APPLICATION OF RECORDS AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT COMPLIANCE PRINCIPLES FOR QUALITY SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION, AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA, NIGERIA

Sanusi Aliyu Babalola
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

Abdulfatah Abdulrahim
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

Abubakar Aliyu Duada
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

Abstract

This study investigates the application of the Records and Information Management compliance principle for enhancing quality service delivery in the Departments of the Faculty of Education at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Employing a quantitative approach, the research utilizes a cross-sectional survey research design, focusing on a population of 41 administrative staff responsible for records management within these departments. Self-developed questionnaire was utilized for data collection with analysis conducted through frequency distribution and percentages. The findings revealed that the most common compliance mechanisms in place within Education departments at ABU Zaria include measures to protect sensitive information and mechanisms to monitor compliance with recordkeeping policies and procedures. Additionally, challenges faced by these departments in fostering a culture of compliance in records and information management processes include the lack of external regulatory pressures, unclear or outdated policies and procedures, inadequate resource allocation, insufficient training and awareness programs, and technological limitations. In conclusion, the implementation of the Records and Information Management compliance principle in the Departments in the Faculty of Education at ABU Zaria revealed certain deficiencies. The management should prioritize awareness and education initiatives by conducting regular training sessions on relevant laws and regulations for employees. Update and align company policies with current legal mandates, and implement robust monitoring systems to ensure ongoing compliance. Schedule periodic reviews and assessments to identify compliance gaps and drive continuous improvement in information management practices.

Keywords: Application, Compliance principle, Challenges, Records and Information Management, Quality Service

Introduction

In today's digital era, effective records and information management (RIM) is essential for the efficient operation and accountability of any organization, including educational institutions. The Faculty of Education at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, relies heavily on the application of RIM compliance principles to ensure high-quality service delivery. These principles, particularly compliance, help maintain accurate and accessible records, which are vital for supporting academic and administrative processes. Compliance in records management involves adhering to laws, regulations, and institutional policies, ensuring that records are created, maintained, and disposed of in a manner that meets legal and regulatory requirements (ARMA International, 2023).

Compliance in records and information management refers to the adherence to laws, regulations, policies, and standards governing the creation, maintenance, and disposal of records (Popovici, 2021). It is a fundamental principle that ensures organizations meet legal and regulatory requirements, thereby mitigating risks and ensuring accountability. Compliance in records management is critical for maintaining the integrity and reliability of records and protecting the rights and privacy of individuals and entities involved. By ensuring compliance, educational institutions like Ahmadu Bello University can safeguard sensitive information, prevent unauthorized access, and ensure the accuracy and reliability of their records, which are crucial for decision-making, reporting, and audits.

Universities, as custodians of extensive records, including academic and student records, face significant challenges in promoting a culture of compliance with records and information management programs. These challenges include a lack of awareness and training on RIM compliance among faculty members, staff, and students. Resource constraints, such as limited funding and personnel, hinder the establishment and maintenance of effective RIM measures. Additionally, cultural resistance within academic departments, where ingrained norms impede efforts to enforce compliance, further complicates the situation. Addressing these challenges is crucial for the effective implementation of RIM compliance principles.

In light of these considerations, this paper examines the application of RIM compliance principles for enhancing quality service delivery within the Departments of the Faculty of Education at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Drawing on best practices and case studies from academic institutions worldwide, it explores the key components of effective compliance in RIM frameworks and offers recommendations for implementing them in the context of ABU Zaria. By adopting these principles, the faculty can ensure that its records and information management practices are robust, efficient, and compliant with best practices and regulatory requirements, thereby supporting its mission of providing high-quality education and research.

Statement of Problem

Effective records and information management Practices for quality service delivery would entail a well-structured and seamlessly integrated system. This system would feature standardized policies and procedures governing records, clear lines of accountability, and meticulous compliance with regulatory standards. Faculty members and administrative staff would demonstrate a collective commitment to compliance principles, fostering a culture of transparency and ethical conduct. Ultimately, the ideal scenario would facilitate efficient operations, support academic excellence, and optimize service delivery within the Organization, contributing to its overall mission and reputation.

However, The Faculty of Education at ABU Zaria, like many academic institutions, faces challenges in ensuring quality service delivery through effective records management practices (Umar, 2023). Despite the recognized importance of compliance in records management for organizational efficiency, there is a lack of empirical understanding of how these practices are applied within the faculty's departments to improve service delivery. Key issues include potential non-compliance with relevant regulations and difficulties in implementing accountability and compliance mechanisms. This study aims to identify, analyze, and address gaps in compliance in records management practices to enhance service delivery and improve educational processes and outcomes at ABU Zaria.

Research Questions

The following research question guided the study:
1. What mechanisms of compliance are established within the departments of the Faculty of Education to uphold quality service delivery in records and information management at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria
2. What challenges do departments within the Faculty of Education encounter in nurturing a culture of accountability and compliance within their records and information management practices at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria?

Literature Review

Records and Information Compliance Principle

The Records and Information Compliance Principle is fundamental in the realm of records management, highlighting the significance of complying with legal and regulatory mandates concerning information assets. In adherence to the principle of compliance, universities are not isolated entities, and the imperative for them to adhere to legislative mandates cannot be overstressed. Effective record-keeping stands as a pivotal element in the proficient management of both public and private sector entities, constituting not only a fundamental aspect but also a legal obligation. Scholars and practitioners have extensively examined this principle, offering valuable insights into its significance and practical implications. According to Southern Connecticut State University (2022), the Records and Information Compliance Principle is a crucial component of the Generally Accepted Recordkeeping Principles (GARP) established

by ARMA International. This principle outlines the necessity for a recordkeeping program to be constructed in a manner that complies with applicable laws, regulations, and organizational policies. Key elements of the Records and Information Compliance Principle include:

Legal Compliance: The recordkeeping program must adhere to relevant laws, regulations, and other binding authorities to ensure legal compliance. Policy Adherence: Organizations are required to construct their recordkeeping programs in alignment with their internal policies to maintain consistency and compliance.
Regulatory Requirements: The program should meet regulatory standards to ensure that records and information are managed appropriately within the legal framework.
According to Zirco Data (2018), understanding the fundamental tenets of regulatory compliance provides a sense of assurance, safeguarding businesses against potential losses or legal vulnerabilities. Furthermore, Zirco Data emphasizes the crucial necessity for organizations to recognize that legislative retention requirements vary across industries and types of information, necessitating a comprehensive understanding and adherence to specific regulations pertinent to their documentation. Regardless of sector—be it public or private—organizations are mandated to maintain records documenting their operations to fulfill legislative, financial, operational, and historical requisites within their operational spheres. Therefore, it is imperative for every organization, whether public or private, to align its practices with the legal frameworks governing records and information management. Compliance with legal stipulations promotes accountability and upholds principles of good governance, particularly in the private sector where business proceedings may not be subject to public scrutiny (Agere, 2000). The findings of the study indicated that the college lacked a comprehensive records management policy. Although a draft policy existed, it was not operational, and attempts to locate it were unsuccessful. This absence of a policy poses challenges for institutions to fulfill legislative requirements such as the Access to Information Act (Ngoepe, 2016).

Compliance with a diverse range of laws is essential for the success and protection of stakeholders in universities (ARMA International, 2010). Awareness of internal and external compliance obligations, along with the consequences of non-compliance, is crucial (ARMA International, 2010). The processes and technology supporting compliance must align with these laws (ARMA International, 2010). However, merely establishing laws, policies, and codes of conduct without implementing auditing and remediation mechanisms renders these efforts ineffective, aligning with the GARP Principle of Accountability (ARMA International, 2010). Popovici (2021) emphasizes that a robust recordkeeping program in universities should ensure adherence to laws, standards, and codes of conduct, irrespective of the organizational field or division. Chinyemba and Ngulube (2005) assert that good RIM practices are imperative in universities to meet legislative requirements, especially with the enactment of access to information laws. Failing to locate records due to poor management may result in reputational damage.

Therefore, the Records and Information Compliance Principle underscores the imperative of aligning records management practices with legal, regulatory, and industry-specific requirements. Scholars and practitioners emphasize the proactive measures needed to address accountability and compliance challenges effectively, safeguard organizational interests, and promote trust and transparency in RIM frameworks. The literature review highlights several challenges identified in RIM practices within academic institutions, particularly based on the study conducted at Chancellor College by Mphunda & Mnjama (2022). These challenges include: Inadequate Storage Space: Insufficient infrastructure to accommodate the increasing volume of paper records. Lack of Financial Resources: Financial constraints impacting various aspects of records management programs, including training, storage space expansion, and equipment acquisition. Misfiling: Issues with misfiling attributed to heavy workloads and delays in record organization, particularly by secretarial staff. Access and Retrieval Delays: Difficulties in retrieving inactive records compared to active ones, leading to operational inefficiencies within the records management system.

These challenges reflect broader issues faced by academic institutions in effectively managing information assets, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to enhance information management processes and promote organizational efficiency.

Methodology
The research adopted the quantitative approach and cross-sectional survey research design. The population consists of 41 administrative staff responsible for managing records within the Departments of the Faculty of Education at Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria. Self- developed questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. Analysis of the collected data involves utilizing frequency distribution and percentages. Responses are considered positive if they meet or exceed the benchmark of 50%, while anything below this threshold is interpreted as a negative response.

Result and Discussions

Compliance Mechanisms in Place within the Education Departments to Ensure Adherence to Regulatory Requirements and Standards in Information Management ABU Zaria
The respondents were asked to indicate the Compliance mechanisms in place within the Education departments to ensure adherence to regulatory requirements and standards in information management at ABU Zaria. Their responses to this objective are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Compliance Mechanisms in Place for Information Management at ABU Zaria

S/N	Compliance mechanisms	Frequency	Percentage
1	Are you aware of the relevant laws, regulations, and industry standards that govern records management in your jurisdiction or industry	13	38
2	Have you identified specific legal and regulatory requirements that apply to your organization's recordkeeping practices	12	35
3	Have you established policies and procedures that align with legal and regulatory requirements	11	32
4	Do you have mechanisms in place to monitor compliance with recordkeeping policies and procedures	18	53
5	Do employees receive training on recordkeeping policies, procedures, and legal requirements	14	41
6	Are measures in place to protect sensitive and confidential information from unauthorized access, disclosure, or alteration	24	71
7	Is there documentation of compliance efforts, including audit reports, compliance assessments, and corrective action plans	16	47

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2023

The analysis presented in Table 1 illustrates the compliance mechanisms established within Education departments to ensure adherence to regulatory requirements and standards in information management at ABU Zaria. Notably, measures in place to protect sensitive and confidential information from unauthorized access, disclosure, or alteration, as well as mechanisms for monitoring compliance with recordkeeping policies and procedures, both exhibit a response rate of 50 per cent. Conversely, response rates below 50 per cent were observed for awareness of relevant laws, regulations, and industry standards governing records management, identification of specific legal and regulatory requirements applicable to recordkeeping practices, establishment of policies and procedures aligned with legal and regulatory mandates, provision of employee training on recordkeeping policies, procedures, and legal requirements, and documentation of compliance efforts, including audit reports and corrective action plans. These findings align with the observations of Mosweu and Rakemane (2020), who highlighted challenges associated with outdated archival laws and the absence of access to information laws in certain African countries, raising concerns about their implications for good governance. Furthermore, as emphasized by Zirco Data (2018), a deep understanding of regulatory compliance principles instils confidence and serves as a protective shield for businesses, mitigating potential losses and legal vulnerabilities.

Having a response rate below 50% in key areas such as awareness of relevant laws, identification of legal and regulatory requirements, establishment of compliant policies, provision of employee training, and documentation of compliance efforts suggests significant risks. This low engagement indicates widespread gaps in knowledge and implementation, leading to potential non-compliance with legal mandates, inconsistent recordkeeping practices, and inadequate employee training. Additionally, poor documentation of compliance efforts can hinder the institution's ability to demonstrate adherence during audits or inspections, potentially resulting in legal repercussions, financial penalties, and damage to its reputation. Therefore, organizations should prioritize efforts to enhance regulatory awareness, establish robust compliance frameworks, and foster a culture of accountability to ensure effective RIM and regulatory adherence.

Challenges Departments in the Faculty of Education Faced in Fostering a Culture of Accountability and Compliance in their Records and Information Management Processes ABU Zaria

The respondents were asked to indicate the challenges departments in the faculty of education face in fostering a culture of accountability and compliance in their records and information management processes ABU Zaria. Their responses in this regard are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Challenges Departments in the Faculty of Education Faced in Fostering a Culture of Accountability and Compliance

S/N	Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
1	Lack of leadership support and commitment to accountability initiatives.	**17**	**50**
2	Unclear or outdated policies and procedures regarding information management.	**27**	**79**
3	Insufficient training and awareness programs for employees on compliance requirements.	**23**	**68**
4	Resistance to change and reluctance to adopt new information management practices.	**15**	**44**
5	Cultural barriers that hinder the acceptance of accountability norms and compliance standards.	**16**	**47**
6	Technological limitations, including outdated systems and inadequate data governance frameworks.	**20**	**59**
7	Inadequate resources allocated to information management and compliance efforts.	**27**	**79**
8	Lack of external regulatory pressures that pose compliance challenges.	**29**	**85**
9	Lack of accountability mechanisms and performance metrics to assess compliance efforts effectively.	**19**	**56**
10	Limited understanding of the importance of	**20**	**59**

	accountability and compliance among stakeholders.		

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2023

The data presented in table 2, elucidates the challenges encountered by departments in faculty of education face in fostering a culture of accountability and compliance in their records and information management processes at ABU Zaria. Notably, challenges with a response rate of 50 per cent include the lack of external regulatory pressures that pose compliance challenges, unclear or outdated policies and procedures regarding information management, inadequate allocation of resources to information management and compliance efforts, insufficient training and awareness programs for employees on compliance requirements, technological limitations such as outdated systems and inadequate data governance frameworks, limited understanding of the importance of accountability and compliance among stakeholders, and the absence of accountability mechanisms and performance metrics to assess compliance efforts effectively. Conversely, challenges with response rates below 50 per cent include resistance to change and reluctance to adopt new information management practices, as well as cultural barriers hindering the acceptance of accountability norms and compliance standards. These findings align with observations from studies such as Asogwa (2013), who noted that many African institutions struggle with outdated policies and insufficient resources for effective records management, and McLeod, Childs, and Hardiman (2011), who emphasized the importance of training and stakeholder engagement in fostering compliance and accountability in RIM. The alignment of these findings underscores the pervasive nature of accountability challenges within organizations, necessitating concerted efforts to address underlying issues and foster a culture of responsibility and regulatory adherence. Organizations must prioritize leadership commitment, policy clarity, adequate resource allocation, and stakeholder engagement to mitigate these challenges and promote effective RIM.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the application of records and Information management Compliance principles for quality service delivery in the Departments of the Faculty of Education at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, is largely insufficient. The response rate below 50% in critical areas such as awareness of relevant laws, identification of legal and regulatory requirements, establishment of compliant policies, provision of employee training, and documentation of compliance efforts indicates significant risks. This low engagement reveals widespread gaps in knowledge and implementation, leading to potential non-compliance with legal mandates, inconsistent recordkeeping practices, and inadequate employee training.

Recommendations
The following recommendations were made in line with the findings of this study:
1. The management should prioritize awareness and education initiatives by conducting regular training sessions on relevant laws and regulations for

employees. Update and align company policies with current legal mandates, and implement robust monitoring systems to ensure ongoing compliance. Schedule periodic reviews and assessments to identify compliance gaps and drive continuous improvement in information management practices.

2. The management should regularly review and update policies, ensuring adequate resource allocation for compliance initiatives, including technology and training. Foster a shared understanding of accountability among all stakeholders and develop strategies to overcome resistance to change and cultural barriers. Implement regular assessments and establish feedback mechanisms to monitor progress, fostering a culture of accountability and continuous improvement in compliance.

References

Abdulrahim, A., Yunusa, M. B., & Aliyu, H. (2021, December 13-15). Application of information governance compliance principles on records management practice in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. Paper presented at the 2nd Ahmadu Bello University Library Complex International Conference, PG e-Library, Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Agere, S. (2000). Promoting good governance: Principles, practice and perspectives. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Asogwa, B. E. (2013). The challenge of managing electronic records in developing countries: Implications for records managers in sub-Saharan Africa. Records Management Journal, 23(3), 198-211. https://doi.org/10.1108/RMJ-06-2013-0017

ARMA International. (2023). ARMA Information Governance Implementation Model. Retrieved from ARMA International.

ARMA International. (2010). Course notes: Generally accepted recordkeeping principles®: Overview [Online course handouts]. Retrieved from http://www.courses.learnsomething.com/scormcourses/ o5642c9adab5b4668a 3e5d59ba5b bdf18/p62ab316db617435e999f6e420a7bc86d/data/resources/ GARP%20Course%20Notes%5fFinal%5f2010%2d4%2d30%2epdf?download=true

Chinyembe, A. & Ngulube P. (2005). "Managing Records at Higher Education Institutions: A Case Study of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus", South African Journal of Information Management. Vol. 7 (1).

McLeod, J., Childs, S., & Hardiman, R. (2011). Accelerating positive change in electronic records management: headline findings from a major research project. Archives and Records, 32(2), 103-134. https://doi.org/10.1080/23257962.2011.11008716

Mosweu O and Rakemane D. (2020). The role of records management in ensuring good governance in Africa: impediments and solutions. *JOURNAL OF SASA*. 53. https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/jsasa.v53i1.8

Mphunda, J., & Mnjama, N. (2022). Application of ARMA information governance maturity model for assessment of records management programme at chancellor college, university of Malawi. *Journal of the South African Society of Archivists*, 55, 88-109.

Ngoepe, M. (2016). Records management models in the public sector in South Africa: Is there a flicker of light at the end of the dark tunnel? *Information Development* 32(3):338 353.

Popovici B. F. (2021). Generally Accepted Recordkeeping Principles (GARP) A Presentation. ww.pokarh-mb.si/uploaded/datoteke/Radenci/Radenci2012/12_Popovici_2021.pdf

Southern Connecticut State University (2022) Records and Information Management. inside.southernct.edu/records-and-info/principles

Umar, F. A. (2023). Health information managers quality service delivery in Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospitals Zaria, Kaduna, Nigeria. Direct Research Journal of Health and Pharmacology, 10(7), 53-59. https://doi.org/10.26765/DRJHP038046912

Zirco Data. (2018). In the know: Understanding regulatory compliance in records management. Available at: https://www.zircodata.com.au/in-the-know-understanding-regulatory compliance-in-records-management/ (accessed 2 August 2022).