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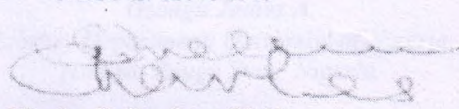The National Library of Nigeria assigned International Serial Number for JAIST is: 22141-1913

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Accessibility and Use of Records in Educational Policy-Making in Selected Ministries of Education in South-West, Nigeria

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Abstract

Purpose: *This study investigated accessibility and use of records for educational policy making by senior civil servants in selected state ministries of education in South-West, Nigeria.*

Design/Methodology/Approach: *The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of 1,205 senior civil servants in Ministries of Education in South-west, Nigeria out of which a sample size of 241 respondents was derived. A questionnaire was used for data collection. The data collected through the questionnaire were complemented with interview conducted with a Director, Deputy Director and a senior officer in Lagos State, Ogun State and Osun State by the researchers. The data collected with the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and regression analysis while content analysis of the recorded interviews was made.*

Findings: *The study revealed that accessibility and use of records significantly predicted educational policy making ($R^2 = .055$, $F_{(2,240)} = 6.898$, $p < .05$) with 5.5% explanation of the variability of the dependent variable. It also revealed that records needed for educational policy making include academic records of students, annual reports from schools, inspection reports and yearly approved estimates. It identified politics, power supply and bureaucratic system as the major constraints to timely accessibility and use of records.*

Implication: *The study has implication for the management of records in the public sector. Suggested solutions to the challenges in the accessibility and use of records include putting in place mechanisms to remove or reduce the constraints to timely accessibility and use of records for educational policy making, setting standard for formulating, implementing and sustaining educational policies made and considering continuity in the established policies.*

Originality/Value: *the originality of this study lies in the finding that accessibility and use of records significantly predicted educational policy making.*

Keywords: *Accessibility of records, Use of records, Educational policy-making, Ministries of education, Nigeria.*

Paper type: *Empirical research*

Introduction

Education is the pivot around which a nation's development revolves. The term "education" which was derived from two Latin words "Educare" (Educere) and "Educatum" denotes education as a process. "Educare" means to train or mould, to bring up, to lead out or to draw out, propulsion from inward to

outward. This indicates the development of the latent faculties of an individual (or child) possibilities unknown to him or her. On the other hand "Educatum "denotes the act of teaching which throws light on the principles and practice of teaching. Education is seen as the backbone of every society that seeks development. In other words, it is the bedrock of societal development.

Globally, education is regarded as a potent instrument for introducing and sustaining social change in human overemphasized. In recognition of this importance the international communities and governments all over the world have made commitments to their citizens to have access to education.

Nigeria is a country in West Africa, with Abuja as her capital and estimated population of 193,392,517 people (National Population Commission and National Bureau of Statistics, 2017),which covers a land mass of 923,768 sq km. The major languages spoken in Nigeria are Ibo, Hausa, Yoruba, Fulfulde, Efik, Ibibio, Kanuri, Tiv, Edo, Ijo, Igala, and Nupe. From a four region structure in the sixties, the country now has 36 states and a capital territory. Nigeria adopts informal, formal and non-formal systems of education in initiating, socialising and educating hercitizens. Some of these systems are based on policies made for the nation. It then follows that for any meaningful education or systems of education to take place there must be policies backing it.

Policy is a deliberate course of action that guides decisions to achieve specific goals within an institution, organization or state. It involves issues of management, resource allocation, and/or power distribution (Shen, Gerard and Bowyer,2009). Thus, in the field of

society, as well as shaping its destiny. Apart from serving as a vehicle for enhancing upward social and economic mobility, education is regarded as a key to social reconstruction (Ukeje,1978), and an instrument for conserving, transmitting and renewing culture (Erder, 1966). The relationship between education and development has been established, such that education has now been internationally accepted as a key development index. Its importance cannot, therefore, be education, educational policies are relevant in order to achieve educational goals and objectives.

The Nigerian National Policy on Education is government's way of realizing that part of the national goals which can be achieved using education as a tool. Educational policies provide a useful map for making sense of the terrain of social issues in education. In other words, no policy on education can be formulated without first identifying the overall philosophy and goals of the nation which are found in diverse governmental records. This implies that for any meaningful educational policies there must be accessibility and use of records.

The term "records" has specific meaning in the field of records management. Records as defined in the glossary of terms by the International Record management Trust (IRMT) "is documentary evidence regardless of form or medium, created, received, maintained and used by an organisation (public or private) or an individual in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business.

It is a common parlance in the field of records management that all records convey information but not all sources of information are necessarily records. Consequentially, as noted by Popoola

(2000) about seventy- five (75) percent of the needed information for smooth running of an organisation is contained in its internally and externally generated records. These records are needed daily in the processes of planning, decision making, policy formulation and control of organization. Since a greater percentage of information needed for the smooth running of an organisation are contained in records, it becomes pertinent that records (especially educational records) are accessed and utilised for effective policy making by the senior civil servants.

The glossary of archival terms defines access to records as the availability of records for consultation as a result of both legal authorization and identifying, locating and bringing to the attention of policy makers records that contain information that is useful for planning and making rational decisions. IRMT glossary of terms states that access is the right, opportunity or means of finding, using or retrieving information. Accessibility of records for policy making is paramount. According to Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) cited in Popoola and Ayodele (2011) resources may be available and even identified as relevant to one's subject of interest but the user may not be able to lay hands on them. In other words, availability of records does not necessarily imply its accessibility because the records maybe available but access to it prevented for one reason or the other. Policy makers may tend to use records that require the least effort to access. Thus, the more accessible records are, the more likely they are used.

Since availability of records does not really mean their accessibility, in the same manner accessibility of records does not really mean their utilisation as some records may not meet the information needs of the policy makers.

In this regard, some scholars such as Schumacher (1996) and Lawson (1969) as cited in Popoola and Zaid (2007) have postulated the under utilisation of information sources such as the libraries as a result of not being aware of the holding and services and how best to utilise them. In other words, if policy makers are not fully aware of some educational records and how best to use them, it could also affect policy making.

According to Roy (2006), use of information (records) is based on access to records. Emesalu (2012) also noted that the use of information resources is the practical and maximum use of library information materials identified and acquired by a user for the purpose of solving a problem. Use of records by policy makers is essential as it serves as evidence and memory of legal transactions.

Top government officials in various states of the nation responsible for making national decisions and planning as regards education are the policy makers also known as senior civil servants. Access to records by policy makers is essential and their utilization by the policy makers is inevitable. Thus, for effective and efficient educational policy to be made there must be accessibility and utilization of records by the senior civil servants.

Objectives of the Study

This study set out to investigate the extent to which accessibility and use of records determine educational policy making by senior civil servants in ministries of education in selected states (Lagos, Ogun and Osun) of South-west Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to:

i. identify the types of records needed for educational policy making by senior civil servants in ministries of

education in selected states in South-west, Nigeria;

ii. determine the types of educational policy made by the senior civil servants;

iii. determine the level of accessibility of records for educational policy making by senior civil servants;

iv. find out the uses to which records are put in educational policy making by senior civil servants;

v. ascertain the frequency of use of records for educational policy making by senior civil servants;

vi. identify the relationship between accessibility of records and educational policy making by senior civil servants;

vii. find out the relationship between use of records and educational policy making by senior civil servants; and

viii. determine the constraints to accessibility and use of records for educational policy making by senior civil servants.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered by the study:

1. What are the types of records needed for educational policy making by senior civil servants?

2. What are the types of educational policy made by the senior civil servants?

3. What is the level of accessibility of records for educational policy making by senior civil servants?

4. What are the uses to which records are put in educational policy making by senior civil servants?

5. How often are records used for educational policy making by senior civil servants?

6. What are the constraints to accessibility and use of records for educational policy making by senior civil servants?

Hypotheses

The study tested the following hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance;

Ho_1. There is no significant relationship between accessibility of records and educational policy-making by senior civil servants in ministries of education in selected states in South-west, Nigeria.

Ho_2. There is no significant relationship between use of records and educational policy making by senior civil servants in ministries of education in selected states in South-west Nigeria.

Ho_3. Accessibility and use of records will not significantly determine educational policy making by senior civil servantsin ministries of education in selected states in South West Nigeria.

Literature Review

Education is valued all over the world and it is believed to promote liberty. Educating the mind entails liberating it from the shackles of fear, prejudice, ignorance, superstition etc, and to develop a free, ,independent and responsible citizenry. Education is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills and other capabilities. Education could be formal with clearly intended consequences and informal with unintended consequences. It is a universal aspect of any culture. Although it is a universal feature of society, educational systems vary according to organizational structures,

pedagogical practices, and philosophical and cultural organizations (Kunle and Wale, 2006 cited in Jones, 2013). Education is the engine of socio-economic development or as usually stated it is the bedrock of societal development. This could be attested to as revolutions in education are taking place in many nations. There is the universal declaration of education as a basic human right. In 2001, "No child left behind Act" was passed in America by the Congress during the administration of President Bush as a way of providing every single child with a quality education which is the key to unlocking opportunity for an individual, a family or a society

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) has adopted education as an instrument "par excellence" for effecting national development (FRN, 2004). Education in Nigeria is in three forms namely, informal, non-formal and formal systems of education. The informal system of education has existed in the divergent regions that made up the countries before the coming of the missionaries and still exist today. In this form of education, according to Ifenkwe (2013), 'the young are taught how to cope with their environment, how to farm, hunt or fish, prepare food, build a house or run a home. They are being taught the language and manners and generally the culture of the community. Through this informal method, the young learn by participating in activities alongside the elders". They learn by listening, watching and doing. In many practical ways, they learn how to live as members of their community. However, this form of education extended to other forms and more sophisticated systems known as the formal and non- formal systems of education with the advent of the missionaries.

The formal education is an organized, comprehensive and curriculum-based education given to beneficiaries in an institutional setting(Ifenkwe, 2013). This formal system of education (western education) was started by the missionaries towards the end of the 19th Century in the Western and Southern regions and was meant to train evangelists and teachers as well as trainings in religions, history and humanities. Concurrently, the Northern region practiced Islamic system of education as they found it difficult to accept the western education and this led to a wide disparity in educational achievements between the North and South and brought the notion of educationally-disadvantaged states. This was followed by the general secular educational system, which was started by the British, mainly to find operatives to run the then Nigerian system (Colonies) (Aminu, 1990). This has developed to the present day formal and non –formal educational system, thus the old situation has changed at all levels.' The educational revolution in Nigeria is evident from the phenomenal expansion of schools in all geo-political zones of the country (Ifenkwe, 2013). However, it is worthy of note that the formal education in Nigeria is a shared responsibility of the public (federal, state, and local government) and private institutions. The Federal Ministry of Education (FME) plays a dominant role in regulating this education system, engaging in policy formulation and ensuring quality control. However, the federal government is more directly involved with tertiary education than it is with secondary and primary education, which is largely the responsibility of state and local governments and private institutions. The formal education system is divided into four sub-sectors: early childhood, basic education (nine years), post-

basic/senior secondary education (three years), and tertiary education (four to seven years, depending on the major or course of study.

Records are information captured and stored in a permanent medium (Popoola,2009). They provide platform to access information about the past by decision makers, researchers, scholars, students, journalists, lawyers, and others who want to know about people, places, and events in the past. As an administrative function, policy making in the civil service requires information in the form of records. Access to information cannot be divorced from records management (Uwaifo, 2004). Thus records management is a vital component of accessibility and policy making in the civil service. Without accessibility of records there is a deficit in information required for decision making. Such deficit contributes to inadequate and improper policy making within organisational and national establishments. There seem to be a chain relationship among records management, accessibility of records and policy making.

Policy making is the activity of formulating policy generally which involves research, analysis, constitution and synthesis of information to produce recommendation. It also involves an evaluation of options against a set of criteria used to assess each option (Akhakpe, 2005). According to Michael, Simon and Jill (2011) policy making have suffered a gap between theory and practice. Either unrealistic models of policy making have been presented or failure to support the desired practices into reality. Policy making has been left to chance, personality and individual skill giving rise to unrealistic processes.

Accessibility of records is essential to good policy making. According to Thomassen (2002) trustworthy records contain reliable evidence of decisions taken, right acquired and commitment made. Without records, no assessment can be made of whether individuals and public organisations have actually carried out the actions and transactions that they have to execute, whether they have performed these actions and whether they have done the things which they were not supposed to do. However, people and organisations pay less attention to the management of records that they produce or use during their daily activities. On the other hand, they always adduce records for the protection of their rights.

Atulomah (2011) in her study of perceived records management practice and decision making among university administrators in Nigeria found out that records management is contingent in administrative decision making process. The study also showed that most administrators are not aware of organised system of records management programme, records are kept with various principal officers, there is abridged protocol for handling records in the institutions and most administrators are not aware of government policy on records management. This is an indication that there is less or no accessibility of records for policy making in the civil service.

Moreover, Popoola and Oluwole (2007) revealed that Nigerian administrators are concerned about the alarming rate of misplacement or loss of vital records and the slow speed at which needed records are retrieved from their storage. This has resulted in the common problem of management in the institutions such as difficulties in finding information needed to take decisions or respond to inquiry, accumulation of administrative matters and delays in

payment of staff emoluments and fringe benefits.

Records play important role in specific areas of national development by providing information which is essential in the formulation of national development policies and plans. They help to maintain a consistent pattern in policy formulation and implementation.

It has been observed by the Information Solution Group (ISG) (2000) that the record keeping systems are unable to cope with the growing mass of unmanaged records especially in countries with limited financial or administrative resources or where records and archives managers lack training or professional development opportunities. The policy makers in these areas would find it ever more difficult to retrieve the information they need in policy making. The decline and in some cases total collapse of record keeping systems makes it virtually impossible to use records for policy making in the civil service. This situation impedes the use of genuine records for policy making in the civil service. The resultant effect is polices made with no reference to past and future goals.

Use of records would lead to effective policy making. This could be supported from the investigation of Haruna and Mabawonku (2002) on the relationship between information resources utilisation and professional effectiveness attributes of legal practitioners in Lagos, Nigeria, in which they reveal that acquisition and utilisation of relevant, precise and timely information has been responsible for effective legal practice in Lagos State. Utilisation of information involves the development of documents in a variety of forms and formats (Kirk, 2004). Thus, there is need to have access to relevant information resources in institutional libraries and make effective use of them to improve the teaching and research effectiveness of academics (Okiy, 2002).

Records are created and used in the civil services. However, on later dates the use of the same records maybe difficult or impossible due to some major issues identified by Uwaifo (2004) to include lack of clear cut records management standard, inadequate professional records management personnel, non – availability of automatic security/protection system and erratic power supply.

Adomi (2002) states that majority of administrative staff in Nigeria do not have access to databases from which information could be called up to aid decision making. Hoarding of information and occasional distortion of information by staff set a roadblock to make good decisions because information is the life blood of decision making. Decision based on distorted information will definitely, negatively affect the life of the organisation. Uwaifo (2004) in his analysis of management and use of records in Delta State University also highlighted the problems which hamper the effective use of records in Nigeria to include: lack of clear-cut records management standard, inadequate professional records management personnel, non-availability of automatic security/protection system and erratic electric power supply.

The absence of integrated records management programme hampers accessibility and use of records. It is worthy of note that protection of the physical integrity and informational content of records is of paramount importance in record keeping and records management in public service (Abioye, 2010). Similarly Enwere (1992) cited in Uwaifo (2004) states that the unintegrated records management

programme in Nigerian public service has led to inefficiency in administration of and loss or non-availability of vital information needed for decision making at the right time.

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. This research design was considered suitable since the variables of interest had all existed and were studied as they were. This research design is also considered most appropriate for the study because it did not allow inference to be made on variables and data, which were obtained from the field survey as well as determine the extent to which respondents hold a particular attitude or view(Osiki, 2006). The researchers also chose this method in order to gather information from a fairly large number of respondents as well as to protect the identity of the respondents.

The target population for the study comprised1,205 senior civil servants on salary grade level eight (8) and above in the ministries of education located in the three states in South-west, Nigeria namely; Lagos, Ogun and Osun states. The purposive sampling technique was used for this study. Systematic random sampling was used to arrive at the final sample size; a sampling fraction of 20% was used from each state. This is derived from Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009), who asserted that in a descriptive research the sampling fraction should range between 10% - 20% and if the population is about 1,500, the sample of 20% should be used. Thus, sample for the study is 241 out of the total population of 1,205 civil servants from the three states.

The study used two instruments; the questionnaire and structured interview to collect data for the study. The questionnaire contained seven(7)

sections. Section A focused on the demographic data of the respondents and it had seven (7) items. Section B collected data on records needed for educational policy making; it had fifteen (15) items. Section C with six items collected data on the type of educational policy making the senior civil servants engaged in Section D elicited response on the level of accessibility of educational records by the civil servants and it contained five (5) items.

Section E contained eight (8) items and it collected data on the uses of educational records by senior civil servants. Section F with 12 items elicited response on the frequency of use of educational records. Lastly, Section G focused on the constraints to accessibility and use of educational records and it had nine (9) items. The questionnaire had a total of sixty-two (62) items. The structured interview schedule had a total of eight (8) questions.

A total of 241 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the senior civil servants by the researchers assisted by three staff each from the state ministries of education studied. The interview which was conducted by the researchers with three staff of the ministry; the Director, Deputy Director and a Senior officer in Lagos State, Ogun State and Osun State respectively was recorded and content analysis carried out. The data collected with questionnaire were analyzed in simple frequency and percentages with the aid of Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) after proper coding using excel coding sheet. Tables are used to present the data and inferences are drawn from them.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of the study are reported under the following headings in accordance with the research questions:

Types of records needed for educational policy making

The study shows that records are needed for educational policy making by the senior civil servants. The identified records needed for educational policy making in percentages include; academic records of students(78%), financial statement(50.2%), annual reports from schools (63.5%), inspection reports(60.6%), disciplinary reports(47.7%), federal and state constitutions(48.5%), minute books (43.2%), records of past educational policies(48.1%),yearly approved estimates, correspondences(61%), ,Executive Order and education laws, Acts, edicts and bills(52.3%), others like National teacher education policy, circulars, public service rule were also mentioned. The records needed are in consonance with ISO 15489 (2001) definition of records as information created, received and maintained as evidence and information by an organisation or person, in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business. The need for these records for effective educational policy making reflects the view Ofiwhiwhu (2005) that for any organisation to function effectively and carry on with its services there must be one form of record or another and these records are synonymous with every human activity.

Types of educational policy made by senior civil servants

The study found out the types of policy made by senior civil servants. The needed records are relevant for effective educational policy making. They revealed types of policy made by the senior civil servants with their correspondent number of respondent

include; policy on the purpose of education (159), school privatization (82), curricular content(130), graduation requirements (116), teacher education and certification (144), school infrastructure (141) while renovation of furniture, discipline, siting of schools, finance and promotion where mentioned by 50% of the respondent. The interview conducted indicated that the senior civil servants formulated and implemented policies. This is in line with the assertion of Gbadamosi (2006),that scholars have identified three basic stages in policy making process to include; policy formulation, policy implementation and feedback and evaluation. And for policy to successfully pass through the three stages of policy making, it is pertinent that policy makers identify the requisite information requirements and needs. They must access and utilise it adequately in the course of policy making.

Accessibility of records needed for educational policy making by senior civil servants

As for the level of accessibility of records needed in educational policy making, the study revealed that it was high, 83.3% of the respondents indicated that the records are very accessible. Thus this confirms the statement of Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) that efforts are being made nationwide to promote accessibility to records in all formats. Although there are rigidity in accessing some records as revealed by the interviewees, when strong request are made they are made accessible. Accessibility of records for policy making in education is paramount. According to Ainoko and Boman(2009) accessibility of records would help to facilitate policy making. Policy making is an administrative function of the senior civil servants and invariably

requires information in the form of records.

Use of records for educational policy making

The study found out that senior civil servants used records for educational policy making as revealed by 173 of the respondents. Use of vital records would lead to the production of effective educational policy. Emesalu (2012) opines that information resources utilisation could also be referred to as the practical and maximum use of library information materials identified and acquired by a user for the purpose of solving a problem. And good enough, from the data collected, the respondents claimed to use the records for various purposes such as planning, research, accountability and monitoring of activities, posting and tracking, determining class size, setting objectives for education, setting graduation requirements and checkmate values.

Frequency of use of records for educational policy making by senior civil servants

In answer to how often records are used by the senior civil servants for educational policy making, the result showed that frequency of use was dependent on the type of records. Records such as staff movement books, academic records of students and staff attendance register were used on daily basis as indicated by the respondent 157 (65.1%), 103 (42.7%), 170(70.5%) respectively while others such as minute books, report files, staff confidential reports, inventories, auditor's report file, health records, disciplinary committee files were used occasionally and annually. This finding confirms Iwhiwhu's view that records are synonymous with every human activity. They also facilitate the day to day

transactions and form a solid base for rational decisions. (Iwhiwhu, 2005 andAbioye, 2010). Thus, their frequent uses are essential.

The constraints to accessibility and use of records for educational policy making

Often times there are road blocks to accessibility and use of records. The result from the study reflected the nature of records 140 (58.1%) respondents, long bureaucratic process, poor records management and technological obsolescence 127(52.7%), 115 (47.7%) and 144 (47.3%) respondents respectively as the major constraints to timely accessibility and use of records. This is in line with the findings of Uwaifo (2004) on the problems hampering the effective use of records in Nigeria. The finding also corroborates the identified constraints by Ajewole (2001) who stressed that the problem of records management is not with records and information but with those having interface and interacting with these records.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Records accessibility and use play a vital role in effective educational policy formulation and implementation in the state ministries of education in South-west, Nigeria. Accessibility and use of records are dependent on good records management practices. However, the management of records for timely accessibility and use for educational policy making is faced with certain constraints which have slowed down the process of decision making. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were suggested.

1. Mechanism should be put in place to reduce the bureaucratic (bottle neck) system which hampers timely accessibility to records, such as

automation of records and use of ICT in the state ministries.

2. There should be a clear cut rule or set standard for formulating, implementing and sustaining educational policies made. This would help reduce the incessant changes that come with instability in power.

3. Continuity in the established policies should be considered by senior civil servants and the executive council.

4. The state of records management in the ministries should be improved through seminars, workshops, training and re- training of records staff for effective performance.

5. Incessant power outage was identified as a constraint to accessibility of records. Necessary arrangement should therefore be made to ensure stable power supply in the ministries.

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