Archives and Records Management in Exams and Records of Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic Port Harcourt

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Abstract

The study investigated archives and records management in the exams and record unit of Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic, Port Harcourt. The specific objectives of the study is to find out the policy adopted, examine the storage and preservation approach, retention and retrieval, personnel and security measures and challenges associated with record management. The study was carried out using qualitative research methodology, interviews and observations were used as instrument 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 department and schools, challenges affecting the unit is lack of space, difficulties in retrieving the files from the store house. The study concluded and recommended that the institutions should provide space for them and also send their staff in the unit for further training and also get certified record managers amongst others.

Introduction

Institutions of higher learning like the polytechnics are not just responsible for teaching and learning processes but are also responsible for providing 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 at such plays a very vital role in the management system of the institution. The term record originates from the Latin word "recorder" which means to remember or being mindful of (Esse, 2002). Record means information or document recorded in written or film through electronic process. Records are important aspect of any

institution because it ensure that the activities of the institutions are governed effectively and efficiently, it also ensure institutional report which enhances transparency and accountability. Every organisation and institution have been able to keep one record or the other to keep as a track record of events to help the smooth running of that unit in that academic environment.

Record 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.

An archive is a place where people can go to gather first hand facts, data and evidence from letters, reports, notes, memos, photograph and other primary sources this information are retained for a long time value. Records are deposited in an archive which could be that of any institution either public or private, preserved because of their value. Records are evidence of an activity which could be in a book form, papers, maps, discs, flash drive or any other documentary material (Amadi 2016).

Records are essentials for the effective and efficient productive functioning of every organization, public and private as well as academic institution. For academic institutions to be able to manage student's records adequately, they must grow the capacity of managing records and information. 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 student admission processes, activities and progress, students result, student's mobilization for one-year service to the nation are among there must be kept by polytechnics as was stated by education law

The importance 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

Record 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).

Currently record management has moves 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, record and record management is the lifewire 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 was a polytechnic funded by the Government of Rivers State, located at Rumuola in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

It was established in 1987 36 years ago, chairmaned by Hon. Lee Maeba, rectored currently by Barr. Samuel B. Kalagbor, an urban centered public institution. Port Harcourt polytechnic was changed to Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic by the current Governor of Rivers State, Barr. Nyesom Ezenwo Wike CON, and was signed into the Bill of law on 4th July 2016.

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 the retention and retrieval method
3. To identify the personnel and security measures
4. To identify the problems in the unit

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 base 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 achievement and performance during their days in school, also for recruiting agencies and students who might need their transcripts and certificates in the future due to job pursuit. Also 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 for 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 prevents 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 the 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 student's 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. Because these delays also affect students in their pursuit for post graduate studies especially delays in retrieving transcripts and original results for employment as well. Polytechnic program has become intensely complicated over the years due to records not being accessed or retrieved when needed. This greatly affects organizations, students and parents who needed this records for timely decision making (Nwankwo, 2001).

He further observed that tertiary institutions in Nigeria have what it takes to generate information of about 76% and usage low capacity of 3% this gap has raised querries as to what happened to the information's 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 made 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 at such guiding the management of student's record.

Storage and Preservation

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Retention and Retrieval

It involves easily locating the desired records. This is made possible if documents or files moved out are brought back or made visible for everybody especially those in the unit) records become useful if they are easily accessed and retrieved for staff, students and organizations. Record retention refers to recorded documents that states the duration that particular records can be retained before disposal. There is a standard policy on retention and disposal of records building on institutions based on the agreement of the management board. Abdalrahman 2015, on 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.

Personnel and Security

The activities and processes involved in record keeping and management, requires a trained professional in record management. In some institutions, records are not managed by trained personnel; which is a major challenge in record management. A well trained record manager in any institution can help to reduce most of the challenges arising from access and retrieval. The point is record management requires a great knowledge and skill in record creation, storing, retrieving, preserving and disposing (Antonia & Ebisemen, 2020). Record managers must be on alert in safeguarding this information keeping secrets about them in this organisation and institutions, so as not to allow unauthorized individuals having access to these records. Every institution intentionally keep their records secured and unaccessible to individuals except those authorized by the management to be part of the unit. Lack of security measures can actually put the institution in a tight corner.

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. Also, the death of a qualified personnel that leads to a replacement most times affect the next personnel who may not be qualified at such to manage and preserve records in the institution. As important as record keeping is, there are still issues of hard copies being damaged by insects, fire and flood due to poor storage situations which can damage these records, most institutions still practice the old fashioned record keeping/pattern of stacking files upon each other as well as poor storage facilities(oyebanji,2018).

Record management in this era has been reported to be poorly handled as a result of challenges faced by most institutions and organisation, record management generally in Nigeria is plagued by issues like unskilled and inexperienced personnel, lack of funds; archaic record keeping method and poor data against organisation and preservation of records (Egwuyenga, 2009). In some cases, issues like inadequate procedures and guidelines, information security and privacy is also a great challenge. Most institutions lack retention schedule 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 qualitative research methodology. In this study, interviews, observation, written documents and audio recording was made and transcribed into content analysis. Questions were asked related to the objectives of the study and answers were provided by the unit head (Deputy Registrar) exams and record unit of 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 deem 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 and 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?

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 forwards it 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?

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?
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 there are all kept in the store house till date.

How do you secure the records?
Response:
Our files are secured in a cabinet under lock and key, staff not confidential cannot be posted to exams and record. Credible staff that can keep top secrets are the people posted to this unit (anyone found wanting, an immediate request is made for that person to be pulled out.

Do you have a trained personal on record?
Response:
Administration is the all mark of record keeping and as an individual in a growing institution my years of experience in this unit from day one helped me till date in record keeping. There is no certified personnel in record keeping in this unit rather we are trained on the job and as we keep navigating and keeping the record, the more we are trained in the job but not certified in it.

What are the challenges in record management in the unit (Exam Records?)
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 Recommendation
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. That records have been retained from inception till date without any form of disposal. It is obvious that Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic have 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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