

Problems and Prospects of School Records in Senior Secondary Schools of Yobe State**Popoola Olayemi Bosede¹ Duchi Abba Kyari²****Correspondence email address:** 0layemibosede8@gmail.com**Correspondence Phone No:** 08032676569**School of Education**

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Abstract

In every organization or institution particularly in schools, it is always necessary to store records for future use. These should be stored not only for safe keeping but also that they can be easily located when needed. This is done by filling them properly. As could be seen in the schools, there are many educational new students, recruitment of teachers, timetable organization and so on. Also, these are school activities which need to be recorded and stored for retrieval when they are needed for any important validation or discussion or decision. School records comprise all existing and accessible records, books, files and other documents containing useful information that relates to what goes on in the school system. They are evaluation tools for accessing progress made by schools and also show evidence of compliance with legislative laws. 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 aims to offer an excellent package to support stakeholders in educational management 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: School Record, Problems, Prospects, Secondary School**Introduction**

The school regulatory bodies in Nigeria place a very high importance on school record keeping. School records are official documents, books and files containing essential and crucial information of actions and events, that take place in schools. These

records are kept and preserved in the school office for utilization and retrieval of information when needed. Such records are kept by heads of school, principals, teachers, counsellors or administrative staff. The purpose of record keeping and management is to ensure that accurate and proper records of students' achievement and growth, information on school activities and matters that promote efficiency and effectiveness of the school system are kept and maintained (Philip, 2007).

Record keeping is a germane factor in determining the effectiveness and efficiency of the school system. In fact, it is central in the administration of institution of learning because it documents the planning and implementation of appropriate course of service allowing proper monitoring. In conventional paper-based organizations, paper continues to be viewed as the material for records in administrative documentations (Igwoke, 2008). Whichever method is adopted whether paper based or electronic based, the centerpiece is to ensure that efficiency is achieved in the areas of time, cost and resources management. This is evident in the fact that record keeping ensures information can be accessed easily, destroyed routinely when no longer needed, and it enables organizations not only to function on a day to day basis, but also to fulfil legal and financial requirements.

School records occupy strategic position in the effective and efficient organization and administration of the school. This is particularly explained in the assertion of Durosaro (2008) who stated that records are important tools for effective planning and administration of a school. Records are important because they serve as major information tools that sustain the school and aid achievement of educational goals and objectives. Records restore teaching competence and maintain the trend in the history of teaching and learning processes.

Also, not all information can be considered as records until they satisfy such characteristics, genuineness and authenticity; that is the information that records give must be true, correct and original (Egwunyenga 2005). Records must be comprehensive, available, accessible and secured. This implies that records must contain adequate information which is needed for the smooth running of school's activities. School records are grouped into statutory and non-statutory. Statutory records include admission/withdrawal register, attendance register, scheme of work, time-table, logbook, visitors' book (educational policy book), time/movement books, school diary, lesson plan/note for teachers, examination record book, etc. Non-statutory records are cash book, stock book, punishment book, school calendar, inventory book, staff minutes book, school magazine, inspection/supervision report file, confidential report forms and requisition book. Record management is the application of systematic and scientific control of recorded information that is required for the operation of the school. Such control is exercised over the distribution, utilization, retention, storage, retrieval, protection, preservation and final disposition of all types of records within the school. The aim of record management is to achieve the best retrieval and management of school records in the school system and also to improve the efficiency of record making and keeping processes. Record management helps to control the quality and quantity of information that is created in a manner that effectively serves the need of the school (Fasasi, 2004).

Without records there can be no accountability this is in tune with the view of Ibarra him (2010). 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. School record management according to Fasasi (2004) is meant to enhance the performance of secondary school administrators. Adequate record management program co-ordinates and protects an institutions' records, sharpens the effectiveness of records as a management memory which controls the times, equipment and space allocated to records and helps to simplify intra-organizational and communication problems. The management of records in the secondary schools like in any other organization is a cyclic process involving the principals, teachers, students, messengers and cleaners. The bulk of records are handled by principals which are kept manually thus the attendant effect of difficulty in processing, retrieval and utilization of records.

Iwhiwhu (2005) stressed the insufficient quality and quantity of manpower in record management in the school system. He emphasized that manpower is employed without prejudice to qualitative records management. Though this business of record keeping and effective management in the secondary school system has not attained good success due to insufficient provision of facilities, fund and management components however, adequate security, storage facilities and funds are generally recommended for good record keeping and management.

The overwhelming importance of school records, it has been observed that they are poorly kept and managed this is in tandem with the view of Asogwa (2004) which states that records and data generated in the course of execution of legitimate function of an organization or school should be kept and managed properly. School records whether statutory or non-statutory, physical or electronic should be properly kept and managed for utilization and future retrieval. The effective management of school records by principals depends on certain management procedures and functions such as effective supervision, effective leadership, monitoring, provision and training of adequate personnel, records storage and retrieval, discipline and effective communication, delegation of duty, developing record keeping skills and motivation. Babalola, (2007) noted that information and data generated from an effective and efficient records management program aids the school to plan and make useful decisions, preserve facts and figures for future reference, thereby enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization and administration of the school. The adequate provision of quality manpower, funds and equipment would ensure optimum management of school records. However, inadequate or non-availability of these resources bring about problems and challenges in the efficient and effective management of records. Since all schools are expected to keep records for effective and efficient achievement of educational goals and objectives. Running the school system, especially middle or secondary school is tasking and demanding, it is worthy of note that students who are churned out as products would serve as images and representatives of the school.

Hence massive credence should be placed on data preservation because, it is from this that the school can work with its own educational objectives of producing students for higher education and producing students with skills and attributes to be useful in the society (FRN 2004). Oftentimes, schools with poor data bank suffer a great loss because it creates an impression that lasts for quite a while. Data preservation is a pressing concern for schools in all parts of the world. They realize the need to preserve the world's memories. In Nigeria, however, preservation has yet to take its actual place in most academic system. The reason for this is lack of funding.

Caroline (2012) explains formative and summative assessments. She averred that “formative assessment takes place before or during the instruction with the explicit purpose of eliciting evidence that can be used by students and teachers to improve the current learning while summative assessment is a measure of learning at a particular point in time” This means that formative is the pre-assessment done before the end of the exercise while summative is the addition or the total assessment done after the whole exercise. Therefore, some records that constitute formative assessment in schools include: lesson plan, time-table attendance register, log book, students’ payment voucher and diary while summative records in schools are termly record/result sheet, termly hostel report, level description and a host of others.

Record management is the systematic control of organizations’ records. Record keeping constitutes the arteries that supply life-sustaining blood through the system and sub-systems of organizations and institutions (Nwagwu, 2005). It will definitely be an impossible task to plan and administer any known organization in which records are not kept, or are carelessly or fraudulently kept. The education system as a social organization 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. Record management 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). 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.

Types of School Records

The aim of any school record is to preserve information. If school records are properly kept, they serve as an information bank from which the principal and his staff can recall stored information when needed. For this purpose, the records must be honestly and faithfully kept in order to make them reliable and to serve as a means of diagnosing individual student’s problems and recording his achievements. The ability to recall stored information depends on the availability of the records, easy access to

the records, a good filing system which guarantees that no pages are gutted out. There are two types of records namely: administrative or statutory records and teacher professional record. Some School Record includes:-

1. A register of admission, progress and withdrawals
2. A register of attendance and fees
3. A log book
4. A time-table
5. Weekly diaries
6. Visitors book
7. A corporal punishment book
8. Individual cumulative record card
9. Academic record of a student
10. School inventory book and Other school records

Problems of Record Records

The problems confronting education records keeping in Nigerian institutions are numerous and are such that people are careless with record keeping. People don't preserve documents even personal documents such as pay slips, declaration of age, marriage certificates, receipts of payment made on school fees and even certificates are being poorly kept and lost (Adesina, 2005). Another problem with record keeping is that sometimes, educational institution managers are not conscious of how to use some modern storage facilities such as computer flash, disc, microfilm and microfiche. Even where the school personnel are conscious of these modern facilities, the schools are not empowered to be able to acquire them. There is also the problem of poor storage due to faulty cataloguing which makes retrieval difficult. It was also discovered that low level of training of school managers in record keeping constitutes a hindrance. Many administrators are computer illiterate and are ignorant of what school record keepers do. The setbacks to keeping of school records are many and include the following:

Fire outbreaks: Fire outbreaks have become a common phenomenon in our school system. Most schools in the rural areas are without perimeter fences which expose them to bush burning by hunters. Even where perimeter fences are erected, the negligence of school personnel in the misuse of electrical appliances do result to electrical fire outbreaks which tend to burn down most school buildings and consequently school records. The issue of fire disaster has been a major issue in the management of public schools in Nigeria. Fire disasters in schools have become a source of concern in all parts of the world. They cause enormous loss of lives and property. Fire disasters are by far the most common disaster in learning institutions in Nigeria. According to Hanior (2014), Nigerian schools are ill equipped in the face of a fire disaster. Most of them have no capacity to handle emergency and even implement safety standards manuals.

Flooding: Flooding according to Hanior (2014) is the discharge of water exceeding the channel capacity of a river and the preceding to inadequate the adjacent flood plain to

destroy agriculture and land settlement, therefore causing disaster to lives and property. According to Hanior (2014) flood though a natural disaster, the construction of artificial lakes like dams can cause artificial flooding. Schools that are built near dams and rivers are mostly affected by flooding. School buildings and records are completely submerged in water, thereby creating a big challenge for record maintenance. For instance, many schools were affected in Nigeria in 2012 due to flooding.

Pests and rodents: Pests and rodents are common challenges facing the maintenance of school records in most public schools in Nigeria. Most schools' surroundings are shrouded with overgrown grasses thereby making the inhabiting of rodents possible. When cockroaches and rodents invade a school they chew anything that resembles food or nesting material including cardboard, boxes, books, art projects, plastic bags and their contents and electrical wires. Mice and rats also make a mess by urinating and defecating wherever they feed and leaving smelly trails of furniture and droppings.

Improper storage: This phenomenon occurs when the responsibility of keeping school record is manned by inexperience personnel or an organization has low priority of record management in their scheme of things. Awe (2000) views the problem of records keeping from the perspective of government agencies and their staff records, school management and their students' records. It was alleged that these bodies are responsible for unavailability, inaccurate, incomplete and dishonest records of individuals in their organizations. Utulu (2001) asserts that this affects planning for and provision of structures and facilities, adequate funding, proper formulation and review of policies. Other associated problems of record keeping identified in the educational system in Nigeria include: lack of records manual and filing guidelines which leads to loss of vital information (Egwunyenga, 2002) and inadequate computer terminals. Ogundele (2001) believes that there is serious training need for staff in this wise. Many secondary school teachers and secretariat staffs possess insufficient knowledge and understanding of the use of records that they need to keep in the classroom (Agenyi, 2013). According to Bosah (1997), the driving force behind any venture is the knowledge of the need and utility value of the said venture. This knowledge motivates and sustains the efforts of the operatives in seeing the venture to fruition. This observation according to Agenyi (2013), suggests that inadequate record keeping, attitude by teachers and secretariat staff to record keeping in Nigerian Secondary Schools may be due to the following factors inefficiency of knowledge of the usefulness of the records kept by them in school, inadequate supervision of teachers and secretariat staff by Principals, non-utilization of submitted data to government agencies and fragile nature of electronic records.

Irresponsibility on the part of teachers and secretariat staff: Irresponsibility on the part of teachers and secretariat staff may result to falsification of school records. Lack of appropriate record keeping can be due to teachers allowing unauthorized persons like the class prefect or non-academic staff to mark register or schemes of work. These categories of persons have no relevant experience to keep accurate records of activities. They may even be too lazy to exercise the function since it is not their duty to do it.

Inadequate supervision of teachers and secretariat staff: Allied to this point above is inadequate supervision of teachers and secretariat staff by Principals, which may hinder

effective record keeping in schools. When the Principal or the Vice Principal designated to supervise the record keeping fails in his/her duty, the result is that teachers according to Agenyi (2013) may keep shady records or may not keep them at all. Odiba (2000) asserts that average men need be coerced to exercise appropriate behaviour. Principals and Vice Principals need not assume that teachers and secretariat staff are doing their work and need no supervision. Every one whether effective or ineffective, needs supervision that can launch him/her into greater responsibility.

Non-utilization of submitted data to government agencies: Non-utilization of submitted data to government agencies affects effective record keeping in our public secondary schools. A situation where school boards or government agencies do not give attention to the figures submitted to them when allocating educational equipment does not augur well with the system. Bosah (1997) observes that decision on allocation of scarce resources should be based on facts and not the rule of thumb. This has resulted to lack of commitment to good record keeping.

Fragile nature of electronic records: Electronic records on the other hand are extremely fragile. They can be corrupted or rendered unreadable with the stroke of a key, this requires that for school and organization records to be effectively and efficiently kept, they should be handled by experience personnel with computer literacy. Lack of public electricity supply and high cost of running private power supply also affects the use of some electronic gadgets.

Prospects of School Record

Records management function should be incorporated into the Secondary schoolwide strategic planning initiatives. Most importantly, senior management should embrace the records management function to ensure its effectiveness and should be incorporated into their performance management targets.

1. The Secondary schools needs to appoint records managers whose responsibilities will be compilation, implementation, maintenance and utilization of approved filing systems and the records filed according to these systems. It significantly revealed that the university lacks professional and qualified records management staff, resulting in the poor management of records.
2. Records Managers should be given adequate training to ensure that this official is able to undertake the full responsibilities of the post. The position of the Records Manager is crucial as this official is entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing the welfare of the school's records. Also, to ensure improvement of Institution's records management practices, the Records Manager should be dedicated only to the records management function. School Management should appoint separate Assistant Records Managers for the Budget, Treasury Office and Human Resources. They should be charged with the responsibility of ensuring sound records management within their respective divisions. Such Records Managers should remain accountable to the Records Manager of the whole school.
3. Again, records management is a field that needs to be run by experienced professionals who will know what has to be done. It is therefore necessary for the schools to train their records management staff to have a qualification in records management. Workshops and seminars should be organized by the school to

train staff on records management. A policy document or legislative instrument should therefore be carved out to regulate records management and records management staff on the functional roles of managing records effectively and efficiently.

Further studies on records management might also focus on the essence of legislative framework in records management and reasons why there was the need for one.

1. As a matter of priority, the schools should ensure that part of its strategic planning process includes records management.
2. Society is dynamic and as Information Communication is making the world a global village, the schools should prepare itself to embrace electronic records management to reduce the large volumes of paper and store space for records. This easily done by introducing appropriate software that can manage records at a reduced cost and train staff on how to effectively manage them. This will help maintain a sustainable records management programme. In view of the importance of electronic records management, the Finance and Academics offices staff should be encouraged to update and upgrade their software from time to time. It is also worth extending these soft wares to all other offices.
3. Management should enforce the principle of accountability, protection, integrity and making staff responsible for any lapses in terms of records protection on their part authorities should note that if they fail to comply with the Code, they may also fail to comply with legislation relating to the creation, management, disposal, use and re-use of records and information, for example the Public Records Act 1958, the Data Protection Act 1998, and the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2005, and they may consequently be in breach of their statutory obligations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

A very important step towards improving record keeping in Nigerian educational institution system is that of looking for lasting solutions to some of main constraints to record keeping and storage. The school head teachers, principals and educational managers are primary contact points of major education records and data. The inadequate cognitive preparation of teachers and head teachers for their jobs constitutes part of the problem of record keeping and storage. To lessen some of the challenges identified in the paper, principals and head teachers should be trained and retrained in current ways of record keeping and storage. The principals need to be taught the improved systems of recording school level data accurately. Moreover, the level of challenges posed to principals, educational administrators, educational managers and head teachers in our schools is too little; they are sometimes not involved in serious planning activities and most of the records they are made to collect and probably keep are mostly not used by them hence they don't comprehend their values for the future as well as growth and development of the educational institutions. Principals, and head teachers are also supposed to be involved in key management resolutions like budgeting, project planning and execution and curriculum planning in ministries of education as well as education boards. This will enable them value and appreciate

record keeping in their various institutions. Also, there is need to create computer literacy awareness in Nigerian school level, especially the secondary and primary schools by helping them to have access to computer and be computer educated. This will guarantee better record keeping storage, more accurate analysis and a fast recovery of data or information when needed.

- i. Government should frequently organize workshops for Head teachers on records keeping and its importance.
- ii. School heads should ensure that record are accurately and adequately kept and maintained.
- iii. School administrators should ensure there are always backup copies of all school records.

In conclusion, poor record keeping in school system result to ineffective and inefficient school planning, administration and supervision which in turn result to poor performance of school. Therefore, the roles of head teacher and school records are synonymous because effectiveness and efficiency of head teacher depends largely on these vital documents. However, class teachers should complement this task by effectively discharging their duties to properly keep and maintain these academic records for which they have direct responsibility.

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