

A Survey of Records Management Practices in Circular Primary Schools in Metropolitan Local Government Area (MLGAs) of Kano State.

by
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Abstract

The study was a survey of records management practices in circular primary schools of metropolitan local government area of Kano state. There was a total of 8 local government areas in the metropolitan with a population of 233 circular schools. Out of the number, 104 were randomly selected for the study. A minimum of 10 copies of questionnaire were administered on each local government area. Out of the number retrieved, 75 copies were found usable. The study reveals that all the schools studied generate and receive different kinds of records which includes administrative, financial, academic etc.; over 70% of the schools either organize their records serially or by subject matter; majority (56.5%) of the schools use storage facilities such drawers, cabinets and cupboards to preserve their records; some records such as log book, financial records, admission register, store ledger, counterfoil of certificates, teachers' personal files etc were kept on closed access by the head teachers; most of the head teachers (74.7%) use their discretion to appraise records for retention and disposition; it was also discovered that among those who dispose of their unwanted records, 81.5% use burning method; problems such as shortage of storage facilities, absence of computers, insufficient space and absence of records management policy were discovered to militate against effective records management in the schools studied. Based on the findings, recommendations were suggested.

Introduction

Primary schools are institutions of learning established to provide basic formal education at the grassroots level. A number of components come together to make up the institutions – the physical structure, the pupils, staff and the curriculum. The physical structure consists of the classrooms, toilets, offices, halls, pitches, etc. The pupils' component comprises of a range of the pupils from preprimary level through primary one to six. Among them you have the head boy or head girl, prefects, class monitors etc. The staff component comprises of the administrative staff ie Head teacher and the Assistants, academic staff and non academic staff. The head teacher and his lieutenants are responsible for the general administration of the school. Among the academic staff, some are assigned responsibilities such as class master or class mistress, health master, sports master, kitchen master, exams officer, teacher librarian etc. The curriculum on the other hand spells out the various subjects to be taught at different levels as well as the contents of the subjects. Certainly, the activities of these components must warrant the creation and received of records both within and outside the institutions respectively.

Statement of The Problem.

The type of institution and its activities determines the types of records it generates and receives from other sources. Primary schools, by the nature of their functions generate a lot of

In order to keep track of what is happening or has happened, and for efficient planning purposes the records generated and or received in the course of their activities must be organized to allow easy access when ever the need arises. Some of them must be preserved so that reference could be made of them for decision making, some may be appraised for the purpose of disposition in order to create space for more useful ones. Records management generally consists of all these activities. As educational institutions, records about pupils' academic activities, responsibilities assigned to staff, course contents, log book, financial transactions, and the general administration of the institutions should be properly generated, organized, preserved and appraised.

Metropolitan local government areas in Kano state consists of 8 local government areas (LGAs) viz – Municipal, Gwale, Dala, Fagge, Nassarawa, Tarauni, Ungogo and Kumbotso. Put together, there was a total of 233 circular schools. Primary schools in these LGAs are more populated than most schools in other LGAs of the state.

records. Some of them are inclined to the pupils, some to the teachers, some to the administrative functions etc. Some of these records may have less value that may warrant their disposition immediately they are used while some may

warrant preservation for a certain period of time depending on their value while others may warrant permanent preservation. Depending on the value of the records generated or received, school administrators to some extent determine those to be preserved or disposed of as the case may be especially in the absence of a policy that guides their appraisal, retention and disposition. Experience has revealed that even in institutions of higher learning, records management (creation, organization, preservation, accessibility, retention and disposition) seem to be rather difficult especially the last two aspects. A number of records that are supposed to be retained are disposed of and those that are supposed to be disposed of are unnecessarily retained thereby creating cumbersome environment especially if they are not organized. This creates confusion and delay in accessing some important records. Absence of records management policy that guides the entire records management circle allows records managers to use their discretion as to what to retain, how long it is to be retained or to preserved permanently and what to dispose of. For instance, in his study Maberu (2010, p.50) reveals that federal universities in North western Zone of Nigeria do not have policies to guide students' academic records management. This according to the finding leads to delay in decision making among others. If this is so in universities, the situation in primary schools may be more sympathetic. In another study, it was found out that records management in urban schools was more effective than in rural schools (Regina, 2011, p.43). The involvement of the researcher as a resource person in a 10 day training workshop for head teachers, supervisors and inspectors of primary schools in Kano state, organized by the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) in January, 2012, necessitated this study. While treating one of the components of the workshop on Records Keeping with the participants, the researcher observed that a lot of records are generated in primary schools but it appears that there was no mechanism for effective management of the records generated or received in the course of running the schools. It was clear from our discussions that some primary schools do not keep proper records. Where such records

are kept, they are not properly organized, preserved and appraised. It is in view of this that this study aims at investigating records management practices in circular primary schools in metropolitan LGAs of the Kano state.

Research Objectives

This study was conducted in order to;

1. Find out different types of records generated or received by circular primary schools in Metropolitan Local Government Areas (MLGAs) of Kano state.
2. Identify various methods used in organizing or arranging the records for easy accessibility.
3. Find out the strategies employed in preserving the records.
4. Identify the appraisal criteria used for determining retention and disposition of records in the schools under study.
5. Find out various methods used in disposing of the unwanted records.
6. Identify the problems militating against effective records management in the schools under study.

Methodology:

Survey research was employed. Population of the study was 233 circular schools located in the 8 MLGAs – namely Dala, Fagge, Gwale, Kumbotso, Municipal, Nassarawa, Tarauni and Ungogo. A sample of 104 schools was randomly selected. Questionnaire was the major instrument used in collecting data from head teachers who by their status as the overall heads of their respective schools were the major subjects for the study. The instruments were administered with the help of research assistants. In addition, follow up visits to some of the schools were made to ascertain some of their claims on the questionnaire. This exercise allowed the researcher to see some of their records, preservation facilities and how they were organized. A visit was also made to the state headquarters (SUBEB) to ascertain the existence of any policy guiding records management in schools. Descriptive statistical analysis was used in analyzing the data collected.

Data Presentation, Analysis And Discussions Of Findings

Response rate:

A total of 104 copies of questionnaires were randomly administered to head teachers of circular schools in MLGAs of the state. A minimum of 10 copies were administered to each LGA. Out of the number retrieved, 75 representing 72% were found usable. This high response rate was not unconnected to the fact that the researcher employed the services of a

head teacher in each of the 8 MLGAs in the administration of the questionnaires.

Types Of Records Generated And Received By The Schools.

A list of various kinds of records that could be generated or received by schools was provided to head teachers to indicate the types they generate or receive in their schools. Table 1 presents their responses.

Table 1: Types of records generated or received.

Type Of Record Generated Or Received	Generated In The Sch.	Received from others places
Admission register record	√	X
Attendance register record	√	X
Log book	√	X
Cash accounts book (ledger)	√	X
Visitors' book	√	X
Teachers' records of work	√	X
Corporal punishment book	√	X
Counterfoil leaving certificate	√	X
Minutes of staff meetings	√	X
Scheme of work	√	X
Syllabi	X	√
School's general timetable	√	X
Copies of class timetable exhibited in each class	√	X
Continuous assessment records of students	√	X
Past question papers	√	√
Exams timetable	√	√
Exams report sheet	√	X
Extra curriculum activities of pupils	√	X
Staff files consisting of credentials, offer of appointment etc.	√	X
Records of responsibilities assigned to each staff	√	X
Lesson plans	√	X
Scheme of work	√	X
Lesson notes	√	X
Staff movement book	√	X
Financial records of development levies collected, expenditures incurred, etc	√	X
Donations received	√	X
Complains received from parents	√	X
Minutes of the PTA meetings	√	X
Stock book	√	X
Correspondence file	√	X

Circulars		X
Copy of education policy		X
Staff attendance register	√	X
Health related record	√	X
Announcement book	√	X
Staff confidential report records	√	X
Duty master and duty prefect report book	√	X
Inspection report record	√	X
Annual report	√	X
Hand over taking over file	√	X
Receipts of purchase	√	X
Records of construction & renovations	√	X
Records of excursion / field trips	√	X
Pictures or videos of occasions organized by the school.	√	X
Guidance and counseling file	√	X
School Diary	√	X
Nomadic file	√	X
Inventory File	√	X
NUT File	√	X
Teaching Practice File	√	X
SBMC File	√	X
Posting / Transfer of teachers file	√	X
Pupils' Transfer File	√	X
Library File	√	X
School Garden File	√	X
Subjects Files	√	X
Maternity File	√	X
Terminal records	√	X
Old pupils' Association file	√	X

√ = Applicable X = Not Applicable

From table 1, one can see that all the records listed were either generated or received by the schools. Although not all the records listed were found to be generated or received by all the schools but over 70% of them indicated either generating or receiving such records. The common ones maintained by virtually all the schools included admission register, log book, teachers' records of work, attendance register, visitors' book, teachers' records of work, minutes of staff meeting, school general timetable, minutes of the PTA meetings, hand over and taking over file and cash accounts book. Although the study reveals that education policy, circulars and syllabi were the only records or documents received from outside, education policy was found to be received by very few schools. It further reveals that none of the schools maintain all the records listed. It should be noted that examinations question papers examination timetables are generated by the schools as well received

from outside. This is possible because exams are organized both internally and externally. For external exams their question papers and timetables come from outside while the internally conducted exams have their question papers and timetables generated within the schools. Whichever case, some of these records are vital for the general administration of schools. Gama (2004, p.15), Akporhonor (2011, p.23) maintain that records serve as important sources of information that enable individuals and organizations to carry out their legal obligations. So, maintenance of these records would no doubt facilitate decision making as well as enhance the general administration of the school system.

Organization of the Records

In order to find out how the generated and received records were organized to facilitate easy retrieval, a number of options were provided for the respondents

(head teachers) to indicate the type of methods they employ in arranging the records. Table 2 below presents their responses.

Table 2: Methods of organizing the records.

Methods of Organization	Freq	%
Alphabetical arrangement	11	14.7
Chronological arrangement	7	9.3
Serialization	29	38.7
By Subject matter	27	36.0
Randomly	1	1.3
Total	75	100

The main purpose of records organization is to facilitate easy retrieval. Different methods are used in organizing records depending on many factors such as the policy statement, technical skills of the managers, etc. This study reveals that every school uses one method or the other. While majority (38.7%) of the schools organizes their records by arranging them in serial order, arrangement by subject closely followed with 36%. For the fact that serial arrangement may not need much technical skills on the part of the records managers, probably that explains why most of the schools employ the method. Only 1 (3.7%) school was found not to have employed any systematic way of organizing its records. This development may probably not be unconnected to the none realization of the importance of logical arrangement of the records for easy accessibility. Personal observation of the records by the researcher indicated that many of them were contained in file jackets that were arranged either serially or based on their subjects in cabinet drawers while others were in book forms such visitors' book, log book, attendance register, scheme of work etc. It was also found out that index register that could be used to facilitate easy retrieval of any record was not maintained by many of the schools.

Methods of Preserving The Records

The study was interested in finding out the various strategies the schools employ to preserve their records for posterity especially that a number of the records are supposed to be kept permanently.

Table 3: Methods of preserving the records.

Preservation Methods	Freq.	%
Using storage facilities such as cupboards, drawers, lockers etc	52	56.5
Fumigation	2	2.2
Dedicating a special room for the records (records store)	1	1.1
Dedicating a staff to handle the records (records manager or clerk)	1	1.1
Frequent dusting of the records	13	14.1
Non direct access to the records by every staff to avoid mishandling.	20	21.7
Computerization or digitalization of the records	3	3.3
Total	92	100

Records are preserved using different methods depending on the capability and initiatives of the records managers. Table 3 presents head teachers' responses on the methods they applied in preserving their records. It should be noted that some of the schools employ multiple methods. This is a welcome development because the more methods one applies the more likely hood that the records would be preserved more effectively. As we can see, significant number of them uses only the first method (using cupboards, drawers, lockers etc). This finding may not be surprising because storage facilities such as cupboards and drawers are commonly found in every school. Though, it was observed that some of these schools have computers that are used for training purposes only 3 were found using the facility as part of the preservation methods of their records. It may not be surprising to have found out that fumigation was not popular among the schools because it requires some financial commitments on the part of the managers. Insufficient office accommodation might be the explanation for not dedicating a special room for the records except in 1 school. Old schools apparently are in possession of large volume of records, which may warrant a special place. This finding does not seem to agree with the findings of Adebowale and Osuji (2000, p.7) who studied record keeping practices of primary school teachers in Ondo state and found out that over 20% of the respondents indicated that school records are kept in rooms designated as records centers. Highlighting the significance of proper records keeping in schools,

Fasasi (2004, p.75) maintains that the act enhances planning process, provides knowledge on students' academic performance and facilitates financial administration of the school.

Accessibility to The Records

As part of the strategies employed in preserving the records as well as for confidentiality, the following records were found to be put on closed access by many schools – log book, store ledger, donation book, staff movement book, PTA cash book, admission register, counterfoil of certificates, punishment book, staff time book, teachers' personal files, annual reports and syllabi. Although records are for use, access to some of them should be restricted only with permission. This would enable the head teacher track the records as to who uses what, when and for what purpose. Some of these records such as counterfoil of school certificates, store ledger and cash books if tempered with may put the school or the head teacher in trouble and some of them are vital records that cannot be replaced when lost. In line with this finding, Adebowale and Osuji (2000, p.11) citing Hrach (2006) maintains that records must be kept in locked files only to be accessed by those who have business with them. However, records such as annual reports, syllabi should not be put on restriction because every teacher is supposed to be conversant with the contents of the subjects he / she teaches as well as the developments of the school in terms of its successes and challenges and the future plans as may be contained in annual reports.

Records Appraisal Criteria

The practice of judging the value of the records generated or received in the schools as to warrant their preservation or disposition was sought from the head teachers. Table 4 presents the responses.

Table 4: Appraisal criteria

Appraisal Criteria	Freq	Percentage
Policy guideline	14	18.7
Self discretion	56	74.7
Inherited practice	5	6.6
Total	75	100

Table 4 apparently shows absence of policy that guides appraisal of schools' records. Records are appraised to determine those that are vital, significant, important or less useful in the administration of the schools. Most head teachers (74.7%) use their discretion to determine which records are to be kept for what period, which ones are to be destroyed immediately and which ones are to be preserved permanently. Some of the respondents (6.6%)

indicated maintaining the practice they inherited from their predecessors. Although 18.7% of the respondents indicated using policy guidelines in appraising their records, it was found out that none of the claimants has ever come across any policy that guides records retention or disposal criteria. This was further verified from the office of the School Services, SUBEB headquarters of the state, that there was no any policy on records management in schools but that statutory records must be maintained by all schools. The claim made by some of respondents that they were being guided by policy was possibly made because they did not want to be seen as offenders by appraising their records unguided. Absence of a policy to guide the school administrators in retention and disposition of their records is likely to cause the loss of vital records and retention of less important ones unnecessarily. When vital records are lost, there may be the tendency of legal implication especially if the records may be required for adjudication in the court of law as it may warrant.

Methods of Records Disposal.

In order to find out how unwanted records were destroyed or disposed of, a number of methods were listed for the respondents (head teachers) to tick as applied to them. Their responses are indicated on table 5.

Table 5: Methods of records disposition

Methods of Disposition	Freq	%
Burning	22	81.5
Selling	0	0.0
Rapping some items in them	0	0.0
Covering transparent windows etc	0	0.0
Dumping them in dust bin	3	11.1
Shredding and dumping.	2	7.4
Total	27	100

It should be noted that most of the respondents 48 (64%) claimed that they don't dispose of any record. To them, all generated and received records are vital. That is why table 5, presents data on only those (27 respondents) that claimed disposing some of their records. Records can be disposed of by several ways. The most common way employed by the schools studied was by burning. This practice accounted to 81.5% of the respondents. When records are burnt, they are gone forever unless if their duplicate copies exist. Records to be disposed of by burning must be carefully appraised to actually adjudge them as unwanted. It is interesting to find out that none of the schools disposes its unwanted records by selling, rapping some items or covering transparent windows or doors. Although only three schools representing 11.1%

indicated dumping their unwanted records, the act could be dangerous because they may attract the attention of some pupils who may take them home either to sell to those who use papers to rap some items (meat, fried yam, akara etc) or use them for some purposes that would expose them to the general public. Common records found being destroyed by the schools included schools' general timetable, class timetables, exams timetable, past question papers and complaints received from parents etc.

It is indeed worth noting that some of the respondents indicated disposing of vital and important records such as continuous assessment records of pupils, financial records, visitors' book, pictures and videos of occasions organized by their schools. These records are vital and so need to be permanently preserved for posterity. Destroying such kinds of records may affect the academic, historic and administrative functions of the schools.

Identified Problems Of Records Management in the schools

The following problems were identified by some of the respondents;

1. Shortage of storage facilities
2. Absence of computers
3. Insufficient space
4. Lack of shelves
5. Absence of records managers
6. Lack of sufficient knowledge on the part of the school administrators on the how to manage the records effectively.

Some of these problems especially shortage of storage facilities, absence of computer facility and inadequate knowledge on technicalities of records management on the part of the records managers were identified by other scholars such as Nakpodia (2009, pp. 11-12) as militating against effective records management in schools.

Proffered Solutions To The Identified Problems

1. Enlightenment campaign through seminars and workshops so that head teachers could be educated on effective ways of managing records.
2. Provision of ICT facilities so that records could be created easily and be kept in both soft and hard copies for posterity.

Conclusion.

The study concludes as follows;

1. Circular primary schools in metropolitan local government areas of Kano state receive and maintain variety of records on pupils, staff, finance and general administration.

2. The schools apply different methods in organizing the records. The common ways were serialization and subject based arrangement.
3. Most common preservative method applied by the schools in preserving their records was the use of drawers, cupboards and lockers.
4. Some schools applied restricted access to some vital records such as financial records, counterfoil of school leaving certificates, staff personal files etc.
5. Self discretion was mainly used to appraise records for retention or disposition. There was no written policy that guides the practice.
6. Records are disposed of mainly by way of burning.
7. Problems such as inadequate storage facilities, space, computers and technical know how on the part of the records managers affect effective records management in the schools.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings, the following are recommended;

1. School administrators should be sufficiently trained and retrained on the importance of the records they generate and receive and be acquainted with the technicalities of managing them.
2. Uniform method of organizing the records should be adopted by all the schools. This will enable the school administrators to be familiar with the system where ever they may be transferred to within the MLGAs.
3. The state universal education board through the local education authority should provide additional storage facilities to the schools to enable them preserve their records for posterity. Since records are better generated and preserved using computers, the authorities should provide the facility to schools.
4. Records retention and disposal policy should be formulated to guide school administrator on what to dispose of, when and how they should be disposed of.

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