

Record Management and Goals Achievement in the Public Sector: A Study of Selected Local Government Areas in Enugu State

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Abstract

This study focused on Record Management and Goals Achievement in the Public Sector: A Study of Selected Local Government Areas in Enugu State. The research design for the study was the descriptive survey research. The population for the study consists of a sample of 49 senior staff of records unit and administrative department of six Local Government Areas (LGAs) selected through purposive sampling from the three senatorial zones of Enugu State. However, in analyzing the data, the researchers relied on the 41 questionnaires that were validly completed and returned. The major instrument for data collection was a five point likert scale questionnaire titled record management and goal achievement in the public sector questionnaire (RM&GAPSQ). It was concluded in this study that record management system employed by the selected LGAs in Enugu state has contributed in the achievement of the goals of the government especially in the area of enhancing process efficiency. It was recommended that Local Government Areas should ensure that results of their socio-economic mapping and project management information should be integrated into the overall information system of the LGAs for enhanced social service and project delivery, training and retraining of record managers in the LGAs should be made an intricate part of the policies of the LGAs in order to update their proficiency and ensure that they contribute optimally to the achievement of the goals of the LGAs and in order to promote cost efficiency and enhance timeliness in information processing, it was also recommended that LGAs should migrate to full electronic information management system.

Keywords: Goal achievement; Process efficiency; Records; Social service delivery.



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1. Introduction

Government organizations are primarily charged with the responsibility of delivering public services that guarantees citizens wellbeing. This they must achieve within the limited resources available to them, hence; it is not unusual for them to continuously strive to ensure efficiency in their processes. To achieve this requires that government agencies must keep alive the memory of their activities through a functional record management system which ensures that documents and data of high importance are strictly preserved to guide rational decisions in the future. However, when these records are not managed properly, they will not provide the necessary support and information might be lost causing problems for the agency. To provide an efficient and effective administration that ensures that organizations run as smoothly as possible, there should be proper management of records. International Organization for Standardization [International Organization for Standardization \(ISO\) \(2001\)](#) explained records management as the field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records, including the processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of information about business activities and transactions in the form of records.

[Mrwebi \(2000\)](#) indicated that information plays a very vital role in the economic development of organizations which is essential for any corporate body to function effectively. Information is every organization's most basic and essential asset, and in common with any other business asset, recorded information requires effective management. Institutions produce increasingly large amounts of information and consequently greater volumes of records, in both paper and electronic forms. It is essential that information is captured, managed and preserved in an organized system that maintains its integrity and authenticity as well as fulfilling legal and financial requirements. According to [Shepherd \(2006\)](#), organizations use records to support accountability, when they need to prove that they have met their obligations or complied with the best practice or established policies. An unmanaged record system makes the performance of duties more difficult, costs organizations all resources (e.g. time, money etc.) and makes them vulnerable to security breaches, prosecution and embarrassment. Important information of an organization can be lost forever if records are not kept properly especially when a member who is holding a key position in an organization dies, retires, resigns, travels abroad, transfer to different department, branch. According to [Duose \(2009\)](#), if public officers keep their records right, the records would always be there to show the situation as it is. He

added that one cannot talk about good governance, democracy and rule of law when records are not kept properly. Hence, the need for accurate records management at the various units, sections, departments of the organization.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

It is widely acknowledged in administrative theory and practice that records are important factors in organizational resource mix, hence; the focus on the diverse aspect of record management. Local Government Areas are expected to provide platforms for the transmission of federal and state government policies and programmes to the grassroots through the delivery of social services. To achieve this goal optimally may require an organized system built on current and relevant records that are consistent with changing needs of the citizens at the grassroots and administrative global best practices. When the needed infrastructures for record management are absent or there is an abrupt termination of knowledge reserve and transmission process, the LGAs capacity to deliver on key social services may be endangered. This may breed inefficiency-induced-inefficiency which will affect the achievement of the LGAs goals negatively. The problem of this study therefore is to examine the impact filing an record management has in the achievement of organizational objectives.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the impact of filing and record management in the achievement of organizational objective. The specific objectives are;

- i. To examine the impacts of record management on social service delivery of LGAs in Enugu State
- ii. To examine the impacts of record management on process efficiency of LGAs in Enugu State

1.3. Research Questions

The following questions will provide guide to this study;

- i. What are the impacts of record management on social service delivery of LGAs in Enugu State?
- ii. What are the impacts of record management on process efficiency of LGAs in Enugu State?

1.4. Hypotheses

The following null hypothetical statements are made for this study;

- H₀₁:** Record management does not have significant impact on social service delivery of LGAs in Enugu State
H₀₂: Record management does not have significant impact on the process efficiency of LGAs in Enugu State

2. Review of Literatures

2.1. Records and Record Management

In order to define records management, the concept of “record” needs to be fully explored. A record is defined either in terms of the physical tangible format in which it appears, or in terms of the information it contains. It must be noted that records differ in format or size, and have different contents. The term record comes from the Latin word “recordari”, which means to recall, or to remember, or bring back to mind, and this is exactly what records do (Pember and Cowan, 2010). Cox (2001) also explained records as an extension of human memory, purposefully created to record information, document transactions, communicate thoughts, substantiate claims, advance explanations, offer justifications and provide lasting evidence events. Records can be defined as documented information, in any form, created or received and maintained by an organization or person in the transaction of business or conduct of affairs and kept as evidence of such activity.

Institutions create records to support the activities that they carry out. However, if these records are not managed properly, they will not provide the necessary support and information might be lost causing problems for the institution. To provide an efficient and effective administration that ensures that the business runs as smoothly as possible, there should be proper management of records. International Organization for Standardization (International Organization for Standardization (ISO), 2001) explained records management as the field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records, including the processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of information about business activities and transactions in the form of records. Records management is also the discipline of applying well-established techniques and procedures to the control of those sources of information, which arises internally within an organization as a result of its own activities (Newton, 1986). To Pali (2009), records management is the systematic control of all records, either in media format or printed materials from their creation until its final disposition; including the development and application of standards to the creation, use, storage, retrieval, disposal and archival preservation of recorded information. In summary, an effective records management program will ensure that records are available for use when needed, that privacy and confidentiality are maintained, that redundant records are destroyed and that records ultimately contribute towards sustaining service delivery.

2.2. The Benefits of Proper Records Management

According to Sanderson and Ward (2003), the importance of records management is increasingly being recognized in organizations. It is therefore the responsibility of records managers to ensure that they gain the attention of decision-makers in their organizations.

- Administrative staff required information in order to carry out their official duties and responsibilities efficiently and effectively in a transparent manner. Records represent major sources of information and are

almost the only reliable and legally verifiable source of data that can serve as evidence of decisions, actions and transactions in an organization (Wakumoya, 2000).

- De Wet and Du Toit (2000) stated that the service provided by records management is of vital importance to both employees (end users) and organizational success. The primary function of records management is to facilitate the free flow of records throughout the entire institution.
- It is the function of records management to ensure that an organization's records are safe for future reference.
- According to Palmer (2000), the role of a records management system is that it acts as a control system that reinforces other control systems such as internal and external auditing. The records themselves can serve to detect fraud and recover the loss. Since corruption creates an environment that allows opportunities to commit fraud, records can provide a trail for investigators to track the root of corruption. However, for records to be useful in this capacity, they must be accessible. In summary, it may be appropriate to indicate that records exist in order to remind institutions of their previous activities.
- The records are the corporate memory of the organization, evidence of what was done and why it was done. They provide information for different institutional purposes, such as decision making, financial accountability, performance measurement, strategic planning and research.
- Sanderson and Ward (2003) are of the opinion that records management in an organization helps to avoid the cost of litigation or failure to comply with regulatory bodies, preventing the loss of intellectual property or loss of corporate learning/corporate memory, preventing loss of information from disasters or theft and ensuring business continuity, maximizing the efficiency of operation and usage of information, responding in a timely and effective way to requirements of customers, protecting executives and their organizations from loss of reputation and credibility with the general public and customers by demonstrating good practice and providing accountability for their actions.
- According to Sprehe (2002), records ensure that an organization can; conduct its business in an orderly, efficient, and accountable manner, deliver services consistently and equitably, document its policies, decisions, and outcomes to stakeholders and regulators, meet its legislative and regulatory requirements, including audits, protect itself in litigation, function in a financially and ethically accountable manner, protect corporate interests as well as the rights of employees, clients, and other stakeholders, provide continuity of operations in an emergency or disaster, and maintain its corporate and institutional memory.
- Without records, no assessment can be made of whether individuals, private and public organizations have actually carried out the actions and transactions that they had to execute, or whether they ensure that these actions and transactions meet the criteria of efficiency, legitimacy or the principles of good governance, and whether they had done things which they were not supposed to do (Thomassen, 2001). Records as important resource for organizations should be harnessed through proper records management practices (Mutula and Wamukoya, 2009).
- Institutions and individuals create records in the conduct of their current business to support administration, to ensure accountability, and for cultural purposes, to meet the needs of society for collective memory and the preservation of individual and community identity and history (Shepherd, 2010).
- Proper records management helps to support the expectation of a democratic society for transparency and they protect citizen's rights. They enable governments to deliver electronically enabled services to citizens (e-government) and facilitate citizen participation through the provision of information and digital interaction (Shepherd, 2010). Thus, records have to be managed as a strategic resource so as to facilitate the day to day operations of the institution. For instance, In summary, an effective records management programme will ensure that records are available for use when needed, privacy and confidentiality maintained, redundant records destroyed and that records ultimately contribute towards sustaining service delivery.

2.3. Challenges Associated With Records Management

Brendan (2012) noted weak legislative and organizational infrastructures as a major challenge to record management in the public sector. Study (Egwunyenga, 2009) confirmed that African record keepers lack the basic skills and competences for handling records and archives in the public sector. There is a serious problem of technophobia in most offices in Africa especially among the older employees. Due to inadequate skills in information technology, many traditional librarians, records managers, and archivists are very conservative and have phobia for computers. This may be due to generation gaps between the new and old professionals which led analogue information managers to perceive computers as a threat to their status as experts. Brendan (2012) opined that, growing use of information technologies in record management creates a lot of problems in the management of records in both public and private organizations. He added that in Africa and many developing countries governments are looking forward to computerizing their core functions by adopting e-government. Regrettably these projects fail to succeed because governments neither assess the available information framework suitable for electronic records management, nor consult the records managers to determine how the process of automation will not affect the role of records managers in providing reliable and authentic evidence. In Miller (2004) view, the conversion from traditional records management activities to electronic environment will not succeed in Africa if the underlying processes are not structured in an efficient and effective fashion. Many African states are jumping into the information technology bandwagon without adequately incorporating good records management strategies.

Lawal (2007) attributed the challenges associated with records management in most organizations to corruption or inadequate finance. According to him, corrupt leaders in Africa do not provide adequate funds, facilities, and infrastructure for proper and efficient electronic record management. Instead, corrupt bureaucrats intentionally distort public policies, public records, decision-making apparatus, and sometimes go to a length to transfer experienced records managers in a bid to create opportunities for embezzlement. Otuama (2010) mentioned the following as the problems associated with records management in most organizations; Absence of an archival institution, the problem of oral traditions, inadequate skills and high staff turn-over, inadequate funding, poor housing and equipment, absence of an archival law, high levels of illiteracy, poor transport and communication network. Ilana (2008) identified lost records and record storage as challenges associated with records management.

2.4. Common Record Management Practices

Revolution in data storage and transmission over the decades has a paradigm shift in the way organizations manage their records. Records systems should however be able to facilitate and implement decisions about retaining or disposing of records. Therefore, the effective management of records requires that there are procedures for the timely disposal of records that institutions no longer need to support current day-to-day activities or those that they do not need to retain for legacy purposes (International Organization for Standardization (ISO), 2001).

➤ *Centralized and Decentralized/Departmental Filing:* Record filing may be organized centrally or departmentally. Some organizations choose the centralized filing system, while others prefer decentralized/departmental filing. Others also find both systems to be good. Centralized filing is whereby all the files of an institution are kept and controlled in one room instead of allowing each department to file its own records. In many large organizations, a separate department (central filing department) is created to take care of its filing. Trained personnel called records managers are in-charge of all filing and so filing is done more efficiently. This makes it possible for effective supervision to be exercised over files including the movement and placement of correspondence on files. Decentralized or departmental filing is a system by which each department or section of an organization keeps and maintains its own system of filing which best suits it (Arora, 2006).

➤ *Manual or Paper-based Records Management:* Paper based records are records that are created on paper. They include hand written notes, correspondence, printed reports, procedures or maps. When a record is created or received, it is up to the user to ensure that it is filed and documented correctly to allow for easy tracking and further use by the organization Azman (2009). Paper plays an important role in organizational life. Paper documents such as schedules and flow charts provide a gathering place for workers to view information and be seen viewing information. Sellen and Harper (2002), showed that large paper documents became the foci of organizational life. Gregg (2013) highlighted the challenge encountered in using paper-based records management as; accessibility through hardcopy files is limited because paper-based information can only exist in a single location at a time. He added that with one copy of a document in existence, only one person can access that information at any given time. This serial approach to information management does not play well in today's "I need it now" business environment. This is especially the case since most organizations are decentralized and geographically dispersed. When there is only one version of information, managing the hardcopy document involved becomes a physical challenge

➤ *Electronic Records Management:* Records management has evolved from a paper-based function responsible for the storage of an organization's miscellaneous documents, to one concerned with the management of specified internal records, in a multitude of media, from creation to disposal, through their active use as sources of information and hence of ultimate review against retention schedules, for their eventual destruction (De Wet and Du Toit, 2000).

The introduction of computers therefore assists in achieving and adding value to the conduct of business transactions (Johare, 2001). Electronic records with its potential play an important role in supporting efficiency, accuracy and accessibility of information. Sing (2002) pointed out that there is a direct relationship between investment in electronic records and productivity improvements in the office and these include; better customer service, greater product/service variety, shorter response time, enhanced product/service quality and better customization of products and services.

3. Methodology

The research design for this study is the descriptive survey research. The choice of survey design is appropriate since the number of element (population) under study is known. The population for this study consists of a sample of 49 senior staff of records unit and administrative department of six Local Government Areas (LGAs) selected through purposive sampling from the three senatorial zones of Enugu State. However, in analyzing the data, the researchers relied on the 41 questions that were validly completed and returned. The data used in this study was generated from primary and secondary sources. The major instrument for data collection is a five point likert scale questionnaire titled record management and goal achievement in the public sector questionnaire (RM&GAPSQ). The statistical tools used for data analysis are: simple percentage (%) and chi-square test. Simple percentage is given as;

$$\% = \frac{a \times N}{100}$$

Chi-square (X^2) statistical tool was used to test the stated hypotheses at 5% (0.05) level of significance. The chi-square is mathematically expressed as; $\chi^2 = \sum (E-O)^2 / E$ where X^2 = Chi - square, \sum = Summation, O = Observation and, E = Expected frequency. The analysis was carried out at 0.05 level of significance with the aid of 20.0 versions of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS).

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Hypothesis One

H_{01} : Record management does not have significant impact on social service delivery of LGAs in Enugu State

4.2. Responses on Research Question 1

Questions	Responses					
	SA	A	UD	D	SD	TOTAL
1	2	22	7	9	1	41
2	4	23	9	4	1	41
3	5	15	12	7	1	41
4	5	19	12	4	1	41
5	6	20	6	8	2	41
Total	22	99	46	32	6	205

From the output of the SPSS software analysis, we have the following output;

4.3. Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Questions * Response	205	100.0%	0	0.0%	205	100.0%

4.4. Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	17.327 ^a	12	.035
Likelihood Ratio	17.585	12	.017
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.051	1	.821
N of Valid Cases	205		

a. 10 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.40.

Finding: Since the p-value or sig. (0.035) < the alpha level (0.05), we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that record management has significant impact on social service delivery among the LGAs in Enugu State

4.4. Hypothesis Two

H_{02} : Record management does not have significant impact on the process efficiency of LGAs in Enugu State

4.5. Responses on Research Question 2

Questions	Responses					
	SA	A	UD	D	SD	TOTAL
1	4	26	10	1	1	41
2	7	29	4	1	1	41
3	5	26	9	1	1	41
4	10	21	8	2	2	41
5	8	23	8	2	2	41
Total	34	125	39	5	7	205

From the output of the SPSS software analysis, we have the following output;

4.6. Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Questions * Response	205	100.0%	0	0.0%	205	100.0%

4.7. Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.397 ^a	12	.023
Likelihood Ratio	18.776	12	.022
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.125	1	.123
N of Valid Cases	205		

a. 5 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.40.

Finding: Since the p-value or sig. (0.023) < the alpha level (0.05), we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that record management impact on the process efficiency of LGAs in Enugu State is significant

5. Conclusion

Record management system transcends all organizations despite the nature of their activities. It is concluded in this study that record management system employed by the selected LGAs in Enugu state has contributed in the achievement of the goals of the government especially in the area of enhancing process efficiency

6. Recommendations

The study recommends that;

- i. Local Government Areas should ensure that results of their socio-economic mapping and project management information are integrated into the overall information system of the LGAs for enhanced social service and project delivery
- ii. Training and retraining of record managers and staff in the LGAs should be made an intricate part of the policies of the LGAs in order to update their proficiency and ensure that they contribute optimally to the achievement of the goals of the LGAs
- iii. To promote cost efficiency and enhance timeliness in information processing, it is recommended that LGAs should migrate to full electronic information management system

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