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SUPERVISORS' PERCEPTION OF RECORD MANAGEMENT PRACTICES BY SECRETARIES IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study examined supervisors' perception of record management practices by secretaries in colleges of education in South East Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study while three null hypotheses were tested. This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of this study consisted of 107 supervisors from seven colleges of education in South East Nigeria. The entire population of 107 supervisors from colleges of education in in South East Nigeria was used as sample for this study. Therefore, there is no sampling for the study since the population is of a manageable number. The instrument was titled "Records Management Practices Questionnaire (RMPQ)". The instrument was subjected to face validation done by three experts. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. An overall co-efficient of 0.83 was obtained. The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to the respondents in their offices with the help of four research assistants who were briefed by the researcher on what to do. Mean and standard deviation were statistical tools used to answer the research questions while t-Test of independence was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level. The findings revealed that supervisors agreed on record creation practices while they disagreed on record storage practices and record maintenance practices of secretaries in colleges of education in South East Nigeria. The findings also revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of supervisors on record creation practices and record storage practices, record maintenance practices of secretaries in colleges of education in South East Nigeria based on their years of experience and gender. Based on these findings, it was recommended amongst others that secretaries in colleges of Education in South East Nigeria should enrol in workshop training programmes to acquire relevant records management practices.
Keywords. Supervisors, secretaries, record, record management.

Introduction

College of education is one aspect of tertiary institutions in Nigeria that is designed specifically to train and prepare students for the teaching profession. One of their core values is learning, teaching, research and community development. Colleges of education in articulating its mission is committed to academic excellence, innovation in research and critical engagement with society (Akor and Julie, 2013). Carrying out these activities produce records, which provide evidence that colleges of education are carrying out its statutory functions. Records contain information needed for planning, decision making, and control in any organization such as institutions of learning (Abdullahi, Abiola and Abdulwahab, 2016). Keeping of records is therefore efficient and effective because it documents the planning and implementation of appropriate course of services thus allowing proper monitoring of work. Igwoku (2018)

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reiterated that record keeping must be guided by some level of confidentiality, proper maintenance, security, preservation of the content and context.

Records in colleges of education are official documents, books and files containing essential routinely updated information about students, staff, the quality of teaching and learning, as well as activities taking place in the school (Nwadei, 2018). Colleges of education today need to pay more attention to the management of records in their custody for efficiency and effectiveness. That is Unuigbe (2015) defined record management as a control over the quality and cost of records and the procedure, systems, operations, space, equipment and staff requirement to administer records.

The researchers defined record management as the systematic process of generating, storing, managing and retrieval of information. Effective record management ensures that information is well-organized, properly stored, easily retrieved and routinely disposed when no longer needed. When these records are well-created, properly stored, retrieved and utilized appropriately, execution of administrative tasks is likely to be easy. Record management forms basis for formulating policies, making plans for future and taking decision to enhance smooth administration of colleges of education in South East Nigeria. The benefit of school record is derived when information is properly managed through record management practices. This study therefore adopted these two record management practices, record creation and record storage by secretaries in colleges of education.

It is not just enough to create record but also ensure properly record storage till they are needed for use. It is important to note that secretaries are key users of these record management practices in this study. This is why Akpomi (2013) posited that a secretary is an office-staff who combines the mastery of secretarial skills of typewriting and shorthand with office routine functions. Today's secretaries are exposed to office technology including the internet that makes work much easier and knowledge more accessible. It is important to note that supervisors who are executives in colleges of education have the responsibility of assessing record management practices of secretaries. It is so because most of these supervisors have secretaries working under them.

Some of these supervisors are Heads of Units (HOU) or Directors who work closely with secretaries in planning and overseeing all the activities of the faculties or college as a whole. As these supervisors work closely with their secretaries in their functions, they are adequately qualified to assess the records management practices possessed by the secretaries. Some factors come into consideration as what could influence supervisors' influence on their ratings on secretaries' record management strategy. These factors are years of job experience and gender.

Supervisors in colleges of education have varying years of experience and this may influence their ratings on secretaries' record management strategy. Ofeimu, Ahmed and Kolawole (2018) stressed that some supervisors are more-experienced than others based on the number of years they have spent in service. Supervisors' job experience over years could help them acquire skills, expertise and knowledge in managing the school records. In this study, supervisors with less than seven years of job experience are considered as less-experienced, while those with above seven years of job experience are considered as more experienced supervisors.

Gender is also another factor that necessitated this study. Gender refers to as a social construct regarding culture bound conventions, roles and behaviours as well as relations between and among women and men, boys and girls (Nwaubani, 2014). Males exhibit more positive attitude towards records management practices than female Mampe and Kalusopa (2012).

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Amanchukwu and Ololube (2015) affirmed that gender differences are not noticed in records management practices. These variables are likely to affect the assessment. Therefore, the study determined supervisors' perception of record management practices by secretaries in colleges of education in South East Nigeria.

For colleges of education in South East Nigeria to become effective in their administrations, there is the need for adequate and well-organized records management practices to be put in place. Secretaries in colleges of education are expected to brace up with the challenges occasioned by the introduction of new records management practices and other related technologies in today's offices.

Advancements in technology have continued unabated and has enriched and widened the scope and practices of the secretarial profession in terms of work quality, speed, accuracy and variety. Today's secretaries have an array of record management tools and facilities based on modern technologies that are expected to make them perform their duties effectively and efficiently.

Preliminary investigations gathered by the researcher revealed that some of innovative record storage devices such as computer, internet network for clouding document and other facilities seem to be insufficient in most colleges of education in South East Nigeria. This in turn seem to increase the rate of misplacement of vital records and the slow speed at which needed information are retrieved from their storage. Consequently, there is insufficient information which contributes to inaccurate projection or planning. It was based on these problems that the researchers investigated record management practices by secretaries in colleges of education in South East Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What is the perception of supervisors on record creation practices of secretaries in colleges of education in South East Nigeria?
2. What is the perception of supervisors on record storage practices of secretaries in colleges of education in South East Nigeria?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of supervisors on record creation practices of secretaries in colleges of education in South East Nigeria based on their years of experience.
2. Male and female supervisors do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on record creation practices of secretaries in colleges of education in South East Nigeria.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of supervisors on record storage practices of secretaries in colleges of education in South East Nigeria based on their years of experience.

Theoretical Framework

This study is hinged on the Records Continuum Theory, as developed by Frank Upward in the 1990s as a response to evolving discussions about the challenges of managing digital records and archives in the discipline of Archival Science. The theory provides a graphic tool for framing issues about the relationship between records managers and archivists, past, present and future, and for thinking strategically about working collaboratively and building partnerships with other stakeholders.

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In a diagrammatic form, the theory is represented by four concentric circles (see Figure 1). The records continuum theory provides an integrated approach to managing records, rather than one made up of separate stages. Its four levels of perspective include: Dimension 1, the regime applies itself to identifying records management actions and ensures that reliable evidence of them is created by capturing records of the related/supporting transactions; Dimension 2, recordkeeping systems manage "families" of transactions and records series documenting processes, hence intellectual control of records relating to the arrangement and description of both records and archives; Dimension 3 presenting RM actions which relate to the maintenance and use of records, while archives management actions relate to the description of archives; and Dimension 4 which relates to physical control where disposal of records is by destruction, or their transfer to the archives, while archives management actions relate to the preservation and use of archives.

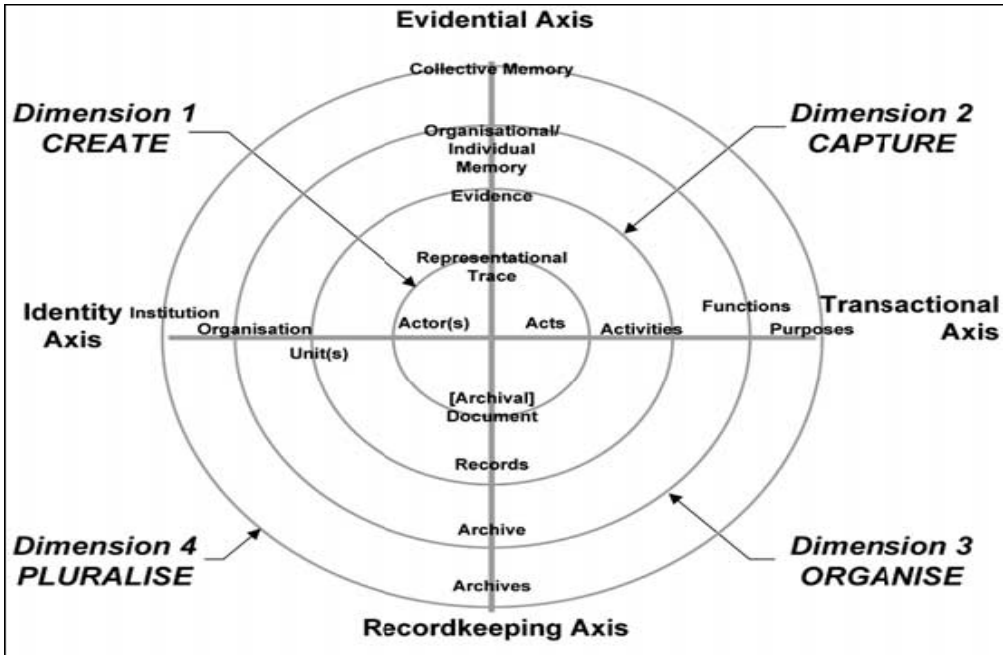


Figure 1. The Four Concentric Circles of the Records Continuum Theory

The figure shows that with a digital system, records do not pass through distinct stages, but the stages act as a point of reference rather than as functions of records management. These stages are interrelated by the records

Methods

Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. According to Nwogu (2015), survey method is appropriate, especially for seeking individuals' opinions, attitudes and perceptions in their natural setting. It comprises the following states Enugu, Abia, Imo, Ebonyi and Anambra State. The population of this study consisted of 107 supervisors from seven colleges of education in South East Nigeria. The entire population of 107 supervisors from colleges of education in South East Nigeria was used as sample for this study. Therefore, there is

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no sampling for the study since the population is of a manageable number.The instrument that was used for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher based on insight gained from literature reviewed and the research questions. The instrument was titled "Records Management Practices Questionnaire (RMPQ).

The research title, purpose, research questions and hypotheses alongside the instruments were given to experts who were requested to scrutinize the items, instructions and response options and freely modify them to ensure the instrument was suitable for the study. The reliability of the instrument was determined through a trial testing. Copies of the instrument were administered to 10 selected supervisors from college of education in Rivers State who were not part of the study population. The data collected were analyzed using Cronbach Coefficient Alpha to measure the internal consistency of the instrument and reliability coefficient values of 0.86, 0.90, 0.80 and 0.78 were obtained for sections B1 – B4 respectively using SPSS version 23. The overall Correlation Coefficient of 0.83 was obtained. These high coefficient values are taken to indicate that the instrument is reliable. The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to the respondents in their offices with the help of four research assistants who were briefed by the researcher on what to do. On the spot response and retrieval method was used but some supervisors could not respond on the spot.

Results

Research Question 1. What is the perception of supervisors on record creation practices of secretaries in colleges of education in South East Nigeria?

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation Ratings on Record Creation Practices of Secretaries

S/N	Secretaries under me:	X	SD	Remarks
1	receive documents from within and outside the establishment	3.74	0.55	Agree
2	systematically reference all records	2.49	0.75	Disagree
3	properly title all records	3.48	0.81	Agree
4	date the documents accurately	3.54	0.71	Agree
5	properly register the outgoing and incoming mails/documents	3.29	0.68	Agree
6	provide the right information to the right people	3.21	0.88	Agree
7	properly distribute the records	2.29	1.13	Disagree
8	sort files in the file cabinet	2.95	0.91	Agree
	Cluster Mean	**3.12**		**Agree**

Data presented in Table 1 showed the item-by-item analysis of perception of supervisors on record creation practices of secretaries in colleges of education in South East Nigeria. The result revealed that items 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8 with mean scores 3.74, 3.48, 3.54, 3.29, 3.21 and 2.95 respectively were rated agreed because they were above the criterion mean score of 2.50.

Research Question 2. What is the perception of supervisors on record storage practices of secretaries in colleges of education in South East Nigeria?

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Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation Ratings on Record Storage Practices of Secretaries

S/N	Secretaries under me:	X	SD	Remarks
9	ensure that records are maintained based on retention practices	2.16	0.53	Disagree
10	know retention period of records are continually checked	2.29	0.73	Disagree
11	periodically check to ensure their safety	2.31	0.54	Disagree
12	make sure that the movement of records are systematically tracked	2.43	0.63	Disagree
13	properly maintain the file register	3.33	0.63	Agree
14	repair the cabinets when spoilt	2.29	0.62	Disagree
15	continual updating of knowledge on records maintenance	2.31	0.59	Disagree
16	periodically audit the records maintenance practices centrally	2.27	0.61	Disagree
17	identify inactive, semiactive and inactive records	2.45	0.62	Disagree
	Cluster Mean	**2.43**		**Disagree**

Data presented in Table 2 showed the item-by-item analysis of perception of supervisors on record storage practices of secretaries in colleges of education in South East Nigeria. The result revealed that items 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16 and 17 with mean scores 2.16, 2.29, 2.31, 2.43, 2.29, 2.31, 2.27 and 2.45 respectively were rated disagreed because they were below the criterion mean score of 2.50.

Hypothesis 1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of supervisors on record creation practices of secretaries in colleges of education in South East Nigeria based on their years of experience.

Table 3. The t-Test of difference in supervisors' ratings based on years of experience

Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	p-value	Remark
Less-experienced	49	27.04	3.43	101	0.421	Not Significant
Experienced	54	26.50	3.35			

The result of Table 3 shows a p-value of 0.421 with 101 degree of freedom and α—level of 0.05 (0.421 > 0.05), the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that there is no significant

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difference in the mean ratings of supervisors on record creation practices of secretaries in colleges of education in South East Nigeria based on their years of experience.

Hypothesis 2. Male and female supervisors do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on record creation practices of secretaries in colleges of education in South East Nigeria.

Table 4. The t-Test of difference in supervisors' ratings based on Gender

Variables	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	Df	p-value	Remark
Male	50	27.12	3.44	101	0.294	Not Significant
Female	53	26.41	3.32			

The result of Table 4 shows a p-value of 0.294 with 101 degree of freedom and α—level of 0.05 (0.294 > 0.05), the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that male and female supervisors do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on record creation practices of secretaries in colleges of education in South East Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Supervisors agreed on record creation practices of secretaries in colleges of education in South East Nigeria. Supervisors disagreed on record storage practices of secretaries in colleges of education in South East Nigeria.

The findings of the study have implications for education practices and workplace environment in South East Nigeria. The study population indicated that secretaries in colleges of Education do not adequately possess record storage practices. This also implies that institutions of higher learning in Nigeria, especially those offering office technology and management (OTM) programme, need to device suitable strategies to adequately equip their graduates with relevant records maintenance practices in the current technology driven workplace through regular practice and hands-on exercise. If these are not done, the public service will be ill-equipped with unqualified personnel who will be unable to contribute to good performance in the government.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that supervisors agreed on record creation practices while they disagreed on record storage practices. It was also concluded based on the findings that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of supervisors on record creation practices, record storage practices, based on their years of experience and gender.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are made.

1. South East government should organize annual capacity building programme in form of in-service training and refresher courses for secretaries to professionally up-date their skills and knowledge of record creation practices.
2. Secretaries in colleges of Education in South East Nigeria should enroll in workshop training programmes to acquire relevant records management practices.

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3. Secretarial training institutions and relevant professional associations should develop short term courses, seminars and records management trainings for practicing secretaries on record storage practices.

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