ELECTRONIC RECORD MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AND EFFICIENCY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Management of records has always been the life wire of every formal organisation. Since the introduction of computer and information technology in general, this managerial function has taken a new dimension. This study examined the electronic record management system and efficiency at the University of Lagos, Nigeria. The descriptive survey research design was used for the study and three research questions were answered. The population comprised all the 12 faculties with their 1,400 members of academic staff, 3,288 non-teaching staff in all the non-academic departments, and all the 77 heads of departments in the University. Simple random sampling techniques were used to select 36 academic staff from two faculties, 330 non-teaching staff at the Registry Department, and 14 heads of departments from the Faculties of Education and Science.A total of 380 participants were used. A self-designed instrument entitled: "E-Management System and University Efficiency Questionnaire" was used to collect data. The data were analysed with mean and standard deviation. The study found out that the introduction and use of electronic record management system in the University of Lagos have greatly reduced the turnaround time in the treatment of official memoranda; that dissemination of information to members of staff has positively improved with the use of electronic record management system; and that the speed of processing students' results has also increased. It was therefore recommended among others, that, the university management should further increase the knowledge of electronic record management among her members of staff as well as ensuring regular supply of electricity to facilitate uninterrupted access to information as and when due.

Introduction

For any organisation to thrive well, effective management of records is essential. Management of records is not a recent development as it could be traced to the beginning of human activities on earth. At a point in early human history, scroll and cuneiform were used to preserve vital information for future need. Since then, management of records has witnessed many transformations from analogue to digital. The advent of computers brought a remarkable turning point in the management of records in organisations.

While the record is used to describe a deliberate creation of the activities and events that occurred in an organisation, electronic record, on the other hand, is any

information that is documented in device comprehensible form.Management of record, on the other hand, refers to the process of creating, storing and retrieving of information for future use.

Management of records is a vital aspect and one of the strongest determinants of the success of an organisation. This is because effective management of records promotes efficiency through the provision of information for decision making when needs arise. It could also be used to appraise the performance of the organisation. In this era of improved technology, attention has shifted from the analogue method of keeping records to a digital or electronic system. Electronic Records Management System (ERMS) are methods of creating, transmitting, storing, and retrieving information through the use of electronic media. Examples of electronic record include the internet, social media, telephoneas well as textual material which is documented in analog or digital form such as electronic spreadsheets, word databases,processing files, electronic mail, instant messages, scanned images, digital photographs, multimedia files, numeric, graphic, audio, video, among others. When these are automated, it becomes ERMS.

Educational institutions, the university, in particular, need to keep a proper record of its activities. This is done with the use of record management. Information about both staff and students must be adequately documented.

The management of institutions, as well as the major decision-makers in the institution (represented by the government, the university itself and the individuals), must be acquainted with the activities of the institution for proper performance. The inability of the institution to maintain records in line with its ethics may lead to failure in its operations. The beauty of electronic record management system is the ability to access it at any point in time.

The University of Lagos, Nigeria, is a large community of staff, students and neighbours. For it to perform well, it must make extensive use of electronic record management system in all its areas of operation, like security, correspondence to staff and students, processing of students' result, among others.

Since the university is being run with the public fund, it must yield return to its investment. This can only be achieved through efficiency in its management. Efficiency here is defined as the ability to achieve its goals with optimal resources. This means that there should be no wastage. In this study efficiency is measured in the areas of turnaround time in responding to requests and issues; quick dissemination of information to the members of staff; and quick processing of students' results without giving room for spillover.

There has always been a serious argument between students and lecturers in keeping records on lecture and examination attendance. A situation where students abscond from lectures and claim to have met the 65% lecture attendance requirement for examination has also been a bone of contention between students and lecturers. This argument may partly be as a result unhealthy way of keeping records. Jacksi, Ibrahim and Zebari (2018) maintained that there existed a positive correlation between attendance management and the success of educational institutions. They also confirmed the popular belief that the management of students' attendance during the

lecture period is full of challenges. They further reiterated that the policy of minimum percentage of class attendance required in most universities in developing countries is not being adhered to.

Arulogun, Olatunde, Fakolujo and Olaniyi (2013) researched the application of radio frequency identification systems on students' lecture attendance, they found out that the application of electronic record management system like radio frequency identification systems would eliminate or reduce the quality of time wasted during the manual collection of attendance, creation of student database management system. Also, they strongly maintained that errors of omission or commission would be avoided and better management of classroom statistics for allocation of attendance score would be achieved.

Every client or stakeholder in any organisation wants a quick response to his request. This is also true of the universities as institutions of learning. Staff (both academic and non-academic) want quick feedback in response to memoranda. In the era of manual correspondences, a member of staff seeking permission to travel abroad for a conference may return from such conference before approval is granted. This may not be because he did not submit his request on time, but because of cumbersome bureaucratic procedures that are associated with manual record processing.This makes the turnaround time in the treatment of requests very high. Yun, Shin, Park, Bang and Kang (2016) in their study on the efficiency of an automated reception and turnaround time management system for the phlebotomy room, found out that the use of electronic record management system (automated reception) was significantly related to the turnaround time in the organisation. This they argued improved workflow.

Processing of students' results is another key function of any educationalinstitution. This is because the evaluation of students is one of the core activities in the university. Zulu, Bigirimana and Jagoro (2016) conducted a study on the impact of the centralised electronic student records management system at African university, Mutare, Zimbabwe. They found a significant change in the student results publication serves as a result of the introduction of electronic result processing system. This was also true of transcript processing.

In another study, it was found out that using electronic result processing system where students' results are uploaded on the university web site made it easier for students to access them (Bigirimana, Jagero & Daudi, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

Every formal organisation is always eager to meet the needs of its clients. In their eagerness to achieve this, they are confronted with a myriad of challenges. Some of these challenges directly inhibit their performances. Of serious concern is the issue of record and information management. Clients and stakeholders want quick processing of information, improved turnaround time in the dissemination of information, reduction in the bureaucratic process, accuracy in the processing and dissemination of information, the security of information, among others. Educational institutions especially the universities have some peculiarities. These are common in the areas of students' results and students' lectures and examinations attendance. In the 20th century when records were kept manually and information processing and

dissemination were done in an anachronistic traditional way, there were usually lots of complaints about students' missing scripts, long waiting for the release of results, and delayed dissemination of information to staff, students and the general public. The introduction of the electronic record management system has, no doubt, brought a lot of changes in the management of the university system. This study, therefore, examined these changes and its relationship with university efficiency.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. It was appropriate because it allowed the collection of data and description of the situation as it occurred without any manipulation. The population comprised all the 12 faculties with their 1400 academic staff; 3288 non-teaching staff in all the non-academic department;and all the 77 heads of department (University of Lagos, Academic Planning Unit, 2017). Simple random sampling technique was used to select faculties, departments and units for the study. Two faculties, Education and Sciences were chosen as samples for the study. The Faculty of Education had five departments with 165 academic staff while the Faculty of Science had nine departments with 205 academic staff. Sixteen and 20 academic staff were chosen randomly from these two faculties respectively. These gave a total of 36 academic staff. At the non-academic unit of the University, 330 staff were selected randomly from the Registry. The Registry Department of the University comprised three major departments. These include the Council Affair, Academic Affairs and the Human Resources Management units. This department was chosen because it is the major information processing sector of the university.

Purposive sampling technique was adopted to choose all the 14 heads of departments in the two faculties. This is because these sets of people are the line managers in the university system. In all, a total of 380 participants were used.
A 17-item instrument entitled "Electronic Records Management System and University Efficiency Questionnaire" was used to collate data. All the three research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to find out if:

electronic record management and turnaround time in the treatment of memoranda in the University of the Lagos administration were significantly related.
electronic record management would affect the turnaround time in the treatment of memoranda in the University of the Lagos administration.
electronic record management relates significantly to processing of students' results in the University of Lagos.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in this study:

What relationship exists between electronic record management and turnaround time in the treatment of memoranda in the University of Lagos administration?

How does electronic record management affect the dissemination of information to the members of staff?

Does electronic record management significantly relate to the processing of students' results?

Results

Research Question One: To what extent does electronic record management affect the turnaround time in the treatment of memoranda in the University of Lagos administration?

Table 1:   Electronic Record Management and Turnaround Time in Treatment of Memoranda

S/N	Item	N	A lot	To some extent	Very little	Not at all	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
1.	I use electronic media in sending a request to the	380	36	22	196	126	1.90	.921	Low
2.	approving authority in the University	380	9	57	122	192	1.70	.814	Low
	I am satisfied with the turnaround time in getting a response to a request								
3.	There is delay in response to memoranda in the University.	380	65	266	30	21	3.31	.691	High
4.	I receive information from the University through electronic media.	380	159	180	15	26	3.13	.606	High
5.	The online university annual performance evaluation report is effective.	380	185	243	53	29	2.71	1.037	High
6.	Getting approval of the appropriate authority on issues through electronic record system is easy.	380	55	22	194	126	1.90	.921	Low
7.	I prefer electronic record management to manual system.	380	190	158	23	9	3.39	.708	High

Table 1 shows the responses of participants on the relationship between electronic record management and turnaround time in the treatment of memoranda within the University of Lagos. A low mean of 1.9 shows that members of staff do not use electronic media in sending a request to the appropriate authority within the University. Similarly, the majority of the members of staff were not satisfied with the turnaround time in getting responses to their requests. This is indicated with a low mean of 1.7. Despite these, however, the majority still prefer the use of an electronic record management system to the manual system.

Research Question Two: How does electronic record management affect the dissemination of information to the members of staff?

Table 2:   Electronic Record Management and Dissemination of Information

S/N Item	N	A lot	To some extent	Very little	Not at all	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
1. The use of electronic record management	380	141	221	6	12	3.27	.726	High
2. system in passing information in the University of Lagos is effective.	380	175	185	14	6	3.39	.683	High
There is quick dissemination of information in the University of Lagos with the electronic record system.								
3. When information is passed through the electronic system, there is always a distortion.	380	19	26	194	141	1.90	.921	Low
4. The safety of information passed through the electronic system is not guaranteed.	380	48	150	10	172	2.02	1.375	Low
5. The effectiveness of information disseminated through the electronic medium is hampered by the irregular supply of electricity.	380	185	243	53	29	2.71	1.037	High
6. There were frequent cases of hacking on the University information portal.	380	9	57	122	192	1.70	.814	Low
7. The academic								

	N							
calendar and programmes of the University are promptly displayed on the web site.	380	224	111	23	22	3.50	.758	High

In table 2, a mean of 3.27 shows that the use of electronic management system in disseminating information to members of staff was effective. A majority also maintained that distortion of information through the electronic system was minimal. Although the effectiveness of disseminating information through the electronic media could be hampered by the irregular supply of electricity, the safety of information disseminated through such medium is always guaranteed. This was shown by a mean of 2.02. Another significant area in the use of an electronic record system in passing information is the display of academic calendar and programmes of the University to her stakeholders. A high mean of 3.5 strongly showed that this is usually done on the University website. The finding, therefore, showed a positive relationship between electronic record management and dissemination of information in the University.

Research Question Three: Does electronic record management significantly relate to the processing of students' results?

Table 3:`Electronic Record Management and Processing of Students' Results

S/N Item	N	A lot	To some extent	Very little	Not at all	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
1. Students' results processing is made	380	190	158	23	9	3.39	.725	High
easier with an electronic record system.	380	185	182	11	2	3.39	.650	High
2. Lack of information technology skills makes the use of electronic record management in the processing of students' results difficult.								
3. The problem of missing scripts has drastically reduced with the introduction of electronic record management system in the university.	380	194	141	19	26	2.90	.721	High
4. Amendment of results is no longer frequent due to the introduction of the	380	172	163	10	35	3.02	.675	High

	electronic management system.								
5.	Generating of the broadsheet is now made easier with an electronic system	380	189	123	37	31	3.40	.724	High

An improvement was also seen in the use of electronic record management system in processing students' results. This is confirmed in table three as 348 members of staff of the University maintained that the processing of students' results was easier than before. The problem of missing scripts has also reduced drastically as an amendment of results is also no longer frequent. A mean of 3.4 confirmed that the generation of the broadsheet is not easier with an electronic system. This, therefore, shows that the electronic record management system and processing of students' results are positively related.

Discussion

The first finding of this study showeda positive relationship between electronic record management and turnaround time in the treatment of memoranda within the University of Lagos. This finding is not surprising as Yun, et al (2016) had earlier found out that the use of electronic record management reduces the turnaround time in managing patients in the phlebotomy room. The reason for this finding may be because the time that is usually lost when dispatching emails manually from one office to the other does not arise in electronic dispatch. The issue of loss in transit is also not feasible. Before the introduction of electronic record management system in the University, there used to be reported cases of missing documents. This has reduced greatly.

The second finding of this study was that the use of electronic record management positively affected dissemination of information to a member of staff of the University of Lagos. Information dissemination was the life wire of every organisation (Bello, 2017). At the University of Lagos, various electronic means of passing information have been introduced. These include the university official Websites, Twitter, Whatsapps, Facebook, among others. This gives members of staff quick access to information. At the beginning of the session, every member of the University community is acquainted with the programmes of the University through various displays on the website. Schedules of meetings, lecture time-table, and other vital information are displayed for public consumption. This makes the administration of the institution less rigorous.

The third finding of the study also discovered a positive relationship between electronic record management and processing of students' results. This corroborates the earlier finding of Zulu, Bigiriman and Jagoro (2016). They found a significant relationship between the use of the electronic result processing system and processing of students' results. This is true as students' results are now released on time. The generation of students' result broadsheet has also become easier as a result of the introduction of the electronic system. The processing of transcript has also become

easier with electronic record system. Alumni can now apply for transcript online without passing through the rigour of the old bureaucratic system. Before the introduction of the electronic record management system, it could take a couple of months before a transcript would be generated, the situation has improved tremendously with the advent of the electronic management system.

Implications of the Findings for Policy and Practice

This study has empirically established a positive relationship between the electronic record management system and University efficiency, with particular reference to the University of Lagos.

It is therefore important that the university authority intensifies her effort in improving the quality of her electronic record system. As a matter of policy, this can be achieved by committing at least 10% of her annual budget to improvement of the electronic record system. All units of the university should be connected to Wireless Fidelity (Wi-Fi) for both staff and students use.

Training programmes to increase the information and communication technology skills of members of staff should also be put in place. Since knowledge is dynamic, constant training is required for the members of staff to be abreast of the latest development in the use of electronic record management system.

Conclusion

The electronic record management system has proved to be a veritable tool in the management of any organisation. It is in light of this that the university introduced it into its management practices. This, no doubt, has yielded some returns, though intangible, to the effectiveness of the services rendered by the university. This is seen in the area of low turnaround time in response to issue, quick dissemination of information both to the members of staff as well as the entire public; and quick processing of students' results. It is important therefore for the university to extend this to all her activities for better performance.

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