Records Management in Higher Educational Institutions in Bayelsa State: Implications for School Administration

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the extent to which the records management systems of higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State are adequate. The descriptive research design was adopted in the study. Five research questions were posed to guide the study. The stratified random sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 162 respondents for the study from heads of departments, administrative heads of units and faculty officers saddled with the responsibility of managing records across the five higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State. Five research questions were posed to guide the study. The instrument for data collection was developed by the researchers and named “Records Management Questionnaire (RMQ)” formatted in four-point Likert type. The instrument was validated by experts in Records Management in the Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the test-retest method. A calculated correlation coefficient of 0.69 of the instrument was obtained using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation method. Mean ratings and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions. A criterion mean of 2.50 was considered as basis for accepting or rejecting responses concerning the extent of their adequacy. The results showed that the records management systems adopted in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State were grossly inadequate. It was therefore recommended that a sustainable policies and procedures should be evolved and used for records management in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State in line with best global practice. For the purpose of effectiveness, regular on-the-job training programmes, conferences and workshops must be put in place for all staff responsible for records management for improvement in the quality of service delivery. More so, high level collaboration should be encouraged between Government agencies, multinational corporations, the
organized private sector, public spirited individuals and higher educational institutions in the State in ensuring that adequate facilities are put in place to aid the effective administration of these institutions.

**Keywords:** management systems; Bayelsa State; higher educational institutions

1. **INTRODUCTION**

For the effective administration of higher educational institutions in Nigeria, the challenges of the 21st century have placed a greater demand on administrators to intensity action in evolving efficient records management policies and procedures to function as self sustaining institutions just as business concerns and remain relevant through competition in this global era. In carrying out its core roles of teaching, learning, research and development of community higher educational institutions create and use various forms of records. The evolvement, adoption and use of proper records management policies and procedures could positively contribute to university’s accountability and good governance, capable of creating a virile university sub-sector in the Nigerian economy. Sapre-Obi (2014) holds that proper records management could help universities to manage their information, efficiently fulfill their mandate, protect them from litigations, preserve their corporate memory, and foster accountability and good governance. Popoola (2000), had actually emphasized how every modern system of government or administration, be they public or private, humanitarian or profit oriented keeps records of its transactions for administrative purposes – planning, decision-making and control which should have timely access.

There seem to be agreement among researchers in the field of records management concerning the meaning of records. Records, in the views of Weeks (1986), Ugwunze (1992), Popoola (2003), Enemute (2005), Sapere-Obi (2014) and Ajewole (2001), etc. are information received and kept, regardless of the form or medium received and maintained by an agency, institution, organization or individual in pursuit of its legal obligations or in the transaction of business. Generally, these are documentary evidence of transactions made or received in pursuance of legal obligations, irrespective of the physical form or characteristics of the media. Such recorded information could be on paper, audiotapes, videotapes, microfilms, photographs, slides and such computer readable as computer tapes, disks, compact and optical disks.

Records management in the conceptualization of Ugwunze (1992), Popoola (2003), Enemute (2005), and Sapere-Obi (2014) could mean a management science that deals with controlling the quantity, quality and cost of records and it encompasses the procedural system operations, space, equipment and staff required to administer the records. Record management means creation, control and disposal of records, it includes planning and developing classification schemes, operating and maintenance of files and other documents, checking undue proliferation of records, planning and maintenance of record rooms, preparation of indexes. Records when managed properly could go a long way in enhancing the administration of institutions that keep such.

Records management is a cyclical process of sequential steps and procedures that are logically and systematically arranged. Weeks (1986), Gower (1989) and Sapere-Obi (2014), agree with others and carefully identified the basic components of records management to include filling, storage, retrieval, retention, and disposal. The essence of record management
in higher educational institutions is to ensure effectiveness, efficiency and proper economy of records generated, created or received by school administration. Records management in higher educational institutions largely depend on recorded information which could be on paper, audiotapes, videotapes, microfilms, photographs, slides and such computer readable as computer tapes, disks, compact and optical disks. It is generally believed that the ability of an organization in managing its records could be a prerequisite to effective administration.

In higher educational systems, some of the vital records produced and used include personal (employee) and financial records. Personal record could be those that contain initial application forms, results, and physical examination, periodic appraisals, transfer and promotion to mention some. It is argued that management of personnel records is likely to pose problems because of their bulk, longevity, sensitivity and occupy valuable space in offices. Financial records are all transactions kept in relation to financial matters. These include budget allocation, budget requests, statement of expenditure, shipment receipts, invoices, requisitions, purchase orders, receipts of monies received or expended, etc. Records management has become a basic aspect of the organizational life of higher educational institutions. Proper functioning of higher educational systems would require the generation and transaction of information in the form of records for teaching, learning, research and general administration in meeting set goals.

In Bayelsa State, a look at the way information is generated, used, stored and disposed in higher educational institutions could reveal the lack of expertise and efficiency in its handling. As sensitive as records are in higher educational institutions, it has become worrisome that vital records for teaching – learning, research and general administrative purposes may be very difficult and time consuming to trace and use even if they exist. Recorded information in files are usually mixed up or lost. Files may not have been properly labeled and kept in designated cabinets for easy access and use.

The observable dusty nature of files usually mixed up, found on the floors at the conners of offices could easily reveal that something had either gone wrong with the records management procedures or such personnel are incompetent in handling such assignments. This corroborates with the submissions of Ugwunze (1992), Popoola (2003), Ajewole (2001), Enemute (2005) and Sapere-Obi (2014), who strongly view the level of educational attainment of records personnel could affect the way records are handled. Since records form the heart beat of school administration, the absence of proper management policies, procedures and personnel could pose great challenges to administrative effectiveness.

It is possible that so many people may have at one point or the other become disappointed with the way administrative records have been handled which may have resulted to conflicts and litigations against institutions, capable of increasing costs. It could be possible that these supposed inadequacies in the records management systems of higher educational institutions may have negatively impinge on overall school administration and capable of slowing down progress. This study was therefore carried out to determine the extent to which records management is adequate and the implications of such findings on administration of higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

**Statement of Problem**

It is true that records would continue to play cardinal roles in the administration of higher educational institutions. This is because every modern institution or system of administration is sustained by records. The way such records are created, filed, retained,
retrieved, stored and disposed could have an overall effect on the effectiveness of the administration. Also, competence is required on the part of those who perform these duties, in enabling the maintenance of best practices based on globally accepted standards. For Higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State and indeed Nigeria to become effective in their administrations, there is the need for effective, adequate and well organized records management procedures to be put in place and implemented for overall goal achievement.

Preliminary observations revealed that records staff deal with huge information and many not possess adequate knowledge of the life cycle of records and could probably lack the inertia for managing such in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State. In these institutions, records could easily be sighted heaped at the corners of offices and have become very dusty as available filling cabinets are filled to capacity. It could be possible that higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State may not have well thought out records management policies and procedures that are implemented, considered comprehensive enough to support effective administration. Situations seem to abound where required records needed to actualize administrative process could not be trace easily or found at all. These range from students issues through personnel matters to other administrative concerns and are capable of creating considerable challenges to general institutional effectiveness in higher educational institutions. The problem of this study therefore is “to what extent are the records management systems adequate in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria?” The study was therefore carried out to determine the extent to which records management systems are adequate in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria and make inferences on how these could affect administration.

**Purpose of the Study**

The general purpose of the study was to examine the extent to which records management systems are adequate in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State. But specifically, the study was carried out:

1. To find out the extent to which the filling of records is adequate in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State.
2. To determine the extent to which storage facilities of records are adequate in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State.
3. To determine the extent to which the retrieval systems of records are adequate in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State.
4. To determine the extent to which the qualification of records staff are adequate in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State.
5. To determine the extent to which the records disposal systems are adequate in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions were posed to guide the study:

1. To what extent is the filling of records adequate in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State?
2. To what extent is the storage of records adequate in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State?
3. Is the retrieval of records adequate in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State?
4. To what extent are the records disposal systems adequate in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State?
5. To what extent are the qualification of records staff adequate in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State?

2. METHODOLOGY

The descriptive research design was adopted for the study. This was because the manifestation of the variables studied had already occurred prior to the commencement of the study (Isangedighi, Hoshua, Asin & Ekuri, 2003). The population of the study was made up of the 547 staff linked with the management of records such as Deans/Heads of department, Faculty Officers, Heads of Administrative units and other Registry staff. The stratified random sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 162 respondents for the study. Respondents were drawn from administrative heads of units and faculty officers saddled with the responsibility of managing records across the five higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State (Niger Delta University, Amassoma; Federal University, Otuoke; Isaac Boro College of Education, Sagbama and Bayelsa State College of Arts and Science, Elebele). Five research questions were posed to direct the study. The instrument for data collection was developed by the researchers named “Records Management Questionnaire (RMQ)” formatted in four-point Likert type. The instrument was validated by experts in Records Management in the Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the test-retest method. A calculated correlation coefficient of 0.69 of the instrument was obtained using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation method. Mean ratings and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions. A criterion mean of 2.50 was considered as basis for accepting or rejecting responses concerning the extent of their adequacy.

3. RESULTS

Research Question 1. To what extent is the filling of records adequate in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State?

Table 1. Mean (x) and standard deviation (SD) scores on the adequacy of filling of records in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>DECISION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>All incoming records are properly processed</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>N/Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Files are properly labeled</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>All out going records are properly processed</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>N/Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Maintain appropriate registers for records</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>N/Adequate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prime information is captured while opening files for records: 2.62, 0.95, Adequate

Grand Mean: 2.46, N/Adequate

Criterion mean = 2.50; N = 121

The data presented in Table 1 showed mean scores of 2.40, 2.62, 2.31, 2.37 and 2.62 for items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively. The mean ratings for items 2 and 5 were higher than the criterion mean score of 2.50. On the other hand, the mean ratings of items 1, 3 and 4 were lower than the criterion mean of 2.50. An overall or grand mean score of 2.46 was obtained. The overall result was lower than the criterion mean score of 2.50. The implication of this result was that the filling of records was inadequate in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State.

Research Question 2. To what extent is the storage of records adequate in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State?

Table 2. Mean (x) and standard deviation (SD) scores on the adequate of storage facilities in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>DECISION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Enough cabinets to store records</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>N/Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>All records are in designated cabinets</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>N/Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Regular maintenance of cabinets</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>N/Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Regular maintenance of files in cabinets</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Efforts always made to preserve files</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grant mean</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td></td>
<td>N/Adequate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Criterion mean = 2.50; N = 121

The data presented in Table 2 showed mean scores of 2.37, 2.47, 2.40, 2.53 and 2.67 for items 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 respectively. The mean rating for items 10 was higher than the criterion mean score of 2.50. On the other hand, the mean ratings of items 6, 7, 8 and 9 were lower than the criterion mean of 2.50. An overall or grand mean score of 2.49 was obtained. The overall result was lower than the criterion mean score of 2.50. The implication of this result was that the storage facilities of records was inadequate in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State.

Research Question 3. Is the retrieval (accessibly) of stored records adequate in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State?
Table 3. Mean (x) and standard deviation (SD) scores on the adequate of records retrieval system in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>DECISION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>All cabinets are properly labeled</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>N/ Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Records are always kept at designated cabinets</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>N/ Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Maintain records for inter unit transfers</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>N/ Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Maintain appropriate registers for filled records</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>N/ Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Records are easy to trace</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>Adequate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grand mean** 2.38  N/ Adequate

Criterion mean = 2.50; N = 121

The data presented in Table 3 showed mean scores of 2.37, 2.17, 2.40, 2.28 and 2.71 for items 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 respectively. The mean rating of only item 5 was higher than the criterion mean score of 2.50. On the other hand, the mean ratings of items 1, 2, 3 and 4 were lower than the criterion mean of 2.50. An overall or grand mean score of 2.38 was obtained. The overall result was lower than the criterion mean score of 2.50. The implication of this result was that the retrieval system of records was inadequate in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State.

**Research Question 4.** To what extent are the records disposal systems adequate in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State?

Table 4. Mean (x) and standard deviation (SD) scores on the adequacy of records disposal systems in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>DECISION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Regular audit of records for disposal</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Close inactive files properly</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>N/ Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Maintain dates for disposal of records</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Always destroy unwanted records properly</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>N/ Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Always permanently preserve inactive records</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>N/ Adequate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grand Mean** 2.39  N/Adequate

Criterion mean = 2.50; N = 121
The data presented in Table 4 showed item mean scores of 2.62, 2.37, 2.53, 2.17 and 2.28 for items 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25 respectively. The mean ratings for items 21 and 23 were slightly higher than the criterion mean of 2.50 while those of items 22, 24 and 25 were lower than the criterion mean score of 2.50. An overall or grand mean score of 2.39 was obtained. The overall mean result of 2.39 was lower than the criterion mean score of 2.50. The implication of this result was that the retention schedule for records was not adequate in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State.

**Research Question 5.** To what extent are the qualification of records staff adequate in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State?

Table 5. Mean (x) and standard deviation (SD) scores on the qualification of records staff in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>DECISION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Academic qualification(s) are related to records management.</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>N/Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Attend conferences on records management</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>N/Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Opportunities for further professional growth in records management</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>N/Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Always attend refresher courses</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>N/Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Regular in-house briefs on record handling</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>N/Adequate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grand Mean 2.32 N/Adequate
Criterion mean = 2.50; N = 121

The data presented in Table 5 showed mean scores of 2.31, 2.40, 2.28, 2.37 and 2.28 for items 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25 respectively. The mean ratings for all items were lower than the criterion mean score of 2.50. An overall or grand mean score of 2.32 was obtained. The overall result was lower than the criterion mean score of 2.50. The implication of this result was that the educational qualification of records Staff was inadequate in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State.

### 4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study revealed that the variables used in determining the extent to which records management systems were adequate in higher educational institutions were all lower than the criterion mean of 2.50. The result therefore indicated that records management systems adopted by higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State were inadequate. The procedures used in filling, storage, retention, retrieval and disposal of records during their life-cycle were inadequate and probably not in line with best practices and therefore fell short of desirable and accepted standards across the five higher educational institutions in the State.
These findings were in agreement with those of Popoola (2003), Enemute, (2005) and Sapre-Obi (2014), among others.

Also, the findings revealed that the qualification and training of staff saddled with the responsibility of managing records were inadequate in these institutions. Hardly do records management staffs undergo on-the-job training as conferences, workshops to enhance productivity as opportunities for further professional growth in the field of records management were not readily available in these institutions. In line with this finding, Ugwunze (1992), Popoola (2003), Enemute (2005) and Sapere-Obi (2014), were strongly of the view that the level of educational attainment of records management staff could directly affect the way such handle which could in the long run influence administrative effectiveness in higher educational institutions.

The foregoing results went down to confirm the preliminary observations made hitherto in the introduction and statement of problem. Probably, certain factors including the absence of well thought out, comprehensive policies and procedures concerning records management in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

5. CONCLUSION

The study was carried out to examine the extent of adequacy of records management in higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that records management was inadequate based on the variables of measure in these schools. Inadequate or poor records management in higher educational institutions could result in observable decrease in institutional efficiency and increase in operating cost. The consequences of these results could be grave as poor or ineffective records management procedures adopted are capable of general ineffective outcomes of school administration. The main purpose of records management programmes in educational institutions is to monitor records of all types and formats to ensure such pass efficiently through creation, use, storage, disposal or permanent retention at minimum cost.

On the other hand, effective records management systems in higher educational institutions must provide functional policies, procedures and necessary information required for right functioning. These could lead to efficiency as available information recourses are synergized for the competitive advantage of such institutions in the emerging global order. The importance attached to records has placed a demand on higher educational institutions to put in place comprehensive records management programmes, mapping all records for easy administrative purposes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State should adopt and use effective and comprehensive records management policies and procedures that would enable information pass efficiently through creation, use, storage, disposal or permanent retention at minimum cost.

2. Higher educational institutions in Bayelsa State should put in place robust plans for records management staff for academic and professional growth.
3. Platforms for inter-institutional records management systems appraisal exercises should be established to evaluate progress for the purposes of improvement based on available best practices in line with global standards.

References


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