

Challenges of Records Management Practices in Sustainable Development
Goal in the 21st Century: an Intrinsic Success Achievement Element in the
Ministry of Information and Strategy, Lagos State, Nigeria

By

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Abstract

Records management is more than generation of records and storing them. More challenging activities are involved, especially, in the ministries where bulky records are created each day. This research looked at the record management practices of the Ministry of Information and Strategy, Lagos, Nigeria and the challenges it faces in administering its public record generation and disposal services and how the services affect the Ministry's decision making. Total enumeration method was used on the 37 employees of the Ministry. Data was collected through questionnaire and 35 of the respondents' filled the questionnaire. It was analyzed using SSPS analytical package and reported in discrete figures, percentages; and two hypotheses were tested using Chi Square at 0.05 degree of significance. Among the findings are that effective implementation of records management practices positively enhances organizational performance and that proper records management practice positively brings about easy decision making in the organization. It is recommended that the Ministry should have a records retention schedule and that the workers should be given training on electronic record keeping.

Keywords: Records management, Records storage, Records classification, Records filing, Records life cycle, Records management policy.

Introduction

Records management is an aspect of work that managers often look down on until they need a vital record that is not within reach. Records management is the practice of maintaining the records of an institution or organization or a body from the time they are created to the time they are eventual disposed of. This includes classifying, storing, securing, and disposing (by destruction or, in some cases, archival preservation). "Records management is not just about collecting and keeping records, but also concerns the knowledge of which records to keep, where they must be stored, for how long they should be kept and managed, and who

should have access to the data” (Corporate Storage, 2010). Records management does not only mean just the classification and segregation of files, it involves how to take care of the documents.

Good records management can enhance organization’s performance and even its decision making abilities. Where these apply, there are lots of benefits, including timely retrieval and safe storage. Of course, these cannot be achieved without qualified staff. Records are created on daily basis in any viable organization. Organizations should ensure that any record created can be used to support evidence of its transactions in a court of law. Therefore if employees do not adhere to recordkeeping policies, the integrity of the recordkeeping system and indeed the whole organization could be questioned.

Purpose of the Study

According to Popoola (2000), what actually keeps the civil service going in any modern system of government is recorded information called "records," which are used for planning, decision making, and controlling. The need for a records management programme in all organizations cannot be overstressed in the digital age. Enwere (1992) argues that bad records keeping and lack of policy guidelines in records management programme in Nigerian public service have led to inefficiency in administration and to the loss or unavailability of vital information needed for decision-making. Therefore, this study wants to investigate what obtains in the Ministry of Information and Strategy, Lagos. There are a number of challenges associated with records management practices in Nigeria today. These challenges can be insufficient skilled and experienced records management personnel, low records management task in the scheme of things, and insufficient funds (Afolabi, 1991). There is the need to examine the records management practices in Ministry of Information and Strategy. Doing this will help the managing body in organizational planning, decision making and implementation.

History of Lagos State

Prior to the Portuguese name of Lagos being adopted, Lagos was originally called Eko, which stems from either Oko (Yoruba: "cassava farm") or Eko ("war camp"), by its Bini conquerors. Lagos State is one of the 36 states of Nigeria. It is one of the earliest states created in Nigeria being created on May 27, 1967 by Decree 14

of 1967 when Nigeria was restructured into a federation of 12 states (Lagos State, 2003; Lagos State Government, 2011). Lagos was the capital of Nigeria from independence in 1960 till 1991 when Nigerian federal capital was moved to Abuja, the present capital of Nigeria (Federal Capital Abuja, 2003). Lagos has an area of 356,861 hectares of which 75,755 hectares are wetlands, yet it has the highest population, which is over five per cent of the national estimate for it. The State has a population of 17 million out of a national population estimate of 150million. Nigeria is one of the fastest-growing countries in the world and expected to surpass the United States in population by 2050. Lagos, it is thought, will move up to No. 9 on the most-populous cities list in 2030 with 24,239,000 people living there. Of this population, Metropolitan Lagos, an area covering 37% of the land area of Lagos State is home to over 85% of the State population (Lagos State, 2012). It has 20 Local Governments and 37 Local Council Development Areas with the capital as Ikeja.

Ministry of Information and Strategy, Lagos: The Ministry of Information and Strategy, Lagos is an arm of the Lagos State government which is responsible for gathering information and managing Lagos State official records for the smooth running of the state in line with other ministries.

Statement of the Problem

A good records management practice is essential in Ministry of Information and Strategy because of its enormous benefits to the establishment like fulfilling legal mandates, improving information access and accountability, reducing costs of record retrieval, ensuring the creation, management of accurate and reliable records, and reducing costs of storing records. The ministry of information and strategy as observed has many inter linking departments in which records are generated daily. Due to the numerous amount of information gathered more time is delegated when sorting this information and locating the needed information from records kept. Records misplacement rate is alarming. Workers, who go for verification of their documents, compliant of time wasting in retrieving their records, when this happens, it leads to low productivity in the organization, therefore, there is need to compile the challenges faced in the ministry and highlight possible solutions to them. It is in this light, that the research work ought to examine and assess what constituted bottleneck in the records management

practices in the Ministry of Information and Strategy, Lagos State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. Does the ministry of Information and Strategy, Lagos State have any viable records management policy?
2. What type of filing system does Ministry of Information and Strategy use in records management?
3. What equipment does Ministry of Information and Strategy use in records storage?
4. Are the workers in Ministry of Information and Strategy, Lagos qualified to serve?
5. Are records in the Ministry helpful in decision making?

Hypotheses

The following two null hypotheses were tested on the course of the research.

Having alternate hypothesis made no difference since rejection of one meant the upholding of the other.

1. Effective implementation of records management practices does not enhance performance in the ministry.
2. Proper records management practice does not bring about easy decision making in the ministry.

Methodology

The design for this study is descriptive or survey research design. This method is appropriate because of the sample size and focus of the staff. The descriptive design method also provides the basis for eliciting possible policies for solving the problems. This method is also chosen because it will help to describe, examine, record, analyze and interpret the variables that exist in this study.

The population is the staff members of the registry and administrative departments of the Ministry of Information and Strategy consisting of thirty seven workers (37). So, total enumeration technique was adopted because of the small size of the population. The main instrument employed in this study is a designed questionnaire having a 5-point- modified- likert type of rating scale opinion, ranging from strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Undecided (U), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD) to allow for response to each of the statements in agreement or disagreement. The questionnaire was personally administered and retrieved.

Method of Data Analysis

Simple number count and percentages were used in the data analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 20th edition. The test statistic employed is the Chi-Square which is represented by the Greek sign X^2 and is represented by the formulae

$$X^2 = \sum (O - e)^2$$

\sum = summation
 O = frequency
observed
 E = frequency expected

In analyzing the data and testing the stated hypothesis, frequency (f), and simple percentage was used to analyze all the variables of the collected data while Chi – square (X^2) was used to analyze and test the stated hypothesis in the related sections of the questionnaire. The interpretation was used to discuss, summarize, draw conclusions and make necessary recommendations. Chi-square and simple percentage (%) was applied to accept or reject the specific hypothesis.

Data Collection, Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

This section deals with the description of the analysis of data collected through the distribution of questionnaire. Data analysis was based on the number of questionnaire retrieved from the respondents. A total number of 37 questionnaires were administered, 2 were not retrieved. So the analysis was based on 35 as the total study size.

Demographic Distribution of the Respondents

This section asked questions about the bio-data of the respondents which includes, sex, age, ministry, department, marital status, etc.

Out of the 35 respondents, 13(37%) were males while 22(63%) were females, showing a high population of females. Twenty-six (74.2%) of them were between 20 and 39 years of age; 5 and 4 for 40-49 and 50 and above respectively. So, majority of the workers were young and probably energetic. Sixty percent were single while the remaining 40% were either married or divorced.

Table 1:
Departments of the Respondents in the Ministry

Departments	Frequency	Percent
Registry	4	11.4
Administration	10	28.6
Public Enlightenment	4	11.4
Press & PR	4	11.4
Accounting	5	14.3
Strategy	5	14.3
Info Production	3	8.6
Total	35	100.0

The respondents come from each of the 7 departments of the Ministry of Information and Strategy, Lagos State as indicated in Table 1. None of the respondents has a qualification below Ordinary National Diploma (OND) and Bachelors degree. Since none of them has any degree below those degrees, invariably, the workers are well read.

Records Policy

Do you have a records management policy in Ministry of Information and Strategy?

The Ministry has a well documented records policy guide which all the workers are aware of. This is very commendable. Unfortunately, the Ministry has no weeding policy. This could be interpreted to mean that no weeding goes on in the Ministry or it is done at will. But the Ministry has an effective retention policy which cancels the non availability of weeding policy. It means that only needed documents are retained. On how long they keep their records, 91% said 1-5 years while 3% for each case said 6-10 years, 11-15 years, and 16-20 years respectively. This means that majority of the documents are destroyed or archived at the end of the fifth year or only the top officials are aware of what happened to the documents after five years which the majority of the workers do not know. On type of records kept, 100% of the respondents agree that they keep financial records and legal records, and other valid

records.

Types of Records Created in the Ministry

Each of the workers responded on the types of materials they create in the ministry.

Their response is indicated in Table 2.

Table 2:
What type of records do you create in your organization?

Kinds of records	Positive Responses	
	Frequency	Percentage n=35
Letter	35	100.0
Directives	35	100.0
Mails	35	100.0
Reports	35	100.0
Policy in procedure manual	16	45.7
Financial	35	100.0
Legal	35	100.0
General maintenance manual	10	28.6
Historical or archival	5	14.3
Periodicals	23	65.7

Table 2 shows result of types of record created by the Ministry of Information and Strategy as follows; all the respondents (100%) indicated that they keep letter, directories, mails, reports, financial, and legal records, and general maintenance manual 28.6%, historical or archival 14.3%, policy in procedure manual 45.7%, and periodicals 65.7%. It implies that the most created types of records are letters, directives, mails, reports, financial, legal, and periodicals. Answering to the question on how they would describe the types of materials kept in the ministry, 29% of the respondents agree that record kept by the Ministry are described as active, while 57% of the respondents agree that vital records are kept and 14% of the respondents agree that semi active records are kept in the organization. This means that more of vital records are highly preserved than active records. On records classification, both manual and electronics systems of classification are in use.

Filing System in the Ministry

The Ministry uses various filing systems. They file by author, title, subject, publication, date, and by publisher. This is pertinent because clients pose questions from different angles and demand fast answers which this varied systems of filing provide fast solutions to. This implies that the ministry makes use standard filing systems and is commendable.

Records Storage System in the Ministry

The Ministry of Information and Strategy uses different storage systems depending on the type of material and in which department. They keep safe their records on Compact Disks (Cds), flash drives, wooden cabinets, file jackets and metal shelves.

Records Management and Challenges in the Ministry

This section makes use of the Likert scale to analyze the answers of the respondents from seven research questions posed to them. The data collected are shown on the tables generated. Strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), strongly disagree (SD), Disagree (D) and Undecided (U).

Table 3:

Effective implementation of records management policies enhances organizational performance.

Options	Frequency	Percent
SA	15	42.9
A	17	48.6
SD	2	5.7
D	1	2.9
U	0	0
Total	35	100.0

From Table 3 above, 91.5% of the respondents agree that effective implementation of records management policies enhances organizational performance, while only 8.6% disagree, and none undecided. The implementation of records management policy is therefore highly encouraged as a catalyst for better organizational performance in the Ministry of Information and Strategy.

Table 4:

Proper records management practice brings about easy decision making in your organization

Options	Frequency	Percent
SA	13	37.1
A	11	31.4
SD	6	17.1
D	4	11.4
U	1	2.9
Total	35	100.0

Table 4 shows that 37.1% of the respondents strongly agree that proper records management practice brings about easy decision making in the organization, while 31.4% of the respondents agree, 17.1% strongly disagree, and 11.4% disagree and 2.9% were undecided. It implies that the Ministry is aware of the importance of proper records management practices.

Table 5:

Good records management practice brings about smooth discharge of administrative duties.

Options	Frequency	Percent
SA	13	37.1
A	20	57.1
SD	0	0
D	2	5.7
U	0	0
Total	35	100.0

Table 5 above shows that, 94.3% of the respondents agree that good records management practice brings about smooth discharge of administrative duties, while only 5.7% of the respondents disagree. It also implies that the Ministry of

Information and Strategy is conscious of the important role of good records management on administrative discharge.

Table 6:

Electronic storage medium in my organization has the challenge of virus attack from time to time.

Options	Frequency	Percent
SA	0	0
A	16	45.7
SD	9	25.7
D	7	20.0
U	3	8.6
Total	35	100.0

From Table 6, the result shows that 45.7% of the respondents agree that electronic storage is faced with virus attack from time to time, while 25.7% strongly disagree to that assertion, 20.0% disagree and 8.6% were undecided in their opinion. The varied answer is an indication of naivety in the knowledge of the internet or electronic system as a record storage medium. This implies that the administrative bodies should give orientation to the record keepers on electronic storage and its challenges. Virus attack is a prominent issue in network environment.

Table 7:

Cost of records maintenance is a challenge in my organization

Options	Frequency	Percent
SA	0	0
A	13	37.1
SD	9	25.7
D	12	34.3
U	1	2.9
Total	35	100.0

From Table 7, with only one-third (37%) of the respondents agreeing that cost of records maintenance is a perceived challenge in the organization and a whopping 63% disagree to that assertion shows that the records section is well

funded. If this painted picture is true, it should be encouraged.

Table 8:

Lack of trained and qualified personnel is a records management challenge in our office.

Options	Frequency	Percent
SA	8	22.9
A	8	22.9
SD	11	31.4
D	8	22.9
U	0	0
Total	35	100.0

Table 8 shows that 45.8% agree that lack of trained and qualified personnel is a records management challenge in the ministry, while 54.2% of the respondents disagree, and none was undecided in opinion. This split (almost bracket) in opinion means that there are trained personnel in the Ministry who may not be professionals in the field. Qualification wise, none of the workers has any qualification below OND, how come then that they see qualification as a challenge in records management in the Ministry.

Table 9:

Inadequate funding forms part of the challenges faced in the Ministry?

Options	Frequency	Percent
SA	4	11.4
A	16	45.7
SD	7	20.0
D	6	17.1
U	2	5.7
Total	35	100.0

From Table 9, 57% of the respondents agree that inadequate funding forms part of the challenges faced in the office while 43% of the respondents disagree assigning those who are undecided to those who disagreed. This result could be interpreted

to mean that many of the workers are not sure of the funding of the Ministry.

Testing of Hypothesis

Apart from the analysis drawn from the questionnaire administered, to fully balance the study, testing of hypothesis of the study would be done with the use of the chi-square, testing it at 0.5% level of significance.

Formula: $\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$

Hypothesis 1

H0: Effective implementation of records management practices does not enhance organizational performance.

H1: Effective implementation of records management practices positively enhances organizational performance.

Using Research Question 1 of Table 3

O	E	o-e	(o-e) ²	$\frac{(o - e)^2}{E}$
15	18	3	9	0.5
17	18	1	1	0.05
2	18	16	256	14.2
1	18	17	289	16.05
0	0	0	0	0
				31.25

Source: Adopted from Table 3

$\chi^2_c = 31.25$ At 5% level of significance

$V = 5 - 1 \chi^2_t = 9.49$

$V = 4$ Since $\chi^2_c > \chi^2_t$

$\chi^2_t = 9.49$ that is $\chi^2_{31.25} > \chi^2_{9.49}$

Hence, we reject the H^0

Decision Rule: Since the completed X^2 is greater than the tabulated, hence H^0 is rejected. Therefore, we conclude that effective implementation of records management practices positively enhances organizational performance.

Hypothesis 2

H0: Proper records management practice does not bring about easy decision making in your organization.

H1: Proper records management practice positively brings about easy decision making in the organization.

Using Research Question 2 of Table 4

O	E	o-e	(o-e) ²	$\frac{(o - e)^2}{E}$
13	18	5	25	7
11	18	7	49	31
6	18	12	144	126
4	18	14	196	178
1	18	17	289	271
				613

Source: Adopted from Table 6

$X^2_c = 613$ At 0.5% level of significance

$$V = 5 - 1 \quad X^2_t = 9.49$$

$$V = 4 \quad \text{Since } X^2_c > X^2_t$$

$$X^2_t = 9.49 \quad \text{that is } X^2_{613} > X^2_{9.49}$$

Hence, we reject the H^0

Discussions

Since the completed X^2 is greater than the tabulated, hence H^0 is rejected.

Therefore, we conclude that proper records management practice positively brings about easy decision making in the organization.

The study was carried out using the Ministry of Information and Strategy as a case study. A total enumeration method was adopted for the 37 respondents. The Ministry of Information and Strategy has more female employees than their male counterparts. And majority of the workers are young, energetic and not married. Majorities are from the administrative department and have work experience of about 10 years. All of the employees have OND/NCE or first degree.

Most of the ministry's records are kept for about 1-5 years from the creation date, and financial records, legal records and other valued records are considered the best kinds of records being kept by the Ministry of Information and Strategy. Varied filing systems are in use and the documents are stored in both manual and electronic systems.

It is noted that, effective records management brings about better organizational performance, easy decision making, and smooth discharge of administrative duties and the electronic storage devices available are sometimes prone to virus attack; cost of records management is a foreseen challenge and inadequate funds in the office contributes to some challenges faced by the employees in attaining a sustainable development goal.

Conclusion

The issue of records management practices in the Ministry of Information and Strategy is something that needs more attention and should be treated as crucial in attaining sustainable development goal of Lagos State information system at large. This is evident from the just concluded study. From the findings of this study, it is concluded that:

The employees of Ministry of Information and Strategy, Lagos State are aware of what records management is, the importance of creating, keeping, and managing records. The ministry has records management policy and keeps vital records.

Good records management practice brings about smooth discharge of administrative duties. However, finance is an inhibiting factor in the discharge of their duties.

Recommendation

Based on the research findings, the following are recommended to be considered by the Ministry of Information and Strategy, Lagos State.

- The Ministry of Information and Strategy should concentrate more on developing an effective and more efficient electronic type of records classification and storage since these will enable easy and faster record keeping and retrieval and guarantees safety of records kept.
- Retaining records beyond their useful lifespan should be discouraged and also disposing vital records is detrimental to the ministry, therefore, there should be mandated, state-wide procedures for legal disposition of all records, all departments in the Ministry should gain a consistent policy with uniform standards.
- The administration should make sure that professionals are employed. Having a degree does not make one competent to work in a records centre.
- The records managers should be sponsored or encouraged to attend seminars hosted by the professional bodies. Proper orientation and in service training should be given to both new and old workers of the ministry on records management.
- Virus attack is a serious issue in network environments. The record keepers should attend seminars on networking problems or internet challenges.

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