MANAGEMENT OF RECORDS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract
This article investigated management of records in public secondary schools of Lagos State, Nigeria. Simple random sampling technique with questionnaire, observation and interview methods were used for data collection through ten research assistants. 257 school managers (principals) were randomly sampled from a total of 355 out of which 240 responded and their copies of questionnnaire were found valid for analysis given a response rate of 93.4 per cent. The study found that the studied schools had no functional records management system. The estimated total volume of records generated and managed was (X = 2.555,070; S. E. = 1180.33). There were no records policy, record centre management operations were not performed. Vital records were protected from possible disasters by boxing, lock-up the store, fumigation, dusting, lock-up file cabinets and unauthorized access. The non-records were disposed through outsale to food vendors, burning, burying and dumping into the sea. It was therefore recommended that functional records management programme be implemented in the public secondary schools of Lagos State.

Introduction
Nwankwo (1985) opined that information encompasses a wide range and variety of things from oral and written words, figures, statements, files and documents to much intangible elements as sound, signals, rays and waves. Records and information are inseparable because when information is captured and documented in a tangible format, record is said to be created.Goodman (1994) asserted that records, in whatever media could be defined as the documentation of information or of work completed. They may draw together data in a meaningful form or record decisions, results or methodology. Records are the end-product of the business activities of a school system. School

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managers in the western world regard their school records as a resource of significant value and they manage them like men, money, materials and machines.

In support of this assertion, Hare and Mcleod (1997) posited that an organization's records are unique to it and they need to be managed explicitly, just as the organization would manage its other resources, that is, its people, money and estate. No school system succeeds nowadays in its provision of educational services without efficiently and effectively managing its records.

However, as school increases in its size and scope of business operations coupled with constitutional requirements in the society for better management for records in the school system, there is a need to carry out research in this area. Hammed (2001) aserted that one of the vital aspects of continuous assessment is the process and practice of keeping of up-to-date and useful records of the students' activities and achievement throughtout the period of their study. Records are reliable source of information for the school managers, teachers and counsellors for monitoring and evaluation of academic achievement of their students.

In addition, school records are very expensive to create but the information they contain provides the basis for research, collection of statistical data, reports generation, legal planning, policy formulation, planning and execution, project planning monitoring and evaluation, protection of human rights, and effective administration of the school system. It is practically impossible to improve the internal efficiency of the school system without functional records management system. Bamisaiye (1998) submitted that school records serve as school information bank for principals (Headteachers), parents, community members, government at all levels, students themselves and any other organisation that might require information about the school itself, the pupils and every staff member either past or present.

Hammed (2001) posited that assessment and evaluation are integral components of the teaching-learning cycle, and that the main purpose of it is to guide and improve instruction and student learning. It is not an exageration to say that about 70-85 percent of the information required by the teachers to evaluate pupils and student's performance in schools and colleges is contained in school records. Functional records management provides good basis for evaluation, which is the culminating act of interpreting the information collected from the available

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records during daily assessment for the purpose of making rational decisions or sound judgements about students' learning and progress.

However, uncontrollable creation of records in schools and colleges could lead to increase in costs of administration. The reason being that more materials (papers, films, and electronic devices such as (diskettes, magnetic disc, video tapes, compact discs etc), file jackets, tags, biros and markers, punched machines, records folders, trays etc. are acquired; record clerks and records managers are recruited which may fuel personnel costs, records and storage equipment-wooden shelves, steel cabinets, trolleys, computers, safes, vaults, cardboxes, etc. are procured which could increase record storage costs. Establishment of functional records mangement promotes accountability, transparency and good administration in schools and colleges. It is this background that the present study seeks to investigate the management of records in the public secondary schools of Lagos State in Nigeria.

Objectives of the study
This study aims at achieving the following objectives:-
1. To estimate the total volume of records managed in the public secondary schools of Lagos State by types.
2. To determine records filing and retrieval systems in use
3. To ascertain methods used in protecting vital records from possible disasters.
4. To find out the mean/average materials cost of managing records per public secondary school of Lagos State.
5. To determine the methods used in the disposition of non-records in the public secondary schools of Lagos State.

Literature Review
Emerson (1989) defined records as those documents, in whatever medium, received or created by an organization in the course of its business, and retained by that organization as evidence of its activities or because of the information contained. Kesner (1988) posited that records management is concerned with mostly paper-based documents of an organization, ranging from the official files of individual workers to the massive operational record of the entire organization. This definition of records mangement is defective because it is more than managing paper based records. Records management is the scientific control

of organization, access to and protection of an organization's recorded information, whether it be on paper, film or electronic formats form, its creation, maintenance and use and final disposition to the archives as records of permanent value or total destruction as non-records of permanent value or total destruction as non-records (useless records) of permanent value. The purpose of establishing functional records management programme in any organization such as the school system, is to minimize the costs associated with business operations of it and to provide high quality information services to the school managers, teachers, students, parents, guardians, educational policy makers and planners and the public.

However, if the records management is to succeed in the school system, the management must give full support for its implementation, formulate records policy, hire qualified records manager for better management of records and national education policy must mandate all schools to implement functional records management system. The records life-cycle concept must be applied to the management of all category of the school records. Penn (1994) opined that the records life-cycle consists of three phases-the creation, maintenance and use, and disposition. At each stage of the cycle, the economy and effectiveness in the management of records must be considered. It must be noted that records retention and disposition schedule assist the school manager to check between semi- current and non- current records from the active office area to the records centre. Chairman (1990) defined a records centre as a building specially designed and constructed, for low-cost storage, maintenance and communication of semi-current records pending their ultimate disposition.

It provides the opportunity to free expensive office area from the housing of semi-current and dormant records and for better management of current records. Nonetheless, no school records management system succeeds without using a suitable records filing system. The essential features of a good filing system for managing records in an organisation like the school system include accessiblity, simplicity, suitability, adaptability, ample space, shelter from dust and dirt. Hardcastle (1998) claimed that typical storage and retrieval speeds range from 30-40 items per hour in lateral filing, while using vertical filing the figure falls to between 25 and 30 items per hour.

Popoola (1998) studied the records management in privately-owned schools of Oyo State, Nigeria and found that there was a poor records management practice. The non-records were disposed off by incineration and outright sale to food vendors. Swanson (1978) identified various ways of preserving records from possible disasters in an organization namely keeping records in waterproof building, using fungicides, insecticides, installation of fire and smoke prevention devices.

Moreover, Popoola (2001) reported that there was a significant difference in the volume of records generated and managed between rural and urban Government secondary schools of Ogun State, Nigeria. Popoola (2000) also advocated the use of cost accounting methods in the management of records in an organization.

Research Procedure

The study population comprised 355 public secondary schools in Lagos State Nigeria, as at December 2001. The sampling technique adopted for this study was simple random. The desired sample size was estimated using the mathematical expressions below:

$$Xn = NS^2Z^2a_2/S^2aZ_2 + Nd^2 \dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots (1)$$

Where N=355 the population size of schools
$d^2 = /x-n=0.4$ the chosen margin of error
x = the sample mean of records
m= the population mena of records
a= 0.05 the desired level of risk
S = 6.215 the population standard deviation of schools computed from the Lagos State 2001 Digest of statistics.
n=257 the desired sample size
Z a/2 = 1.96 the critical value obtained from the Tables of Normal distribution.

A random sample of 257 schools was selected from a total of 355 given a sampling fraction of 72.4 per cent. Ten hired research assistants were trained for five days. The methods used for data collection were questionnaire, direct observation and interview due to the nature of the study. The coefficient of reliability of the questionnaire, used was 0.86 using test-retest method. The copies of the questionnaire were administered on the school managers (principals) of the 257 selected Government secondary schools, out of which 240 responded and their copies of questionnaire were found valid for analysis. The response rate

achieved was 93.4 percent. The data collection exercise lasted for three months (September-November, 2002).

Data Analysis and Discussion

Of the 240 respondents, 150 (62.5%) were males while 90(37.5%) were females. Their ages ranged between 46 and 54 years with mean (X=47.8. SD = 3.6) years. Concerning their highest educational qualificatins, 114(47.5%) of them had bachelor degree certificates in education, 84(35,0%) had postgraduate diploma certificates in education (PGDE) and 32 (13.3%) had master degree certificates in education. Their length of service ranged between 25 and 34 years with mean (X=26.4, SD=4.4) years. This study discovered that none of these 240 school managers had formal training in archives and records management. In addition, the interview conducted for them showed that their clerks also had no knowledge of records keeping system. Hayes (1987) suggested that a qualified records manager must be put in charge of the records management of an organization when the records management of an organization like the school system is chaotic, it is only the qualified and experienced records manager that can put order to it and make it responsive to the needs of the school system.

However, there are two ways by which records are generated in an organization like school system. Firstly, records may be internally created and secondly they may be externally received into the school system. The public secondary schools of Lagos States, Nigeria, generated and managed large quantity of records of varying degrees. The records found in the custody of the studied schools were photographs, last pay certificates, receipts, forms, visitors' book, corporal punishment book, log book, admission register, stock book, cash account book, school fees register, staff minutes book, scheme of work, lesson notes, health record book, staff record book, the school syllabus, scheme of work, record of work of weekly diary, time book, staff movement book, attendance register, class inventory book, report cards, circulars, staff payment vouchers, building plans and personnel files.

All the 240 (100%) respondents claimed that they neither applied records life cycle model nor records continuum model and formulated records management policy in the management of their schools' records. These two records management models

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are currently being used in managing school records in the Western world. This study found that 156(65%) of the 240 schools did not have functional registry despite the fact that the National Policy on Education (NPE 1981) made provision for the establishment of registry system in the Nigerian schools and colleges. In actual fact, registry is a building or storage area meant for the management of active records. Active records are recorded information that is most frequently referred to in the day-to-day performance of business operations of an organization like the school system. The semi-active records are recorded information that is less frequently referred to say once in a month while the inactive records are recorded information that is rarely referred to in the conduct of school business. In order to estimate total volume of records generated and managed by types in secondary schools in Lagos state, Nigeria, the mathematical expression of the simple random sampling technique adopted for the study was employed.

$$X = N/nSxi$$

Where $n/N=f$, the sampling fraction, $n=257$, $N =355$

$$S. E.... (X) = Var. (X) ....(2)$$

Where $S2 = S(Xi-X)2/^{n-1}$

X, and S. E. represent the estimated total volume, and standard errors of records managed in the public secondary schools of Lagos state by types. Table 1 shows the estimated total volume of active records generated and managed in the public secondary schools of Lagos to be (X=663, 193, S. E. =1144.96), semi-active records (X=891, 430, S. E =1375.58) and inactive records (X = 1,000,467; S. E. = 1211.98). The estimated total volume of records generated and managed therein public secondary schools of Lagos state was (X=2,555,070; S. E. =1180.33). One can therefore infer that both semi-active records and inactive records are generated and managed in larger proportions by the studied schools.

Table 1: Estimated Total Volume of Records Managed by Types

Records Types	Sxi	S2	X	S. E. (X)
Active records	480,100	98.40	663,173	1,144.96
Semi-active records	645,345	118.22	891,430	1,375.58
Inactive records	724,282	104.44	2,55,070	1,180.33

As overwhelming majority of the respondents i.e 240(100%) claimed that their schools lacked records centre and that records centre operations were never done, it was very sad to equally fund that no school had record retention schedule. Records retention is the management science of identifying records, deciding on length of their retention, deciding where and in what form to retain them, and then destroying them when they are no longer useful or needed.

Records retention and disposition schedule permits the natural movement/transfer of semi-active and inactive records from the registry to the records centre and finally to the archives in an organization like the school system. Alegbeleye (1993) defines a record centre as a centralized and secured low-cost storage facility designed for servicing reviewing and processing of semi-active or inactive records, whose reference rate does not warrant retention in expensive office equipment, for destruction or transfer to the archives.

Popoola (2000) asserted that filing systems ought to permit ready determination of records of enduring value, periodic destruction of records of transitory value and timely transfer of semi-active and inactive records to record centre for reference services.

Table 2 shows records filing systems in use in public secondary school of Lagos State. These filling systems in use were subject heading , alpha-numeric and chronological. The use of computer-aided based of RMS + (application software) and colour coding which could have facilitated quick retrieval of needed records and reduction of records handling cost were never used.

Table 2:   Records Filling Systems in Use

Filling system	Yes	%	No	%	Total
Subject heading	200	83.3	40	16.7	240
Alphabetical	125	52.1	115	47.9	240
Numeric	122	50.8	118	49.2	240
Alpha-numeric	216	90.0	24	10.0	240
Geographical	12	5.0	228	95.0	240
Colour coding	10	4.2	230	95.8	240
Computer-aided	8	3.3	232	96.7	240
Chronological	218	90.8	22	9.2	240

When planning for a new records filing system in schools and colleges, attention must be paid to the record classification methods available space, budgetary allocation, storage equipment cost, personnel cost, permanence of records and types of filing system. The average time for locating and retrieving the needed records from their storage in the public secondary schools of Lagos State was (x =3,8; SD = 0.25) hours out of six standard hours of work per day. All the 240 (100%) respondents claimed that they did not have records filing procedure manual. They all reported the use of index guides and registers as means of retrieving the needed records from their storage.

However, the methods of protecting vital records from possible disasters are reflected in Table 3. Vital records programme is an important and unique subsystem of records management system and it covers the life span of the agency (the school system) having active records of great value. Stark (1990) refers to them as records deemed essential to reconstruct and continue the operations of the organization like the school system, and to protect its organizational interests in the event of a disaster or an emergency affecting the conduct of business at the headquarters site. As inferred in Table 3, dusting, boxing, lock-up store, fumigation, lock up-file cabinets and unauthorized access are the major methods used in protecting vital records from possible disasters in the studied schools.

Table 3: Method of Protecting Vital Records from Possible Disasters

Methods	Yes	%	No	%	Total
Boxing	180	75.0	60	25.0	240
Vaulting	30	12.5	210	87.5	240
Fumigating	224	93.3	16	6.7	240
Lock-up store	235	97.9	5	2.1	240
Lock-up cabinets	204	85.0	36	15.0	240
Unauthorized access	240	100.0	—	—	240
Dusting	238	99.2	2	0.8	240
Insurance cover	—	—	240	100.0	240
Light filters	20	8.3	220	91.7	240
Installing fire/ Smoke detectors	6	2.5	234	97.5	240

Air-conditioning	40	16.7	200	83.3	240
Off-site storage	1	0.4	239	99.0	240
Microfilming/ Reformatting	—	—	240	100.0	240

Weimer (1976) gave four alternative methods of safeguarding records against mishap in a vital records programme, these are: dispersal, duplication, evacuation and vaulting. None of these methods was used in protecting vital records from possible disaster in the studied schools. All the 240(100%) respondents claimed that their schools had no disaster management plan which is a blueprint for managing disasters before and during its occurrence.

The measure of costs associated with records management operations such as materials costs, personnel cost, storage cost, space cost, records creation cost, record retrieval cost, etc. have been a subject of interest to record management experts in recent times. Druschel (1981) considered materials' cost to be those material unique to any job operation or process. The materials cost of records management operations could be broken into two parts, that is, the supplies' cost and equipment cost. This can be mathematically expressed thus, materials' cost = supplies cost + equipment cost. The supplies' cost of school records management operations include: reams of paper, file jackets, tags, markers, punch machines, folders, document trays, scissors, correcting fluids, roneo inks, etc, while that of the equipment cost include: wooden shelves, file cabinets, roneo machines, cupboards, cardboxes, computers and its peripherals, copiers, etc. The average/mean supplies' cost and equipment cost plus depreciation cost with annual depreciation rate of 10 per cent are (X=N25, 485, SD=N50.22) and (X=89,140.85; SD=N28.50) respectively per secondary school in Lagos State. The average materials' cost of managing records per secondary school in Lagos State is (X=57,312.93, SD=N45.80).

Records disposition is defined as the final action that puts the results of an appraisal decision for a series of records (Bradsher, 1988). The purpose of apraisal is to determine the eventual disposal of records based on their current and future administrative, fiscal and legal uses and their evidential, information and research values called evaluative and selective retention.

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It is surprising to find that all the 240(100%) respondents claimed that their schools records were never appraised. They all reported that their non-records (useless records) were disposed of by outright sale to food vendor, burning, burying and dumping into the sea. Barkowski (1984) opined the manner in which records are to be destroyed. He advised that non essential records to be destroyed. He advised that non-dealers, while the sensitive ones be absolutely obliterated by burning, maceration, pilping or shredding and pulvering. It must be noted that about 60-75 per cent of the available school records are vital records and non-records constitute about 10-15 percent going by the nature of the records generated, maintained and used in the Nigerian school system.

Conclusion and Recommendation

School records are valuable assets because they contain vital information needed for effective administration by the school managers. Records created and managed in government schools are public records because taxpayers' money is largely used. The quality of decision made in the school system has correlation with the information accessible from the available records and its use. In actual fact, much of the information needed and utilized in educational planning and curriculum evaluation are sourced from school records. Even the information required to determine the appropriate pricing policy of educational service at primary and secondary levels of education in Nigeria can be sourced from the available school records. Implementation of functional records management system in our schools will guarantee that good educational service would be offered for sound decision-making.

Based on the findings of this study, it is therefore recommended that: the records office be established, records managers be recruited and school clerks and managers be trained in the modern techniques of records management, record centre operationals performed, systematic efforts be made by the school managers to formulate records policy, adopt reports life cycle model and produce records filling manual as well as formulate records retention and disposition schedule in the management of their records, the vaulting, microfilming, digitizing, installation of smoke and fire detecting devices be adopted to protect the vital records from possible disasters, and records audit needs to be urgently conducted to determine non-records and dispose them

off through shredding and burning in order to reduce material costs, associated with records storage equipment.

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POETRY ON THE LIBRARY

(By Nancy Achebe)

LIBRARY

I am the God of wisdom
Alias -Library
A true friend of the untutored
Though my accomplishments
I do not celebrate
Nor my stronghold siren
But the secret weapon of knowledge
I command
Ask that you may share my wisdom

THE VERY DECENT LIBRARIAN

1. I do know my name
    Though tongues call me different names
    Some I know but do not answer
    Some I answer but do not know

2. I am not a paper maker
    Nor am I a publisher
    But I find my fate endless
    War salvage betwen pest and paper

3. I am not a teacher
    But teaching is part of me
    I am not a counselor
    But counseling is my daily business

4   I am not a minstrel
    Yet entertainment I always provide
    I am not a jack of all trades
    But I master all to survive

5. Cat and Class
    Collection control, my sterner stuff
    I'd rather remain a silent
    But active librarian

BOOK MONGERS

1. Book mongers here and there
   Alive and abound in pastiche stare
   Farming the garden of hope
   With trusted heart

2. Learn to read
   Read to learn
   There is power
   In our books

3. Market and jungles
   Not real power
   Spare the money
   And spurn the trigger

4. Spot your books
   Eyes in books
   And mind your books
   Books are read anywhere

5. Be a borrower
   Be a lender
   Never wonder
   What you are

6. Love your books
   Read your books
   Never, never give up