

ACADEMIC RECORDS MANAGEMENT IN GHANAIAN BASIC SCHOOLS: A STUDY OF BASIC SCHOOLS IN THE ASHIEDU KETEKE SUB-METRO IN THE GREATER ACCRA REGION

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ABSTRACT: *The study examined the academic records management practices in Basic Schools in the Ashiedu Keteke Sub-Metro in the Greater Accra Region. Adopting the quantity approach to research, the study employed the descriptive survey design which involved the administration of closed-ended questionnaire to 20 head, 20 assistant head teachers and 213 teachers from 20 randomly selected Basic schools in the Ashiedu Keteke Sub-Metro. The study revealed that academic records of basic schools included admission register, attendance register, log book, visitors book, cumulative record folder, students report sheet/card, school timetable, staff attendance register, staff movement book, scheme of work, lesson plan and notes, store ledger/inventory book, and school syllabus. The absence of national policy on records management and the lack of guidelines for academic records management in schools appeared to be the major challenges hindering effective academic records management in basic schools in the sub-Metro. Based on the findings, it was recommended that there should be a national policy on academic records management. In addition, qualified record managers or professional archivists should be employed to manage academic records in Basic Schools.*

KEYWORDS: Records, Management, Record Management, Professional

INTRODUCTION

The educational life cycle of a student and the relationship between the student and his/her alma mater may never end considering the fact that even after the student has completed studies and left the school, he/she may come back to the school to request for some relevant academic documents either to further their education or secure a job. When certificates or honours awarded to students become contentious, one of the easiest ways to perhaps calm down nerves and establish the accuracy and authenticity of such documents is to delve deep into the school's academic records archive and bring out the original documents for verification and confirmation.

Academic records management occupies a strategic position in the efficient and effective management of students' records in educational institutions. It is central in ensuring the credibility of students' records, because proper records management systems always prove very relevant in terms of providing accurate students records for verification and confirmation in times of disputes. According to Coetzer (2012), records are a vital asset in ensuring that an educational institution is governed effectively and efficiently, and is accountable to its staff, students and the community that it serves. Adu-Oppong and Asante (2014) contend that a good records management system ensures that an institution meets its records keeping requirements by ensuring that it captures and preserves the evidence required to establish its activities and existence. Records display and confirm the decision taken, the

actions carried out and the results of such actions, they support policy formation and management decision making, it protects the interest of the organization, the right of the employers, clients' citizens and help the organization to conduct its business and deliver its services in consistent and equitable ways (Langemo, 1995).

Gama (2010) argues that basic schools by their nature generate a lot of records. There are records about pupils' academic activities, responsibilities assigned to staff, course contents, log books, financial transactions, and the general administration of the school which should be properly generated, organized, preserved and appraised. While some of these records may have less value that may warrant their disposition immediately they are used others warrant preservation for a certain period or permanently. It is, therefore, the responsibility of school administrators to determine the records that need to be preserved or disposed of as the case may be especially in the absence of a policy that guides records management (their appraisal, retention and disposition) in order to keep track of what is happening or has happened. Gama (2010) however posits that for efficient planning purposes the records generated and or received by schools in the course of their activities must be organized to allow easy access whenever the need arises.

Despite the fact that there has been a drastic revolution in the way in which information is managed within the last few decades, records management has become one of the most difficult tasks associated with educational service delivery in Ghana (Azameti & Adjei, 2013). Wamukoya and Mutula (2005) state that poor records management is guaranteed to result in information gaps that lead to inadequate records and the loss of document heritage. With the advent of computer technology, however, records management has taken a new dimension. Educational institutions now prefer the electronic system of records management to the manual system. While the electronic system uses computer technology for entering, storage and retrieving data, the manual system continues to rely on traditional paper and filing approach. In Ghana, whilst tertiary institutions and some second cycle institutions have adopted both the manual system and electronic system of records management.

Studies by (Azameti & Adjei, 2013; Adu-Oppong & Asante, 2014; Otu, Bempah, & Amoakohene, 2014; Tagbator, Adzido, & Agbanu, 2015) have explored the state of records management in educational institutions in Ghana within the last decade established that there was no national policy on academic records management and that every institution adopts its own records management system though such systems were not without challenges. If indeed this is the state of records management in our institutions of higher learning as indicated by Adu- Oppong and Asante (2014); Otu et al. (2014); Tagbator et al. (2015) then the situation in our basic schools may be worst. It, however, appears that there is the paucity of information regarding the academic records management practices and the challenges that are likely to impede the management of academic records at the basic school level. In view of this, the current study sought to fill the identified gap by providing answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the types of academic records management in basic schools in the Ashiedu Keteke Sub-Metro?
2. What challenges impede the proper academic records management in basic schools in the Ashiedu Keteke Sub-Metro?

3. What measures are put in place by school authorities to manage academic records in basic schools in the Ashiedu Keteke Sub-Metro?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Meaning of Records Management

Information is the lifeblood of every organization and the manner in which it is generated, received, stored, retrieved and disposed is very essential to the continuous operation of an organization. Therefore, over time vital information concerning the internal or external activities of an organization is recorded and stored for immediate use or for future reference. When information generated within an organization or received from outside the organization is documented and stored for immediate or future purposes, it becomes a record of the organization. Cox (2001) defines 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 of events.

Cornwell Management Consultants (2001) defines records as document(s) produced or received by a person or organization in the course of 11 businesses and retained by that person or organization. It is any information created, received and maintained as evidence and information by an organization or person, in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business (International Standard on Records Management, ISO (2001). Also, Akor and Udensi (2014) state that record is any document or other source of information compiled, recorded or stored in written form or on film, or by electronic process, or in any other manner or by any other means.

In an educational setting, records could be classified into four major categories as asserted by Daramola (1995). The classifications according to Daramola are as follows:

- Reference Records: Policy records which must be possessed by a school which contains Government policies, decisions of governing council, and procedures on funding and moral codes.
- Administrative Records: Include records of great visits, events, annual enrolment of students and records of personnel that have served and still serving in an organization.
- Academic Records: Include records of curriculum issues, facilities and equipment for teaching and learning guidelines for the introduction of new academic programmes and students' academic records.
- Financial Records: This class of records consists of information and documents pertaining to the school's financial management. From the various definitions of records aforementioned, it could be deduced that records are documents that serve as an organization's memory which keep all information relating to an organization's activities over time and provide objective evidence of activities performed, events occurred, results achieved, or statements made when there is the need for such information.

Records can be described as all documented information, regardless of their characteristics, media, physical form, and the manner in which it recorded or stored. Records can be either tangible objects, such as paper documents like birth certificates, driver's licenses, and physical medical x-rays, or digital information such as electronic office documents, website content, or electronic mail. It must be noted that not all documents are records. A record is a document consciously retained as evidence of an action and stored for such purpose. Therefore, unlike mere documents, records often have strict compliance requirements regarding their retention, access and destruction, and generally have to be kept unchanged. Records may include accounts, agreements, books, drawings, letters, magnetic/optical disks, memos, micro-graphics, etc. generated or received by an organization or a person in the course of undertaking an activity.

Importance of Records Management

According to Tagbotor et al. (2015), the essence of proper records management cannot be overemphasized. This is because records are indispensable to the efficient and economic operation of organizations. They posit that records serve as organizational memory by giving evidence of past events and basis for future action. When created, maintained and disposed of in a systematic and orderly fashion, records are tremendous assets to an organization. They added that records can be used as an information resource for strategic planning purposes since they provide value for reference and management decisions. Also, keeping complete records from the beginning can save time and money whilst ensuring accuracy of records will also prevent excessive residues by ensuring that withdrawal time has been met. In essence, the primary function of records management is to facilitate the free flow of records throughout the entire organization. According to Ojo and Olaniyan (2008), the purpose of record management is to achieve the best retrieval and exploitation of the data held in these media and systems, reduce the cost and improve the efficiency of the record making and record keeping processes, thereby saving money for the administration of the school.

The International Council of Archive [ICA] (2008) emphasizes that good records management is fundamental to a well-functioning organization since it supports business activity and provides a basis for efficient service delivery. It provides the mechanism whereby both the private and public sectors can account for their decisions and actions. Also, records provide evidence for the public to confirm or claim their public rights and entitlements, as well as providing individuals with evidence to justify organization's decisions and a mechanism whereby they can have trust in the organization's activities. Langemo (1995) contends that records display and confirm the decision taken, the actions carried out and the results of such actions by organizations, supports policy formation and management decision making, protects the interest of the organization, the right of the employers, clients' citizens and help the organization to conduct its business and deliver its services in consistent and equitable ways.

In the school setting, Akanbi (1999) asserts that the purpose of record keeping for effective school management is to ensure that accurate and proper records are kept of student achievement and growth, school activities and matters that will promote school efficiency and effectiveness. He adds that good records management not only helps protect records but also enhances organizations' operational efficiency. Kemoni and Wamukoya (2000) aver that effective records management systems provide information required for the proper functioning of organizations, including educational institutions.

Gama (2010) postulates that records serve as important sources of information that enable individuals and organizations to carry out their legal obligations. Hence, maintenance of these records would no doubt facilitate decision making as well as enhance the general administration of the school system. In their view, Akor and Udensi (2014) assert that records management can help reduce the proliferation of unnecessary reports, documents, and copies, and at the same time improve the effectiveness of those reports and documents that do need to be created. In this direction they contend that proper records management could help educational institutions to manage their information, efficiently fulfil their mandate, protect them from litigation, preserve their corporate memory, and foster accountability and good governance. Hence, they opine that the information contained in academic records needs to be managed according to a methodical approach in order to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the schools in carrying out their mission. Similarly, Esia-Donkor (2014) asserts that an adequate record management programme co-ordinates and protects the school's records, sharpens the effectiveness of records as management memory, controls the time equipment and space allocated for records, and helps to simplify intra-organizational communication challenges. Therefore, he opines that it is prudent that school principals take record keeping and management serious and ensure that all major and relevant activities in the school are recorded.

Challenges of Academic Records Management

Using a sample of 1990 respondents from public and private universities, polytechnics, and nursing and teacher training colleges across the country, Azameti and Adjei (2013) examined the challenges associated with academic records management in tertiary institutions in Ghana. The study revealed the following as some of the challenges of records management in tertiary institutions in Ghana: poor knowledge among record keepers on electronic records management, inadequate record keeping equipment, interferences from supervisors, low morale on the part of record keepers due to poor remuneration and frequent crashing of hard drives leading to the loss of records. Other challenges that were found from the study included weak technological support for efficient record keeping, frequent freezing of computers due to virus attacks making it difficult to retrieve information, and lack the logistical support required to effectively manage electronic records.

Tagbator et al. (2015) outlined the challenges hindering proper records management to include: lack of records management policies and procedures, lack of qualified staff such as a records manager and archivist, limited resources to implement a system according to requirements (legislation), records management costs that are not immediately apparent and may only become significant over a period of time and thus not attract management's attention, and limited resources to implement a system according to requirements.

In examining the status of records management at the College of Technology Education, Kumasi of the University of Education, Winneba, Adu-Oppong and Asante (2014) found that there was no formal records management system at the institution that dealt with general paper work/documents and electronic records. The study further revealed that there was no specific policy that governed records management and no proper archival space and personnel at the institution. The study corroborated that of Otu et al. (2014) who found that the Koforidua Polytechnic had no laid down records management policy and had a weak programme structure for managing records. This situation could be attributed to the lack of national policy directive for academic records management at all the various levels of education which leaves every institution to adopt its own unique policy for academic records

management. The issue of poor records management in educational institutions is not only peculiar to Ghana but evident in many developing countries. For instance, Ibiam (2004) noted that many years of neglect had done great damage to the education sector in Nigeria and record keeping is not an exemption. According to Afolabi (2004) and Egwuyenga (2009), records management in Nigeria is plagued by such factors as inadequate skilled and experienced management personnel, lack of sufficient funds and the placement of records management in a low priority pedestal in relation to other things. Also, Gama (2010) revealed that problems such as shortage of storage facilities, absence of computers, insufficient space, lack of shelves, absence of records managers, and lack of sufficient knowledge on the part of the school administrators on the how to manage the records effectively, and absence of records management policy are some of the major challenges affecting the effective management of records in educational institution in Nigeria.

Measures for ensuring Proper Academic Records Management

In ensuring effective records management system, Egwunyenga (2009) contends that there is the need for effective training of staff in records management; full introduction and sustenance of computer and internet services as well as records management integration; adequate manual classification, security, storage facilities and funds are generally recommended for good record keeping. Akor and Udensi (2014) recommended that as part of measures for ensuring effective records management in educational institutions, efforts should be made for provision of standby generator as an alternative to power supply to ensure effective electronic records management system, training of staff to handle the institutions records, provision of adequate fund and enough infrastructural facilities towards effective records management. In a survey of records management practices in circular primary schools in Metropolitan Local Government Area (MLGAs) of Kano State, Gama (2010) recommended that as part of measures taken to ensure proper management of academic records, the following should be taken into consideration:

- Enlightenment campaign through seminars and workshops so that head teachers could be educated on effective ways of managing records.
- Provision of ICT facilities so that records could be created easily and be kept in both soft and hard copies for posterity.
- School administrators should be sufficiently trained and retrained on the importance of the records they generate and receive and be acquainted with the technicalities of managing them.
- Uniform method of organizing the records should be adopted by all the schools. This will enable the school administrators to be familiar with the system where ever they may be transferred to within the MLGAs.
- The state universal education board through the local education authority should provide additional storage facilities to the schools to enable them preserve their records for posterity. Since records are better generated and preserved using computers, the authorities should provide the facility to schools.
- Records retention and disposal policy should be formulated to guide school administrator on what to dispose of, when and how they should be disposed of.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed the descriptive survey design as the researcher sought to describe issues as they appeared without necessarily manipulating variables. The study population comprised 45 head teachers and 540 teachers from 45 basic schools in the Ashiedu Keteke Sub-Metro in the Greater Accra Region. School were grouped into 3 clusters depending on their geographical location within the study area. The simple random sampling technique was further used to sample 20 schools from the 3 clusters.

Using the census sampling, all the 20 head teachers and 20 assistant head teachers from the sampled schools were included in the study. All the 213 teachers from the 3 cluster of schools were censused sampled. A total of 253 respondents comprising of 213 teachers and 20 head and 20 assistant head teachers answered the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of three sections A, B, and C. Section A looks at the types of academic records available in Ghanaian basic schools, section B delved into the challenges while section C assessed the challenges. employed as the instrument for data collection which was administered to respondents. With regards to validity, the questionnaire was designed based on the purpose and objectives of the study with reference to the reviewed literature. The face and content validity were ensured by experts in the field of records management through proof reading and vetting of the items. A Cronbach coefficient alpha of 0.75 was established as the reliability of the questionnaire.

For the purpose of data analysis, results from the questionnaire were categorized, coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Service Solutions (SPSS) version 21 and analyzed using frequency counts, percentages and weighted mean scores. Frequencies count indicated the number involved in a particular response item, while percentages showed the number relative to the total involved. Weighted mean scores were used to obtain the average score of the variables for the purpose of ranking.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The study relied on primary data which was obtained through the administration of a questionnaire to 213 teachers, 20 head and 20 assistant teachers summing up to 253 respondents. At the end of the data collection process, the researchers retrieved 213 completed questionnaires from the respondents. Out of the 213 questionnaires retrieved, three of them were not answered properly and therefore were excluded from the analysis. Hence, 210 usable questionnaires comprising of 20 head teachers, 20 assistant headteachers and 170 teachers were used for the final analysis.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	f	%
Gender		
Male	118	56.2
Females	92	43.8
Age		
Below 30 years	71	33.8
30 - 39	66	31.4
40 - 49	49	23.3
50 - 59	16	7.6
60 years and above	8	3.8
Employment Status		
Headteacher	20	9.5
Assistant headteacher	20	9.5
Teacher	170	81.0
Educational Qualification		
Diploma in Basic Education	104	49.5
Bachelor's Degree	64	30.5
Postgraduate Degree	42	20.0
Years of Work Experience		
Below 5 years	53	25.2
5 - 10	73	34.8
11 - 15	65	31.0
16 and above	19	9.0
GES Rank		
Senior Superintendent	65	31.0
Principal Superintendent	88	41.9
Assistant Director II	32	15.2
Assistant Director I	25	11.9

Source: Field Data, 2017

The result shows that males (56.2%) dominated of females (43.8%). With regard to the age distribution of the respondents, it was observed that 33.8% of the respondents were below 30 years whilst 3.8% attained the age of 60 or above. However, 54.7% fell within the ages of 30

to 49. The variety in the age distribution is significant to the findings of this study because a comprehensive and rich data was made available from different generations of teachers and head teachers. This implies that respondents had acquired various levels of education with the dominant educational qualification being a Diploma in Basic Education as indicated in table 1.

With regards to headteachers bio data, the finding of the study revealed that all the headteacher had acquired postgraduate qualifications. This presupposes that though postgraduate qualification is not a strict requirement for the position of a headteacher of a basic school in Ghana, rather prospecting headteachers and existing headteachers find it necessary to develop themselves through postgraduate studies in order to put themselves in a strategic position to perform creditably well as school heads. In terms of work experience, 34.5% of the total respondents indicated that they have garnered between 5 - 10 years of experience in the basic school level, 31.0% have worked at the basic school level for 11 to 15 years, with 9.0% acquiring over 16 years of teaching experience. With these rich experience from respondents their views will enrich the findings of the study.

What are the types of academic records management used in basic schools in the Ashiedu Keteke Sub-Metro?

With regards to the types of academic records kept by basic schools in the Ashiedu Keteke Sub-Metro, all the 210 respondents agreed that the main types of academic records used in their schools were: admission register, attendance register, log book, visitors book, cumulative record folder, students report sheet/card, school timetable, staff attendance register, staff movement book, scheme of work, lesson plan and notes, store ledger/inventory book, and school syllabus. Nonetheless, there were differences in responses regarding the existence and usage of other records such as past examination question papers, staff employment files, handover notes, teaching practice files, capitation grant files, minutes of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, circulars etc. these differences seem to emanate from the fact that respondents had different understanding of what constitute academic records in their school. For example, while 63.4% of the respondents did not agree that the school cash book as an academic record, 36.2% agreed to the same statement. Similarly, 67.1% agreed that the staff minutes book is an academic record, 32.9% disagreed.

The findings with regard to the various types of academic records that exist in basic schools in Ashiedu Keteke are consistent with that of Gama (2010) who found and classified various types of academic records to include records about pupils' academic activities, responsibilities assigned to staff, course contents, log books, and the general administration of the school. However, Gama opine that at the basic school level majority of the teachers and head teachers have little or no knowledge of how and when to use these records. Gama concludes that due to insufficient knowledge and skills most school leaders are even more confused as the types and classification of these records. The end product according Gama is the misuse and abuse of academic records in our schools.

Table 2: Types of Academic Records in Basic Schools

Types of Academic Records	Yes		N	
	f	%	f	%
Admission register	210	100	0	0
Attendance register	210	100	0	0
Log book	210	100	0	0
Visitors book	210	100	0	0
Cumulative record folder	210	100	0	0
Students report sheet/card	210	100	0	0
School timetable	210	100	0	0
Staff attendance register	210	100	0	0
Staff movement book	210	100	0	0
Scheme of work	210	100	0	0
Lesson plan and notes	210	100	0	0
Store ledger/inventory book	210	100	0	0
School Cash book	76	36.2	134	63.8
Minutes of staff meetings	69	32.9	141	67.1
Teachers' transfer documents	58	27.6	152	72.4
School syllabus	210	100	0	0
Teachers' records of work	46	21.9	164	78.1
Counterfoil leaving certificate	30	14.3	180	85.7
Past examination question papers	51	24.3	159	75.7
Continuous assessment records	182	86.7	28	13.3
Staff employment files	46	21.9	164	78.1
Handover notes	37	17.6	173	82.4
Teaching practice files	43	20.5	167	79.5
Capitation grant files	30	14.3	180	85.7
Minutes of the PTA meetings	34	16.2	176	83.8
Circulars	49	23.3	161	76.7
Receipts of purchase	41	19.5	169	80.5
Records of excursion / field trips	39	18.6	171	81.4
School anniversary speeches	21	10.0	189	90.0

Source: Field Data, 2017

Similarly, the findings corroborate the position of Amanchukwu and Ololube (2015) who identified academic records to include: admission and withdrawals register, attendance register, class timetable, individual cumulative record card, lesson plan, log book, syllabus, scheme of work, school timetable, staff and student movement book, and school stock book. However, the findings were inconsistent with Amanchukwu and Ololube's classification of school cash book, transfer and leaving certificates, and visitor's book as academic records. These findings implies that basic schools have many types of academic records in which because of non-existence of strict policies school leaders find it quite difficult to classify and make good use of them for effective administrative purposes.

What challenges impede the proper academic records management in basic schools in the Ashiedu Keteke Sub-Metro?

Table 3 presents the results of the study with regards to the challenges that affect academic records management in basic schools in the Ashietu Keteke Sub Metro.

Table 2: Challenges of Academic Records Management

Challenges of Academic Records Challenges	1		2		3	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Headteacher's lack of records management skills	34	16.2	15	7.1	161	76.7
Lack of qualified records managers or archivists	20	9.5	13	6.2	177	84.3
Absence of academic records management policy	25	11.9	14	6.7	171	81.4
Poor attitude towards records management	18	8.6	7	3.3	185	88.1
Lack of formal records management system	32	15.2	12	5.7	166	79.0
Lack of storage facilities for academic records	16	7.6	5	2.4	189	90.0
Lack of computers for electronic records management	28	13.3	3	1.4	179	85.2
Lack of funds for records management activities	25	11.9	7	3.3	178	84.8
Lack of national policy on records management	20	9.5	7	3.3	183	87.1
Loss of data due to computer breakdown or virus	192	91.4	4	1.9	14	6.7
Lack of record retention and disposition schedule	21	10.0	4	1.9	185	88.1

Key: 1 - Disagree, 2 - Not sure, 3 - Agree Source: Researcher's Field Data, 2017

The findings of the study revealed that head teachers face several challenges in managing the academic records in the school. For instance, the finding of the study shows that majority (76.7%) of the head teachers of basic schools lack the requisite skills and experience in records management, while 84.3% do not possess any knowledge or qualification in records management or archivists. Similarly, majority, 88.1% of the respondents indicate that because there is no national policy on records keeping at the basic schools, their attitudes towards records keeping is unprofessional. It must however be emphasized that all these challenges have been compounded by the lack of storage facilities present in basic schools.

Interestingly, despite the increasing importance of electronic records management since the advent of information technology, record management in basic schools is still a manual activity where teachers and head teachers use cupboard and shelf system of record keeping. Majority of the respondents (84.8%) attributed poor management of academic records in basic school to lack of funds to acquire the needed resources for effective records management. However, 11.9% of argued that academic records management has more to do with developing a positive attitude towards records keeping and for that matter lack of funds may not necessarily be a challenge to records management. The findings of the study corroborate the results of prior studies (Attwood & Gill, 2008; Egwunyenga, 2009; Akor & Udensi, 2014; Adu & Ngulube, 2017). These studies found that records management in schools in developing countries was plagued with challenges such as absence of records managers and archivists, lack of skills and experience in records management on part of school administrators or head teachers, lack of sufficient funds, inadequate storage facilities such as shelves, cupboards and storerooms, absence of computers and other electronic gadgets, absence of records management policy, lack of record manual and filing guidelines which lead to loss of vital information, negative attitude of staff toward records management lack of record retention and disposition schedule among other factors

Despite the benefits of academic records keeping, Ghana and for that matter the Ghana Education Service is yet to develop a specific national policy on academic records management which will serve as a guide to school heads on how to manage the records of their schools. Head teachers who act as record managers of their schools tend to adopt their own styles of records management in the absence of national or school level records management regulations. The lack of national policy on academic records management was seen as a challenge to effective academic records management as indicated by 87.1% of the respondents, although few (9.5%) disagreed with this assertion. This finding confirms the assertion of Gama (2010) that headteachers determine the records to be preserved or disposed of in the absence of a policy that guides records management. Similarly, the findings corroborate the assertions by Azameti and Adjei, (2013); Adu-Oppong and Asante (2014); Otu et al., (2014); Tagbator et al. (2015) that due to the lack of national policy on academic records management in Ghana, every educational institution adopts its own records management system though such systems may be not without challenges.

On the other hand, since majority of the basic schools did not have access to computers and other electronic gadgets for records management, the risk of losing files and other academic records through virus attack was very limited as indicated by 91.4% of the respondents. Hence, majority of the respondents did not see issue of loss of data through computer breakdown or virus attack as a major challenge to records management in basic schools in the Ashiedu Keteke Sub-Metro..

What measures are put in place by school authorities to manage academic records in basic schools in the Ashiedu Keteke Sub-Metro?

The challenges of academic records management in basic schools in the Ashiedu Keteke Sub-Metro are enormous. However, the importance of effective academic records management cannot be overemphasized. In soliciting the views of headteachers and teachers on measures to adopt to curb the problem of poor academic records management in basic schools, all the respondents supported the appointment of a qualified records manager or archivist for each of the basic schools.

Table 3: Measures for Improving Academic Records Management

Measures	1		2		3	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Proper manual classification of records	13	6.2	4	1.9	193	91.9
Appointment of records manager or archivist	0	0	0	0	0	0
Effective security of records	7	3.3	5	2.4	198	94.3
Provision of adequate storage facilities	17	8.1	7	3.3	186	88.6
Taking proper inventory of academic records	12	5.7	3	1.4	195	92.9
Training of headteachers in records management	16	7.6	7	3.3	187	89.0
Adoption of electronic records management system	14	6.7	4	1.9	192	91.4
National policy on academic records management	11	5.2	2	1.0	197	93.8
Sanction heads who fail to keep proper records	10	4.8	6	2.9	194	92.4
Cultivating the habit of record keeping	17	8.1	4	1.9	189	90.0

Key: 1 - Disagree, 2 - Not sure, 3 - Agree Source: Researcher's Field Data, 2017

The duty of the records manager is to manage all records (whether academic or nonacademic) of the schools. In this regard, majority of respondents (91.9%) opined that schools which do not have access to electronic records management system should adopt a proper manual classification system of records keeping. Records management ensures that records are kept safe in an orderly manner to enhance easy retrieval and future use. Hence, the security of records is very paramount in any records management. Therefore, 94.3% of the respondents recommended that headteachers must ensure the security and safe keeping of academic records to avoid loss of students' information which may be required long after the student has left the school.

Over three-quarters (88.6%) of the respondents bemoaned the lack of adequate storage facilities such as cupboards and shelves for keeping paper-based academic records. Therefore, they suggested that to enhance the records management function of basic schools, the Ghana Education Service need to provide them with adequate facilities and resources for records keeping. However, it is believed that records management involves taking inventory of items or documents for future reference. In this regard, the researchers argue that headteachers acting as the records managers of their schools should adopt proper inventory taking practices in order to keep track of all academic records of the school at any particular point in time.

Although head teachers and teachers are do their best to manage academic records, the findings of the study revealed that almost all the head teachers had not attend any workshop/in-service training on record management over the past 2 years. In this vein it is imperative for head teachers who are over burdened with academic and administrative work to effectively manage academic records in their schools. Therefore, the researchers argue that Ghana Education Service as part of head teachers training and workshops should include

academic records management to equip headteachers with the requisite skills for effective records management. It is important to note that basic schools can no longer stick to the traditional manual system of records keeping but must adapt to the new system which has proven to be the most efficient and effective forms of records management. This will become a reality when certain measures such as a national policy, training and retraining of school leaders and funds are made available to purchase new and modern equipments for our basic schools.

The absence of a qualified record management personnel or archivist who will be in charge of managing the academic records of the schools has been found to be one of the major challenges that contribute to the problem of poor academic records management in basic schools on Ghana. Hence, the researchers recommend that basic schools develop and adopt a proper records management policy, and appoint a records manager/archivist who will be in charge of the records management unit of the school. The training of headteachers in records management as a means of improving their skills to manage academic records in the absence of qualified school records manager should be adopted as the immediate remedy.

Similarly, the researchers argue that the adoption of proper manual system of records keeping in the absence of electronic records management system, the formulation of a national policy and guidelines on academic records management were deemed important measures that can help improve the current practice of academic records management in basic schools in Ghana. These measures are in line with the proposition of Chinyemba and Ngulube (2005) that proper records management should involve establishing systematic controls at every stage of the records lifecycle in accordance with established principles and accepted models of records management. It is believed that keeping proper inventory of all academic records and keeping records in good and safe conditions are very important steps in the records management process as indicated by Ololube (2013).

The researchers further argue that the adoption of electronic records management systems by basic schools in managing their academic records is long overdue. This is because over time the traditional manual system of record keeping has proven to be ineffective and bedeviled with a lot of challenges, hence, a shift from the manual system to electronic records management system cannot be comprised.

Implication to Research and Practice

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations were made to help improve the current system of academic records management: As matter of importance, the GES should design and implement a policy on academic records management which will serve as a guide to all basic schools in Ghana on how to manage their academic records. The policy should among other things clearly define the scope of academic records to avoid any confusion related to the composition of academic records, and provide the guidelines for capturing, registering, classifying, retaining, storing, tracking, accessing and disposing of records. The time is ripe to shift from the traditional paper-based manual system of records management to the modern day computer-based or electronic records management system.

If indeed basic schools in Ghana want to be abreast with time and prevent the avoidable inefficiencies and challenges associated with the manual system of records management, then the time is now to adopt a full-scale electronic management system. To this end, it is

recommended that the GES through the Ministry of Education should provide all public basic schools with computers and all the needed electronic gadgets to help them migrate from the manual system to an electronic management system.

To enhance the effectiveness of records management in basic schools, the study has revealed that there is the need to decouple the records management function from the roles of the headteacher and given to a qualified records manager or archivist. This calls for the appointment of a records manager or archivist for each basic school. In the absence of a records manager for basic schools, headteachers perform the role of managing academic records of their schools. Therefore, it is recommended that the GES organizes training in the form of workshops and seminars on records management for headteachers to help develop their skills in records management.

CONCLUSION

It could be evident from the findings that academic records management in basic schools have not received the needed attention from GES and the Ministry of Education. This may be the main reason why up till now there is no national policy on records management for schools in Ghana. The lack of attention has culminated into the poor management of academic records by headteachers who are de facto record managers of their schools since basic schools in Ghana do not have qualified records managers or archivist. While the world is moving towards electronic records management system, the traditional paper-based system of record keeping is still the order of the day in basic schools in Ghana. This study, therefore, recommends that the GES should design and implement a policy on academic records management which will serve as a guide to all basic schools in Ghana on how to manage their academic records. The policy should among other things clearly define the scope of academic records to avoid any confusion related to the composition of academic records, and provide the guidelines for capturing, registering, classifying, retaining, storing, tracking, accessing and disposing of records.

In addition, the GES through the Ministry of Education should provide all public basic schools with computers and all the needed electronic gadgets to help them migrate from the manual system to an electronic management system. To enhance the effectiveness of records management in basic schools, there is also the need to decouple the records management function from the roles of the head teacher and given to a qualified records manager or archivist.

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