNESCO, 2005). Thus, it is essential that records are kept in school for effective administration, because proper record keeping facilitates retrieval of valuable information that might be helpful in day-to-day operations and decision making in school systems globally (Durosaro, 2002). According to Ololube (2013, p. 103), "the importance of good record keeping transcends into short and long term benefits and affects the overall achievement of educational objectives". Ololube (2013, pp. 103-104) identified some additional and important reasons for records keeping in schools:

Accountability: Record keeping is vital to an education system's information cycle as a whole, because of its fundamental role in the process of efficient information production and collection. School records are an important means of accountability because they provide proof. Records such as cash books and stock books help to ensure accountability as they show income, expenditures and stock levels in a school. These cash and the stock books can then be made available to auditors on demand for the auditing of school funds and facilities.

Decision Making: School records help school administrators to make decisions. Records provide raw data that enable coherent, balanced and objective decisions on issues such as promotion, student and staff discipline, and teaching and learning performances.

Employment: Properly kept records on the human resources serve useful employment and planning related purposes. The number of staff, their areas of specialization, qualifications, age, gender, and so on will help the principle to determine the human resource needs and assets of his or her school. Consistent information kept about employees can also be used in employee performance appraisals.

Guidance Counselors: School records are of great importance to school guidance counselors as these records can provide counselors with a holistic picture of the students they counsel (academic grades and achievements, disciplinary measures taken and/or extracurricular activities) and can help counselors to track student progress.

Information Bank: Records kept in schools serve as an information bank from which school administrators can recall information as needed.

Information for Parents: Parents often want to know how their children or wards perform academically. Records of school report cards and/or end of term results should be kept by schools should parents wish to review or discuss past student performance.

Planning: Accurate data assists educational planners to identify areas of need that should be addressed or accorded priority attention.

Student Academic Achievement and Behavior: Certificates and testimonials are issued to graduating students to show how they performed during their studies. Properly kept records can help considerably in the accurate

production of thorough certificates/testimonials.

Subject Time Table: School time tables help in the coordination of staff and student activities and work. Keeping track of time tables from year to year can help a school and school administrators determine which combination of classes and teaching assignments work best to optimize teaching and learning.

Supervisors/Inspectors: The availability of records enables supervisors or inspectors to objectively assess student and staff performance and offer advice or proposals for improvement.

3. Types of School Records

Educational management involves planning, controlling, implementing and monitoring of policies, as well as teachers and students activities. It embraces daily management as well as the formulation of short, medium and long-term objectives, policies and strategies in support of the educational goals (Bock, 2011). Good record keeping is critical to the success of any school system, no matter the size and whether or not it is in the public or private (UNESCO, 2005). In the public sector, the rendering of accounts for public scrutiny is key to accountability in governance (Ololube, 2009). As such, records keeping play a significant role in effective school management, and if records are not well managed, the school management function suffers (Gama, 2010).

To this end, school records can be classified into two types: statutory and non-statutory records. Statutory records are records prescribed by education edicts and laws of a state which must be maintained by school administrators. Non-statutory records, while not prescribed by law, are equally as important to the smooth functioning of a school. Ololube (2013, pp. 104-107) has identified a number of examples of the records found in schools and school systems:

1. **Admission and withdrawals register:** The admission and withdrawals register shows the names of students that are enrolled each year in various classes in a school and the names of those who withdrew from various classes in the school.
2. **Attendance register:** Attendance register shows the daily record of student attendance in each class in the school. At the end of every term, the class teacher closes the register and submits it to the school head to crosscheck and sign.
3. **Class timetable:** Class timetables are a record of how, when and where classes are held. These keep students organized and informed about upcoming classes and help students to manage their time and schedule.
4. **Education edicts and laws:** Education edicts are announcements of a law governing an educational system. They are decrees or proclamations issued by an

authority that have the force of law.

5. **Health records:** Are records of the names of students who were ill and sent to local health centers, school sick bays or the hospital for treatment. These records indicate the nature of the sickness and the treatment administered.
6. **Individual cumulative record card:** This is a continuous record or a combination of records that contain comprehensive information about a student. It provides a summary of a student's academic progress in school and also includes the student's name, age, date of birth, date of admission, family background, social or extracurricular activities, etc.
7. **Lesson plan:** Lesson plans are records kept to guide teachers during their teaching activities. These are written on a weekly basis to determine what and how the teacher will teach. A lesson plan is developed based on the school's scheme of work, unit plan or curriculum. It is presented to the head teacher for assessment, signature, date and name before it can be used for teaching.
8. **Log book:** A log book is an important official record kept to track significant happenings that take place in the school such as the death of students and staff, dates of resumption and closing of the school term, staff and student misbehaviour, etc. The head teacher keeps this book safely secured and must be presented to the Ministry of Education or School Board upon request.
9. **National Policy on Education:** The National Policy on Education (NPE) is a policy formulated by a government to promote education across the country. The policy covers early childhood, primary (elementary), secondary, and higher education. It also includes adult and non-formal education, technical and vocational education, distance education, educational services, planning, administration and supervision, and financing education.
10. **Disciplinary records:** Disciplinary records are kept to protect students from arbitrary punishment from teachers and to exonerate teachers from unwarranted criticisms by parents or students. In most cases, the head teacher approve of any disciplinary action before it is administered to a student or students. Records concerning the disciplinary action and its approval are documented for future reference.
11. **School cash book:** A school cash book is a system that helps organise school finances. It is a simple record that details all payments made and income received. It shows receipt of items and all expenditures. This book is kept with the accountant or clerk in the absence of a school treasurer.
12. **School stock book:** The school stock book shows the current supply of equipment and other materials in the school. It is usually divided into two parts. The first part

showing the consumables items (chalk, dusters, diary, registers, etc.) and the other are showing non-consumable items (furniture, television, tape recorders, sporting and athletic equipment, etc.). It contains name, date of supply, and expiring dates of goods supplied, if applicable.

- 13. School timetable:** A school timetable is a table used for coordinating four basic elements (students, teachers, subjects, and time slots, otherwise called periods) in a school system.
- 14. School diary:** The school diary, also known as a teacher's record of work, shows the things that are to be done and have been done each term for each class/subject in a school. This record helps to keep teachers motivated and on task (to complete the syllabus by the end of the term) and ensures continuity.
- 15. Staff and student movement book:** The staff and student movement book details the entry and exit of staff and students in a school.
- 16. Transfer and leaving certificates:** Transfer and leaving certificates are the forms approved by the Zonal Inspector of Education and signed by the head teacher at the request of parents to permit their children to leave one school to attend another as a result of a parent's work transfer, etc.
- 17. Visitor's book:** The purpose of a visitor's book is to keep records of the names and addresses of visitors, date and time of visits, purpose of visits and who the visitor requested to visit. This book is kept by the head teacher or his or her assistant.
- 18. Syllabus:** A syllabus is an outline and a summary of topics to be covered in a school. A syllabus for a certain subject is often set out by an examination body such as the West African Examination Council (WEAC) who conducts, supervises and controls the quality of examinations for uniformity.
- 19. Scheme of work:** A scheme of work is a guideline that defines the structure and content of a subject. It shows how resources such as books and equipment are to be used and how class time, class activities and class assessments are to be carried out to ensure that the learning aims and objectives of the subject are met. A scheme of work can be shared with students so that they have an overview of their subjects
- 20. Curriculum:** A curriculum is the set of subjects and their content offered at a school. A curriculum is prescriptive and is based on a more general document that which specifies what topics must be understood and to what level to achieve a particular grade or standard in an educational system.

4. Characteristics of Good Record Management

Managing school records according to Fasasi in Osakwe

(2011) is meant to enhance the performance of school administrators. An adequate records management programme co-ordinates and protects an institutions records, sharpens the effectiveness of records as management memory, and helps to simplify intra-organisational and communication problems. The management of records in schools, like in any other organization, is a cyclic process involving principals, teachers, students, messengers and cleaners. Most records are handled by school heads and are kept manually, hence the processing, retrieval and utilisation of records is not always easy. According to Ibara (2010) the following are characteristics or attributes of good record management (although modifications can be made):

Completeness: Complete and comprehensive records should be kept to give users all the information needed to plan and make effective decisions.

Cost: Records should not be too expensive to keep. This means that the financial cost of collecting, analyzing, synthesizing, storing and retrieving records should be low.

Flexibility: Data is flexible if it can be used by more than one user at different times for different purposes.

Quality: The quality of any information contained in any record must be accurate and reliable. The greater the accuracy and reliability, the higher the quality of information, and the more likely the information system is to work well.

Relevance: A relevant record is one that is useful to the needs of the system. A good deal of irrelevant information is kept, particularly in schools. Data that is no longer relevant and not required by law should be securely disposed of.

Retention and Disposition of Records: The disposition of records does not entirely mean destruction. Disposition can also include transfer of records to a historical archive, to a museum, etc. In the case of schools, however, most records are disposed of when no longer needed. The public officials concerned may destroy these records upon expiration of the retention period.

Timeliness: Information contained in a record should be retrievable as it is needed rather than after important decisions have been made.

Variability: This refers to the degree of consensus arrived at among various users examining the record. The greater the consensus among users, the more accepted the record.

Maintenance: The maintenance of records involves all activities that ensure that they are in good condition, and kept in an orderly state. This is a central function of records management.

5. Safely Managing and Preserving School Records

School records management involves the storage, retrieval and use of information. It is the application of systematic and scientific control to all the recorded information that schools need for school administration. Poor records management

results in difficulties in administering, planning and monitoring of educational systems globally (Ololube, 2013). In fact, poor records management and the lack of staff development with regards to the entire information cycle are responsible for a number of management and policy implementation problems in schools and Ministries of Education (Chifwepa, [n.d]). While different methods or systems can be used to bring about efficient records management, there are some basic rules that must be respected. The management of school records involves all activities that ensure that they are in good condition, and kept in an orderly state (Ololube, 2013). Some of the ways records can be safely managed and preserved according to are:

Classification: This is the methods of arranging records and files perfectly into groups according to subject. It ensures that school records are arranged in a logical order. The logical arrangement of files is central because it guarantees that files have their specific places and can be retrieved without snag and significant loss.

File Storage: After a classification system has been determined and files have been labeled, files should then be arranged accordingly and kept in a filing cabinet drawer. A filing cabinet or cabinets should be used for this purpose. The cabinet drawers in which the files are housed must also be labeled clearly and the files appropriately organized so as to maintain the relationship of the files to one another.

File maintenance: It is important to check the files periodically to ensure that they are in good condition, since they are prone to wear and tear. Some records in files may be loose and could fall out easily. These should be securely attached and reattached.

Check Out: When records or files are lent to users, a system must be worked out that tracks where and when certain files or records were lent to a user. Small cards may be designed to enable efficient control over the flow of files.

Natural factors: School records should be properly arranged and secured from natural hazards such as flooding, insects, rain, sun, termites and wind.

6. Conclusions

This article has surveyed the science of school record keeping and effective management of school systems. School records can document any activity that falls within the normal activities of the school. With respect to accountability, they can track the responsible use of resources or confrontations between students and teachers. Tasked with providing an optimal teaching and learning environment, school records are also kept of teachers and other members of staff, materials are acquired, pupils admitted, tested, and examined, attendance and enrolment, staff and student transfers, and so forth. School records thus contain information important to the daily running and long-term planning of schools. The paper concludes that poor records management results in difficulties in

administering; planning and monitoring of educational systems globally (cf. Ololube, 2013). In fact, poor school records management and the lack of staff development with regards to the entire information cycle are responsible for a number of management and policy implementation problems in schools (cf. Chifwepa, [n.d]).

The findings from this study is not definite, therefore, the authors recommends further research, which should include considerations of the problems of the universal requirements for determining effective documentation in schools, and the implementation of which should be able to eliminate a number of factors that lead to the difference between the aims and the results obtained after the execution of effective records keeping in educational systems around the world. Specifically, proposal that relates to the development of effective records keeping to help administrators, teachers and students in fulfilling the goals of educational programmes is highly recommended.

Writing an article on school records and effective educational management is somewhere similar to filing for impoverishment because of the financial cost involved. In either case, one is faced with what appears to be limitless debts. It is impossible for us to acknowledge individually the countless men, women and associations whose ideas and research findings have contributed to making this article what it is. A number of colleagues have read through the original manuscript from cover to cover, while others have read limited sections. Their logical criticisms, while not always adopted, nevertheless were generally on the mark, and suggestions have added clarity and coherence to this work.

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