

Record Keeping in Nigerian Educational Institutions: Issues and Significance

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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 filing them properly. As could be seen in the schools, there are many educational new students, recruitment of teachers, time-table 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. This paper therefore, presents record keeping in Nigerian educational Institutions; it also discussed issues and significance of record keeping in educational institutions. Types of records as well as uses of academic record of a student were extensively reviewed. Challenges of record keeping in Nigerian Educational Institutions were highlighted and way forward were suggested.

Keywords: Book Keeping, Record Keeping, Educational Institutions, Store Records

Introduction

School is an organization with a high degree of permanencies; staff come and goes but the school endures (Eresimadu and Nduka, 1982). Consequently, records of schools as institution can be left to the memories of people. Even when existing schools are closed, the documents of the school are transferred to the Ministry of Education for safe keeping and use at a later time. Because of importance of such records, education laws require that every educational institution keeps steadily certain specific records. All these are ways of filing things as Gilbert (1962) defined filing as the process by which records are classified, arranged and stored, so that they may be quickly located when needed. In other words, the basic functions of filing are to store record in a safe place and in the manner that permits easy retrieval. The efficiency of any office depends on its' ability to locate files easily when needed, conversely the greatest but commonest fault in office is faculty filing.

Only importance documents are to be filed for the administrator and secretary of such organization to have knowledge of the life cycle of a document or paper, these must be properly filed in the order below: The involve five stages namely:-

1. Creation and receipt
2. Storage and protection
3. Use
4. Transfer
5. Disposal

The creation and receipt of records should be properly organized. Records are stored for the main purpose of the use. All records that are no longer useful should be discarded for useful ones. This decision is often taken by the minister of education, the state school Boards or the Governing councils or boards of governors as the case may be. The school as a community with life of its own has its' tradition; culture, history, aesthetics and academic records. The teachers and principals must be very careful in keeping records. Among their duties is the checking and cross checking of every item of information going out under their signatures. The principals must also check all the statutory books kept by the class teachers with emphasis placed on honestly and faithfulness in keeping the. In addition to many activities in public schools, one of the most important aspects of school administration is keeping of records by teaches as well as the principals. Educational and administrators and planners world over unanimously agreed that record keeping is an important administrative functions of the school head, be it at the primary or secondary school level. For instance,

Types of Records and Their Uses

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 records. This paper is however concerned with administrative records only.

Available literature shows that some of the most common statutory records include:-

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 care
9. Academic record of a student
10. School inventory book
11. Other school records

A register of admission, progress and withdrawals: this is simply referred to as admission register. It is used to record serially all admissions made into the school whether as new students or as transfer students. The admission number of the student is usually entered here. The principal must ensure that the book is well kept and withdrawals of students carefully entered.

Educational funding: The recently passed revenue act of the federal republic of Nigeria has a clause which emphasizes the use of school population in the distribution of federal funds (statutory allocation) to the state, (Statesman, Dec. 10, 1981). This means that the states with the largest number of children in school will benefit most from his heading. The Imo Stat House of Assemble is also in support of using school enrolment as one of the criteria in the distribution of funds to the local government areas. This goes to emphasize the need to keep this record up to date for equitable and just distribution of federal and state funds for education. The admission register shows at a glance the growth of the school in terms of the number of pupils admitted from year to year. As it contains the names and addressed of parents or guardians, it serves as a source of contacting parents in times of illness and emergency (Ozigi, 1991). The headmaster or principal of a school can ascertain the progress of each student academically by studying carefully the section on progress report of the pupils or students. From his observation he can advise the less progressive students pointing out their areas of weakness and strengths. He uses this record while issuing testimonials and transfer certificates to the students. The last column in the admission register deals with occupation after leaving. This enable the headmaster trace the whereabouts of his former students so that invitations can be sent to during important ceremonies of the school. Formation of old boys association is simplified because the old students contact addresses will be indicated under this column.

A register of attendance and fees: This is another important record kept in every school. Each class in a school has a class attendance register in which all the names of the students in a class are recorded. Other important

headings in the attendance register are fees paid, number in the admission register, age, date of promotion/admission, daily attendance, weekly totals for the term. Brought forward (if any) and final total.

Use of the register of attendance and fees: Pupils' accounting:- the attendance register is mainly used for pupils accounting. A mere look at the register will indicate the pupils who are regular and those who are irregular in class, Reaves (1942) states that absence on the part of a pupil is carefully investigated and reports of unnecessary absence are made to attendance officers or visiting teachers whose primary function is to predict the loss of school opportunities to pupils through irregular attendance. There is no doubt that a student who habitually is absent from school loses some educational opportunities and the parents should be alerted and immediate remedies found. A child's inability in some school subjects may be traced to frequent irregularity in attendance. Apart from pupils accounting, a register of attendance, helps the principal to identify the students who owe school fees. He may decide to invite the parents in order to appeal to them to pay.

A Log Book: All important events in the school are recorded in the log book. It is often seen as the history of the school. Uses of the log book include visits of supervisors, inspectors and managers. Names of teachers and the classes they teach are recorded in the log book. Any failure to carry out ones duties, absence from duties, illness or any epidemic disease that may lead to closure of the school must be entered in the log book. From the entries made one realizes that the log book is a history book of a school. A new principal can study the development of the school by reading the entries in it. He may even identify the behaviour of staff and students in this school after studying comments in the log book made about them by his predecessors in office.

Time-table: This is expected to be approved by the Ministry of Education. It is drawn by experts. Subjects taught in each class, total number of periods each subjects is taught in a week, how much time is spent on each lesson period, number of lesson periods in a day, time of daily opening and closing time for prayers, for registration and for extra-class activities are shown on the time-table. Each subject on the time-table is given its due weight through the number of period allocated to it. Generally, English language and mathematics are taught daily and at time, double periods are allocated to them. They are usually done within the second and third periods when the students are most attentive and poised to tackle problems in English language and mathematics. Thus, the time table has shown the great emphasis on these two school subjects as stated by Douglas (1951). The principal who has the master time table covering all the classes conspicuously displayed in his office uses it to know where a teacher can be located. It is not uncommon to find non-disciplined teachers chatting in the staff common room or loitering about in the school compound when they are meant to be in various classrooms teaching. The time table thus serves as a check on the unprofessional behaviour of some irresponsible teachers. If the time table is adhered to strictly, it tends to reduce boredom. No matter how interesting a lesson may be, it becomes boring if it lasts longer than expected. Moreover, the lesson may not appeal to some students who eagerly look forward to the end of the period for change (Akubue, 1992). The principal, staff and students need a sense of direction and training on the issue of time and punctuality. The time table serves this purpose. A teacher in preparing his lesson bears in mind the time factor. Students frown at teachers coming to the classrooms late and this makes a conscientious teacher aim at being punctual to classes always and it is the time-table that will enable him accomplishes this task.

Weekly Diaries: A school diary has two parts, namely scheme of work and record of work. The scheme of work is usually drawn from the school syllabus whereas the record of work should be seen as the opposite of the scheme of work, in the sense that the scheme of work is a proposition of work to be done. Thus, the record of work shows work that is already done. Scheme of work indicates on a weekly basis the mapped out themes to be covered in a subject area. In order to be effective, it should be drawn in advance of the academic session. Used immediately the session begins and modified, if necessary in the light of the teacher's experience or as a result of modifications in the syllabus. Classroom teachers should take into consideration the season of the year while drawing the scheme of work. For instance, it is better to teach planting and growth of crops during the farming season than in the harvest season and to reach say the Resurrection of Christ during the Easter week. Provisions should be made for the revision and examinations. The scheme of work is a mere guide and teachers should not be slaves to it. Teachers should be warned not to record work that has not been completed for this is very misleading and not in the best interest of the students in case a new teacher is assigned to a class. Moreover, examination questions are at disadvantages if they are tested on what they did not study. It is on this strength that Ozigi (1991) suggests that the school head can counter-check the staff record of work completed by comparison with the pupil's exercise books.

Visitors' Book: This book contains records of important visitors to the school. In particular, it shows visitors' names and addresses, dates of visits, purpose of visits, remarks and signatures. The visitors' book is very useful because the contents are helpful in determining the amount of interest shown in the school by members of the community. Besides, the suggestions given by visitors may help in raising the standard of the school. The school head, his staff and the students do have a sense of achievement after reading favourable comments made about the entire school by important visitors who are non-ministry officials. The comments in the visitors' book raise their moral for greater efficiency and productivity.

Corporal Punishment Book: In this shall be entered all serious cases of corporal punishment meted out to students. It should show the name of the student punished the date of punishment, the nature of offence and punishment, sex, age, age and the name of the person administering the punishment. In most cases, the type of punishment is usually severe and this is recorded for references purposes and as a serious warning to the students because a repeat of such an offence may lead to suspension or expulsion of the student. The Education Edict (1974) stated that only class tests and terminal examination results are entered in this record. There is a column provided which shows the student's position in each subject and his overall position in the class. Columns for remarks on his general behaviour in the school, for school heads, class teachers and subject masters' remarks or comments are provided. Both the cumulative and academic records of the students are indispensable and should be carefully kept in student's personal file to avoid loss. Very often, the academic record is in triplicate. A copy is sent to the parent or guardian of the student, another copy is given to the student and the last copy retained by the school head.

Uses of academic record of a student:

- a. **Report to parents or guardian:** Many parents are inquisitive to know the academic performance of their wards and their behaviours. The report according to Ezeocha (1990) helps "to enlist the support of the home in promoting diligence and good order on the part of the students". Many parents use the terminal academic records sent to them in pointing out areas of strengths and weaknesses of their wards. In many instances parents' advice has led to marked improvement in students' performance. Adams (1913) stated that unsatisfactory work of a student should be reported quite early to the parents ever before the terminal reports.
- b. Counseling-guidance counselors and teachers use the academic and cumulative records very extensively in students' advising. From the records a student could be directed to pursue science or arts subjects in higher institutions based on their performance. Some may be asked not to think of higher education since they have not the ability. Such students' talents and interests will be channeled towards vocational education. The cumulative record has a column that deals with the health of students. Poor health is a barrier to students' academic progress. It is advisable that students with special health problems should be posted to schools located very near hospitals for prompt attention from medical practitioners. Where the health problems are very serious, a student may be asked to withdraw from school until he has fully recovered. Guidance counselors make use of records in advising the students on what their profession or occupation should be.
- c. Entering Higher institution and the labour Market:- Nowadays, some never-do-well students anxious and desirous of entering institutions of higher learning and the labour market forge certificates which they present either for admission or employment. It has been found out that majority of them do not perform if admitted or employed based on the forged certificates. Institutions of higher learning and employers of labour do write to former schools of the candidates or applicants in order to obtain satisfactory evidence of their ex-students' academic performance. The heads of institutions make use of the cumulative and academic records of the students in supplying the information required.
- d. Preparing reports for the state education board/education committee of the council; these two bodies are responsible for the management of schools. They prepare annual reports which are submitted to the state government through the ministry of education. Their reports are based on school reports of individual schools submitted by the heads. It is the cumulative and academic records that are used in preparing these reports. At times, the zonal education boards award prizes to schools and students based on their performance in the general certificate of education examinations conducted by West African Examination Council/ some philanthropies, organizations and even the state award scholarships for advanced studies to deserving students. These awards are mostly based on academic excellence and student's achievement is recorded in the academic records.
- e. Research Purposes:- Students in the faculties of education in universities and some research institutes collect data from schools. If their study is on students' academic achievement. They visit schools and

make use of the cumulative and academic records for the purpose of data collection. The scores in various subjects are in the academic records. Some studies for example on the relationship between Mock School Certificate Examination and performance in the actual school certificate examination have been carried out and the researchers made use of the academic records in getting at the scores of the students in the two examinations.

- f. **School inventory Book (stock book/assets receipts):-** A school's assets include movable and immovable non-consumable and consumable items. The school inventory book shows a list of laboratory, home economic and games equipment. School furniture, textbooks, library books, school blocks, dormitories, tables, chairs, desks, blackboard, and other materials that belong to the school. A separate exercise book should be used in recording consumable supplies. For example exercise books for note of lessons, pens/bic, ink chalk and dusters. The cost of repairs and maintenance should also be shown against the particular assets of the school. This helps in knowing the running and maintenance cost thus providing cost information for budgetary and replacement purposes.

Uses of inventory book: The inventory book is important in that it helps the school principal to know when the school property has disappeared so that efforts will be made in recovering its. Secondly, it enables the principal prepare a handover note for his successor. Thirdly, the officials of the State Education Board know how adequate or inadequate the supplies are and fourthly, the principal knows from the record whether supplies are judiciously used.

Other school records: Staff confidential report form- confidential files are securely kept and are not meant for discussion with any unauthorized person however intimate the person may be with the head teacher or principal. There are some information which are secret and confidential and cannot be divulge to any other members of staff except the principal and the Educational Authorities. Such information are classified and kept in confidential file record. Such information help in writing confidential reports, annual reports, discipline of staff etc.

Duty report book: This report book is mostly kept in secondary schools and teachers are assigned to specific days to be on duty, reports are made daily in the duty report book by teachers on duty he is expected to over all the school activities of that day. A record is made on all the observations and this is submitted at the end of the day to the school principal who would go through and be fully acquainted of the happening of that day.

In boarding schools, it covers activities such as morning assembly, the three meal periods and other activities such as prep, light outs, labour games etc.

Announcement Book: This is a record of announcements made by the principal or school head. Some of these announcements are made during the morning assemblies for students and staff while some are written and passed round only for the teachers to read and sign. This is important because it helps in verifying the facts particularly when an announcement made by the principal is misinterpreted or misquoted.

Health Record Book: This book contains the record of students who were sick and were treated in the health centre, clinic or hospital. It contains information about the name of the child, class, nature of illness and comments made by the nurse or doctor who treated the case. It is necessary for the principal to refer to this record book from to time in order to find out how many of his students were sick during the week, the most common type of illness and ascertain whether the source of the illness is from the school like in boarding schools where the way food is prepared in the school kitchen could causes diarrhea due to lack of hygiene.

School Cash Book: This record is very important in school administration. The principal is expected to be handling and spending some money from the school fund. It is therefore of great importance to have a neat record of how the money come s in and how it is spent with the receipts of articles bought well intact. This helps in clearing the head of any suspicion or accusations level against him on financial mismanagement.

Minute Books: this is a record book for recording the minutes of every meeting held in the school. It is kept in the principals' office for purposes of reference when the need arises. Exercise books are provided for the minutes of the following meetings: Staff meetings, Board of governors' meetings, the parents-teachers' meeting and food committee meetings.

Staff Attendance Register and Movement Register: Teachers indicate in this register the days that they are present in the school and in time of arrival. The register acts as a check on teachers who are irregular and habitually late to school. Movement register is where records are kept about teachers' movement during official hours or school days. It shows when the teacher left the school probably after obtaining permission, the date and hour permission is given, destination and purpose and the authorizing officer's signature. This record is very useful in checking truancy and absenteeism among teachers.

Syllabus: It is from the syllabus which shows what is to be studied in each subject area that the scheme of work is drawn at the beginning of each school year for each class on each subject.

National Policy on Education Booklet: This booklet in a nutshell provides goals and objectives of the school system. It is mandatory that all schools must have a copy of this booklet.

Revision of school records by Secondary school principals: In the practice of provision of school records, the process of planning must be first considered. According to Okeke, et al (1985), Planning was defined as the "process of determining the advance, what is to be done including clarification of goals establishment of policies, mapping out of programmes and fixing day to day schedules". Also Coleman (1963) defined planning as "deciding what to do in advance, how to do it, when to do it and who to do it". It involves decision making for a future course of action, a decision which must be taken well in advance. From the two definitions above, it is the duty of a school principal to see that all the educational processes are properly carried out. He delegates most of the work to the school teachers who in turn carry out the school work properly according to the earlier plan with the help of the school staff.

In our secondary schools, it is the responsibility of the principal to provide through the ministry of education many of the record keeping materials to the appropriate person who will keep them. This is because he is responsible and accountable for any missing record. He requires some special knowledge for him to carry out the job well. He also requires information, conceptual skills and ability. In other words, he must know:

- a. The content of the job which has to do with provision of funds and maintenance of educational facilities of all description.
- b. He must be able to procure and develop the personnel which includes among others, the recruitment of staff, tenure and other service conditions, assignment of duties and responsibilities, staff development programmes including in-service course, conferences, seminars, workshop and so on.
- c. The improvement of educational quality and opportunities in general. This group of tasks encompasses the whole area of curriculum its planning and development, text-books, teaching aids and instructional materials in general.
- d. The maintenance of effective interrelationship between school and community in such areas as use of physical facilities, economic contribution, general services and help, research knowledge and cultural records, teaching curriculum management.

For the principal to have a good result in executing the above function, he must be the prime mover and be in good relationship with his colleagues for the implementation and evaluation to yield a successful result. The principal who is after an effective and maximum production, he must use or work through scientific problem solving process which are being used in our schools today. There are various systems of testing students through giving, scoring and interpreting various kinds of tests. It is important therefore that the test is made uniform in all the schools so that they have the same procedure. The testing system should include:

- a. The school achievement test of specialized aptitudes of various sorts.
- b. Interest inventories
- c. Test of scholastic aptitude
- d. Social adjustment device such as sociograms and test of vocational interest and preference. It is through this test scores and recordings that a person can be successfully judge or determined. It is therefore the duty of the school administrator to provide files or ask the students to pay for the files where these records will be kept.

Challenges of Record Keeping In Nigerian Institutions and Way Forward

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.

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.

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