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EFFECTIVE RECORD KEEPING AS STRATEGY FOR PRINCIPALS' ADMINISTRATIVE JOB PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN IMO STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated effective record keeping as strategy for principals' job performance in public secondary schools in Imo State. Two research questions and two hypothesis guided the study. The population of the study consisted of 328 principals of public secondary schools in the study area while the sample size which was randomly selected comprised 50 principals. A 15 item structured instrument was used to elicit responses from the respondents. The instrument was validated by three experts, two from the Department of Educational Management and Policy and one from the Department of Educational Foundations. The reliability of the instrument was obtained through Cronbach Alpha. Mean was used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. For the research questions, mean ratings of 2.50 and above were regarded as agreed while mean ratings below 2.50 were regarded as disagreed. The null hypotheses were not rejected when the calculated p-value was greater than the stipulated level of significance of 0.05 but rejected when the calculated p--value was less than the stipulated level of significance of 0.05. The finding of the study among other things is that inadequate record keeping facilities due to poor funding is responsible for ineffective record keeping in public secondary schools in the study area. It was then recommended that government should increase budgetary allocation to schools to enable principals acquire necessary facilities for effective record keeping in schools in the study area.

Keywords: Record Keeping; Strategy; Principals; Administrative Job; Performance.

Introduction

Education has been a universal tool for socio-economic development. That is why every nation endeavours to ensure that their citizens are provided with functional education at least at the basic level. Most economies across the globe depend on education to grow their Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This is because, education provides the manpower and even the employment that impact on national economic and political development (Alabi, 2017). This accounts for why school being the channel through which the purpose of education is achieved is given priority consideration in resource allocation in both developed and developing economies (Ajayi, 2012).

Record keeping is very essential to principals' administrative job performance. Idoka (2015) explained records as information or data on a particular subject or activity collected and preserved for future use. Durosaro (2015) defined school records as official documents, books and files with important and useful information on events and developments that are kept and preserved in the school offices for retrieval and use when needed. Such records are sourced and kept by school heads and other principal officers of the school. The records are the log book, staff and students' attendance registers, the diaries, staff and students' files, visitors and other inventory books (Uzoho, 2016).

School record keeping was enshrined in the Public Education Edict of 1974. The edict provided that every public or private school records and books shall be kept by the person chosen to do so and made available at the request of an inspecting officer and manager (Koko and Nwuji, 2019). In the education law, there are two types of school records that a school is supposed to keep and preserve. They are statutory and non-statutory records. Statutory records are those records that are mandated by the education law. These are admission register, class attendance register, syllabus, lesson note, scheme of work, diary, time table, visitor's book, log book, staff record book, corporal punishment book and others (Goma, 2010).

On the other hand, non-statutory records are those records that are not mandated in education law to be kept by schools. Such records are however kept and preserved by schools because they provide useful and classified information for both members of the school community and other stakeholders of the school outside the school community (Ogbonnaya, 2013). Such stake holders include members of the alumni association, parents and even the supervising ministerial staff like auditors, inspectors of school programmes and activities. Oluwole (2015) listed non-statutory records to include duty roosters, staff movement book, school calendar, cash book, fees registers, record of club activities and ex-student report file. Typologically, school records due to their usefulness should be readily accessible to those who need them for work and should be kept safe where they are not prone to mutilation or destruction. In other words, there should be effective storage of statutory and non-statutory records.

The word effective connotes the idea of producing results that are wanted or needed. Omoha (2013) defines it as producing the desire results within a specified time. It is the

process of doing job as required or meeting targets set at the beginning of the work period within the time specified or stipulated for the work. A principal is therefore said to be administratively effective when he discharges his duties diligently with the responsibilities of his office and term of reference given to him on appointment and this includes effective record keeping (Idoko, 2015).

Principals are the head of post-secondary education institutions in Nigeria particularly in Imo State. They exercise both administrative and academic headship. They are not only the head of pedagogy; they also direct how subject curricular are executive. They are supervisors of teaching and learning and they do this to ensure that teachers perform their task to enhance students' cognitiveness (Bosah, 2011).

Public secondary schools are those schools owned and regulated by the government (Federal or State). They are the schools after the primary or basic schools. In Nigeria, especially in Imo State, secondary education is arranged in two sections of six years. They are the junior school that run from Junior Secondary School 1-3 and the Senior Secondary School that consists of Secondary School 1-3 (Olaitan, 2018). The government recruits teachers and appoints school heads for them. The salaries of the principals and the teachers are paid by the government.

Strategies can be explained in terms of the steps taken or the methods being employed by school heads and personnel to ensure effective record keeping in schools. These methods include proper filing, numbering of documents in each file against the date such document or record was received. It also includes keeping the records, documents and files in such a safe place that rats, pests and human agents cannot destroy them. Effective record keeping can equally mean the careful handling of records in such a way that the contents of the record or document are not leaked to people who are not supposed to know them and at a time that they are not supposed to be made public. This is because certain records are like time bomb that must be handled with care.

The use of records in schools cannot be over-emphasized. One of the used is to enable school management make effective decisions. It also helps head of schools formulate policies that regulate their school activities, actions and programmes. Odeniyi and Adeyanju (2015) stated that school records provide guides to planning and budgeting process. It equally helps school heads or principals keep track with staff performance especially in the assessment of teachers and students. Caroline (2012) added that school records update heads of schools with useful information on the process and development made within a particular school year and indicates the weak areas where the school did not do well. It is in the light of the above pricelessness of school records that the strategies for keeping them have to include traditional record keeping, automated record keeping and depository record keeping.

The traditional record keeping involves the manual or physical keeping of records. Agunwa (2011) described traditional record keeping as the paper-based record management system which has been in use

till the later part of the 20th century. The automated record keeping has to do with the use of computer and other ICT outfits to keep and manage records. ICT has been a veritable tool to record, store and retrieve information as and when due. Alibi (2017) posited that automated record keeping is the most effective method of not only preserving records but also manage the processing and use of records overtime.

Record disposition is the last stage in record management. In its simple terms, it is the disposal, destruction or transfer of records to another utility, most likely an archive for permanent preservation. Some of the records that have to be destroyed include those that have outlived their usefulness. Akporhomer (2015) opined that record disposition assists in appraising and scheduling records, retiring, storing and preserving historical records. As useful as school records could be, it is important to state that keeping or preserving them is not without some challenges.

One of the major problems facing or affecting school record keeping is poor funding. As indicated earlier, ICT facilities are used to keep and manage school records. Some of these facilities are hardwire and software that take a lot of money to procure. Poor budgetary allocation to school has made it very difficult for secondary schools, especially in the study area to procure these ICT facilities for record keeping.

Inadequate knowledge on the use of ICT facilities to keep and manage school records is another problem. Most of the teachers in public secondary schools do not know how to handle most of the ICT gadgets that are needed to keep and preserve schools records. This accounts for why the traditional record keeping is still being operated in most public secondary schools even in this 21st century.

Statement of the Problem

School record keeping is one of the hallmarks of the functions of a school principal. A principal's effectiveness including is expressed on the safe custody and retrieval of school records as and when due. The need for such effective keeping of school records by the principal cannot be underestimated. It provides principals with classified information on how to track the performance of teachers and even students. Most importantly, it shows the school head or principal where the school stopped the previous year and where it is to start in the present year. Over the years, it appears that record keeping has been a challenge in most schools. This is because quite often, it seems challenging to locate records of staff and students who have left the school in previous years. In some cases, it seemed difficult to trace school financial record over a specified period in the past. It is against this backdrop that the study investigated effective record keeping as a strategy for principals' administrative job performance.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study;

i. What are the strategies adopted by principals for effective record keeping in schools?
ii. What are the challenges affecting effective record keeping in schools?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to aid the study;

i. There are no strategies adopted by principals for effective record keeping in schools.
ii. There are no challenges affecting effective record keeping in schools.

Research Method

The study investigated effective record keeping as strategy for principals' administrative job performance in public secondary schools in Imo State. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The population of the study comprises 324 principals of public secondary schools in the study area while the sample size consists of 50 principals randomly selected from the three education zones of Imo State. A 15-item structured questionnaire was the instrument used to elicit responses from the respondents. The instrument was validated by three experts, two from the Department of Educational Management and Policy and one from the Department of Educational Foundations. The reliability of the instrument was obtained through Cronbach Alpha. Mean was used to answer the research questions while t – test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. For the research questions, mean ratings of 2.50 and above were regarded as agreed while mean ratings of less than 2.50 were regarded as disagreed. The null hypotheses were not rejected when the calculated p-value was greater than the stipulated level of significance 0.05. On the other hand, the null hypotheses were rejected when the calculated p-value was less than the stipulated p-value 0.05.The finding of the study indicated that lack of adequate record keeping facilities due to poor funding affects effective record keeping in public secondary schools. It was therefore recommended among other things that government should increase the budgetary allocation to secondary schools to enable principals procure necessary gadgets or facilities for effective record keeping in schools.

Presentation of Results

Table 1: Mean Ratings on the Strategies Adopted By Principals for Effective Record Keeping In Schools

		Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Principals adopt different strategies to keep school record	2.83	.95	Agree
2.	One of the strategies is traditional school record keeping	2.76	.79	Agree
3.	It involves keeping school records in paper form	3.04	.69	Agree
4.	Records are kept in files in line with their dates of receipts	2.91	.85	Agree
5.	The files are kept in shelves	2.85	.85	Agree
6.	Records are kept based on their volume and complexity	2.68	.65	Agree
7.	The files in shelves are kept in dry and clean shelves	2.94	.87	Agree
8.	Principals also use automated record keeping as strategy to preserve school records	2.58	.83	Agree
9.	Records are kept in CD plates	2.74	.89	Agree
10.	Rewards are also kept in external hard drives	2.93	.79	Agree
11.	Records are kept in email address	2.68	.86	Agree

As shown on Table 1, the respondents agreed that the 11 listed items are the strategies adopted by principals for effective record keeping in schools. The mean ratings for the 11 items ranged from 2.58 to 3.04. The standard deviation scores of the items indicate that the respondents' rating of item 6 (SD=.65) has the least dispersion while that of item 1 (SD=.95) has the highest spread.

Table 2: Mean Ratings on the Challenges Affecting Record Keeping in Schools.

		Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Inadequate facilities affect effective record keeping in schools.	3.73	.74	Agree
2.	Inadequate knowledge in handling automated record keeping in schools also affect effective record keeping in schools.	2.64	.76	Disagree
3.	Poor funding of schools also affects effective record keeping in schools.	3.82	.84	Agree
4.	Teachers need to be trained on how to keep school records using automated machines.	2.72	.81	Agree

The mean ratings in Table 2 indicate that the respondents agree to the four listed items as the challenges affecting effective record keeping in schools. They include: Inadequate facilities affect effective record keeping in schools (mean, 3.37), Inadequate knowledge in handling automated record keeping in schools also affect effective record keeping in schools (mean, 2.64), Poor funding of schools also affect effective record keeping in schools (mean, 3.82) and teachers need to be trained on how to keep school records using automated machines (mean, 2.72).

Table 3: t-test Comparison of Principals and Teachers Mean Ratings of the Strategies Adopted by Principals for Effective Record Keeping in Schools

Source of variation	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	t-cal	*P*-value	Remark
Principals	50	2.95	.26	548	12.59	.000	Sig
Teachers	500	2.61	.41				

The results as presented in Table 3 shows that the mean score for Principals (*M*=2.95, *SD*=.26) was significantly greater than that of the teachers (*M=2.61*, *SD=.41*); *t (*548*)* =12.59, *p*=.000. The null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups on the strategies adopted by principals for effective record keeping in schools was therefore rejected.

Table 4: t-test Comparison of Principals and Teachers Mean Ratings of the Challenges Affecting Effective Record Keeping in Schools.

Source of variation	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	t-cal	*P*-value	Remark
Principals	50	2.93	.33	548	11.49	.000	Sig
Teachers	500	2.57	.47				

The results as presented in Table 4 shows that the mean score for Principals (*M*=2.93, *SD*=.33) was significantly greater than that of the teachers (*M=2.57, SD=.47*); *t (*548*)* =11.49, *p*=.000. The null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups on the challenges affecting effective record keeping in schools was therefore rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study as contained in Table one revealed that all the items listed as strategies for effective school record keeping were considered veritable means of preserving and keeping school records. This suggests that the respondents were in agreement that they essential means of keeping school records. This finding is in conformity with the postulations of Ajayi (2012) that effective school record keeping requires planning and the employment of relevant practical steps.

Another finding of the study as stated in Table two is that all the items stated as the problems of effective school record keeping exist. The respondents all agreed that the items are indeed the challenges or problems affecting the preservation and keeping of school records. This response supports the proposition of Alibi (2017) that poor funding and inadequate ICT knowledge are major factors hindering effective school record keeping. Typologically, the need for the preservation and keeping of school records cannot be undermined. The success of a principal or school head in keeping school records defines his job effectiveness.

Conclusion

School records are important. It is extremely difficult to run any administration effectively without records. To a school principal, it is part of his official responsibility to keep records. It is a task that must be done perfunctorily. In most cases however and as pointed out in the course of this study, inadequate storage facilities can be a big hindrance. Such a principal, through the School Based Community Management should endeavour to improvise. A school without records is a school without future.

Recommendations

1. Government should provide more funds for schools in the study area to help principals procure storage facilities for effective school record keeping.
2. Teachers should be trained on the use of ICT facilities required for effective preservation and keeping of school records.
3. Trained librarians should be employed to manage the storage and preservation of school records

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