Assessment of Records Management Practices in Exams and Records Unit of Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic Port Harcourt, Rivers State

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Abstract

The study investigated Assessment of records management practices in the exams and record unit of Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic, Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The specific objective of the study was to find out the policy adopted, examine the storage and retrieval methods, retention and disposal, security measures and challenges associated with record management. The study was carried out using survey research method. Questionnaire and interviews were used as instruments for data collection. The findings revealed that the unit has a policy enshrined in the students' handbook that guides their records creation, they are also preserved electronically with a backup plan and well arranged in files placed in their various departments. Challenges affecting the unit are lack of space, difficulties in retrieving the files from the store house. The study concluded and recommended that the institution should provide space for them and also send their staff in the unit for further training and also get certified record managers amongst others.

Keywords: Records, Record Management, Exams and Records, Polytechnic.

Introduction

Institutions of higher learning like the polytechnics are not just responsible for teaching and learning processes but are also responsible for providing and keeping important records of students that have passed through the institution for years. These records are used for effective service delivery within the unit it falls into and plays a very vital role in the management system of the institution. The term record originated from the Latin word "recorder" which means to remember or being mindful of (Esse, 2002). Record means information or document recorded in writing or film through electronic process. Records are important to any institution because the activities of the institution are effectively and efficiently governed with them, Records also ensure institutional report which enhances transparency and accountability. Every organisation or institution has been able to keep one record or the other for tracking of events to help the smooth running of that unit in that academic environment.

Records management in institutions of learning refers to the process of collecting, organizing, storing and retrieving student information records. Record information not minding the form or medium is adequately managed to enhance effective delivery and quick response to students.

Records are essential for the effective and efficient productive functioning of every organization, public and private as well as academic institutions. Institutions must grow the capacity of managing records and information in academic institutions to be able to manage student's records adequately. This is because the problems of conceiving, introducing, implementing, monitoring and appraising activities will always need a reliable, suitable and timely records as well as information (Otu etal, 2014). Records of students' admission processes, activities and progress, students result, student' mobilization for one-year National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) to the nation are among the documents kept by educational institutions as stated by education law.

The essence of record keeping is to ensure institutional support and to enhance accountability and transparency both for the now and for future purposes. This is

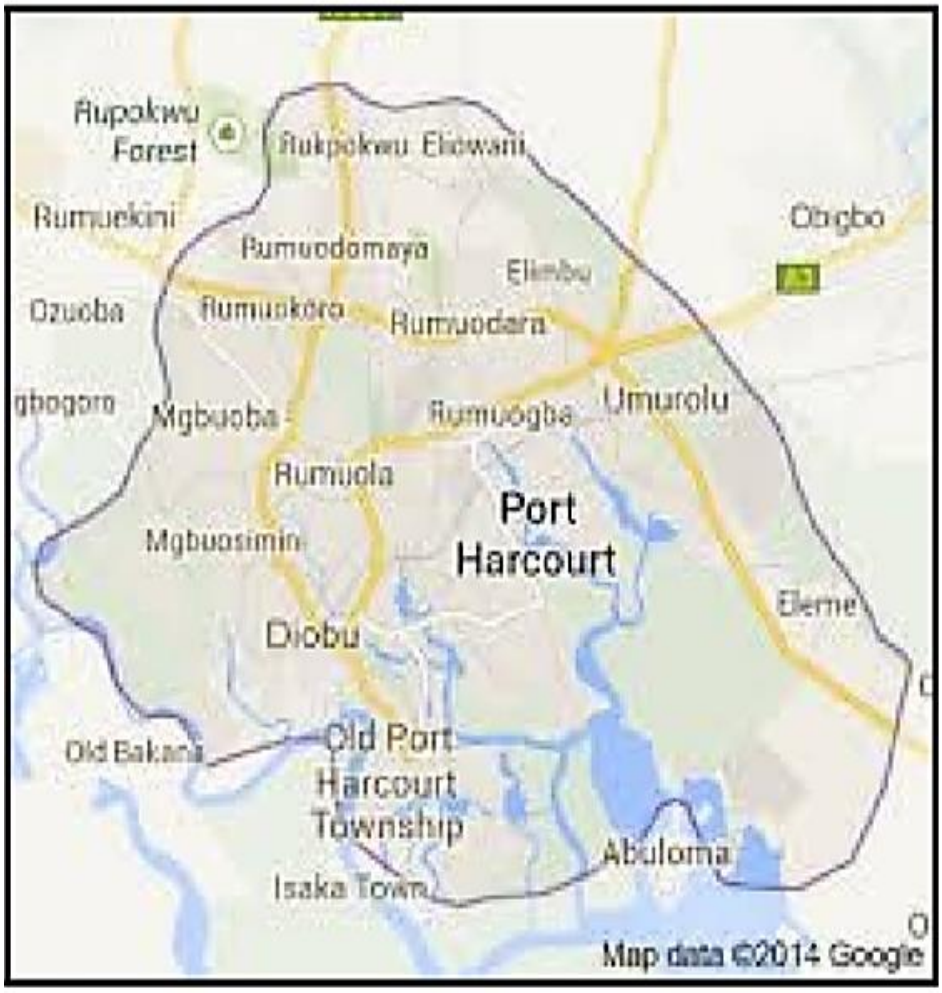
done to preserve corporate memory, support and control the creation and disposal of records, to uphold efficiency and productivity and support good decision making. Primarily records sustain the work of institutions and organizations

Records management is more than generating records and storing them (Uneghu and Oludipe, 2013). In other words records management in polytechnics is the efficient and systematic check of the creation of receipt, maintenance, usage and disposition of records: which includes processes for capturing and maintenance of evidence of an information about academic activities especially that of students found in the exams and record unit of the institution (Oyebanji 2018).

Records management has currently moved from a paper –bases assignment which is concerned with the storage of various organizational documents to a storage of internal records in multimedia formats (Wet and Toit 2000). To sum it up, records and records management are the life wire of any institution or organization.

Brief History of Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic Port Harcourt, Rivers State.
Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic formerly known as Rivers State School of Basic Studies, Rivers State College of Arts and Science and later Port Harcourt Polytechnic is an institution funded by the Government of Rivers State, located at Rumuola in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

It was established in 1987 (36 years ago) and chaired by Hon. Lee Maeba. Port Harcourt polytechnic was changed to Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic by the former Governor of Rivers State, Barr. Nyesom Ezenwo Wike and was signed into the Bill of law on 4th July 2016. The current rector is Dr. Moses S. Neebee.



A Map Indicating Rumuola in Port Harcourt Communities Citing Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic Location

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine records management in exams and record unit of Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic, Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The specific objectives are;

1. To identify the policy for record creation

2. To identify how records are stored and preserved
3. To identify the retention and disposal method
4. To identify how they secure the records
5. To identify the challenges in record management

Literature Review

The concept of records and record management

Records are important tools for effective planning and implementation of suitable course of actions and adequate control of activities. This indicates that these documents either written, stored or by electronic processes, are official documents stored valuable enough to be kept in a platform for future use (Oyebanji, 2018).

Records are seen as part of the everyday life of an institution. School records comprising students and the staff are official documents which contain important and critical information of events which are preserved in the school system for easy retrieval when needed. (Osakwe, 2011). Records are active or inactive based on their use and must be preserved and kept for a short time and some permanently. Record management is seen as a consistent process of managing the available records in an institution such as a polytechnic in line with policies and procedures guiding the institution.

Record management is essential because it ensures that proper records of students are kept, their achievements and performances during their days in school, They are also stored and preserved for recruiting agencies and students who might need their transcripts and certificates in the future due to job pursuit. Past students who might have misplaced their original certificates, record management can only be the solution for that. Records are managed for effective planning, controlling of series of task of event better decision making in any organization or institution.

Records are duly classified and put into different folders. Maintenance of record is very much necessary in every institution and organisation for effective management. According to Akporhonor (2011) records are stored and preserved to provide situations which prevent decay or degeneration ever as there is access to the records. The recent pattern used in record keeping is through the use of

digital gadgets like the computer, which is faster than soughing of files. Records are stored and preserved for safety and longevity against any form of damage.

Record Management in Nigeria Polytechnics

It has been discovered that access to students' records are difficult in basically all Nigerian Polytechnics whether public or private. Oyebanji citing Popoola and Oluwole (2007) stated that Nigerian constitutions are often concerned about the increasing rate of loss of vital records and the delay in retrieving of records kept in their storage facilities. Delays also affect students in their pursuit for post graduate studies especially delays in retrieving transcripts and original results for employment as well. Polytechnic programmes have become intensely complicated over the years due to records not being accessed or retrieved when needed. This greatly affects organizations, students and parents who need this records for timely decision making (Nwankwo, 2001).

Nwankwo (2001) further observed that tertiary institutions in Nigeria have what it takes to generate information of about 76% and usage of low capacity of 3%. This gap has raised queries as to what happened to the information generated. The increase rate of students in population, diverse programmes, inadequate funds and materials in this era of inflation, as well as poor record management processes make it difficult for records to be properly managed especially in this third world countries still grow economically. The management and creation of adequate records will help to provide evidential proofs of the activities of polytechnic institutions.

Policy

Record management policy means an official document that directs record management in an institution. It is being put in place to carry out adequate record of all task or events in an organization, which is managed or retained in line with the acceptable legislation. It encourages accountability and transparency in the management of records of students or staff in any organization. In a study by Ohene et al (2014) observed the management of students' records at Koforidua Polytechnic, revealed that there is no policy guiding the management of student's record.

Storage and Retrieval

Records are duly classified and put into different folders. Maintenance of records are very much necessary in every institution and organization for effective management. This is made possible if documents or files moved out are brought back or made visible for everybody especially those in the unit records. It becomes useful if they are easily accessed and retrieved for staff, students and organizations.

According to Akporhonor (2011) records are stored and retrieved to provide situations which prevent decay or degeneration even as there is access to the records. The recent pattern used in record keeping is through the use of digital gadget like the computer, which is faster than the soughing of files. Records are stored and retrieved for safety and longevity against any form of damage.

Retention and Disposal

Retention and disposal involve easy location of the desired records. Records retention refers to recorded documents that stating the duration that particular records can be retained before disposal. There is a standard policy on retention and disposal of records binding on institutions based on the agreement of the management board. Abdalrahman (2015) in his work stated that in the administration of universities in North central, Nigeria, it was discovered that there is no standard policy on retention and disposal of records.

Security of Records

Record managers must be on alert in safeguarding this information keeping secrets about them in this organisation and institutions, in order not to allow unauthorized individuals to have access to these records. Every institution intentionally keeps its records secured and inaccessible to individuals except those authorized by the management to be part of the unit. Lack of security measures can actually put the institution in jeopardy.

Record Management Problems

Records are not usually managed professionally in some organizations, because there are no professionally trained record managers who are detailed to the core in applying the policies and procedures in putting records in usable and

retrievable format. Problems of record management varies ranging from use of files which are difficult or complex in nature which are not properly preserved. The death of a qualified personnel that leads to a replacement most times affect the next personnel who may not be qualified to manage and preserve records in the institution. There are still issues of hard copies being damaged by insects, fire and flood due to poor storage situations. Most institutions still practice the old fashioned record keeping pattern of stacking files upon each other and other poor methods of facilities storage (Oyebanji, 2018).

Record management in this era has been reported to be poorly handled as a result of challenges faced by most institutions and organisations, Record management generally in Nigeria is plagued by issues like unskilled and inexperienced personnel, lack of funds, archaic record keeping methods and poor data against organisation and preservation of records (Egwuyenga, 2009). In some cases, issues like inadequate procedures and guidelines, information security and privacy also pose great challenges. Most institutions lack retention schedules and disposal policy which is paramount in record keeping and management. These problems to a large extent have been left unattended to by managements of these institutions and organizations.

Methodology

The method used for this work was survey research method. Questionnaire and interviews were used for data collection. Questions were asked based on the objectives of the study and answers were provided by the unit head (Deputy Registrar) exams and other staff that deal directly with records in their daily routine at the academic office of Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic, Rumuola, Port Harcourt.

Discussion of Findings

Record management in exams and record unit of the academic office of Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic, Rumuola, Port Harcourt:

This is an office that keeps all students records and programs, data, result and every information that is deemed fit for a student and it is found in their files. It is compulsory that every student admitted into the college must pass through this

office and complete the entire process of registration and a file opened for them, then they can be recognized as students in any of the department and school, this is the starting point. After the first year, every student comes to this office to update his/her file following the requirement posted on the notice board. Collection of results is determined by students who update their file, with the right certification through the first and second year of their program in ND and HND respectively.

What is the policy for record creation?

S/No	Items Statement	Frequency	% Yes	% No
1	Policy on what records to keep	9	100%	0%
2	Policy on the duration to keep	9	88%	22%
3	Do you have policy on storage	9	100%	0%
4	Policy on retrieval tools	9	60%	40%

Response:
The policy that back up record creation is stated in the handbook of the student. The policy states that at the end of every exam, results and scripts of students are marked within the stipulated time, scored and submitted to the board of studies of the various schools after meetings and deliberations and later forwarded to the academic board for both HND and ND and thereafter to exams and record unit and kept in various departments and schools.

How do you store and retrieve the records?

S/NO	Storage and Retrieval	Frequency	%Yes	%No
1.	Shelves	9	100%	0%
2	Drawers	9	100%	0%
3	Store / Archives	9	80%	20%
4	Computer system	9	60%	40%
5	Cloud	9	10%	90%

Response:
Records are stored through electronic storage/and a backup process was put in place in case it crashes online and we also make use of hard copies as a growing institution (at the tutelage process) but we deal with the hard copies more by filing them into their various departments and must be in their schools for easy access and retrieval. Above all we deal seriously with the hard copies in case there are observations and correction, it can be easily detected and also corrected online for the both programs for easy retrieval.

What is the retention and disposal Method?

S/N	Retention and Disposal	Frequency	% Yes	% No
1	10 years	9	10%	**90%**
2	From inception of the school till date	9	100%	**0 %**
3	Labeled school by school	9	100%	
4	Indexed according to subject	9	0%	**100%**
5	Shelved according to the years	9	100%	**0%**

Response:
In the case of retention, our records have been there right from inception till date and we store them in the store house provided by the Management. And none has been destroyed nor disposed rather they are all kept in the store house till date.

How do you secure the records?

S/N	Method for security of Data	Frequency	% Yes	%No
1	Locked in file cabinets	9	100%	
2	Password to computers	9	100%	
3	Backup on drives and flash	9	100%	

Response:
Our files are secured in a cabinet under lock and key. Credible staff that can keep top secrets are the people posted to this unit. Anyone found wanting is immediately pulled out and replaced,

What are the challenges in record management in the unit (Exam Records?)

S/N	Challenges			
1	Lack of space	9	100%	
2	Lack of professional record manager	9	80%	20%
3	Lack of functional computer gadgets	9	100%	
4	Poorly storage environment	9	100%	
5	Lack of functional policy	9	100%	

Response:

- First constraint is space: back log of student files moved to the outer store make retrieval difficult because of no space to arrange them for easy retrieval.
- Lack of professionals certified in record management.

Conclusion and Recommendations
Record Management is a key aspect of any institution and organizational progress and development. The exams and record unit of Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechic has a policy backing up students record which is well structured, records are generated from the students from day one in school till they pass out which are stored electronically and also hard copies for preservation and easy retrieval. There are safety measures put in place for the management of their records. These records have been retained from inception till date without any form of disposal. It is obvious that Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic has been able to achieve and manage their records with a better accountability, transparency and effective service delivery.

The following Recommendations are made:

- The institution should make provision for space that can enhance easy retrieval.
- A certified record management personnel should be employed.
- Trainings should be organized outside the institution for better service delivery.

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