UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES OF ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

AT THE WESTERN REGIONAL OFFICE OF THE GHANA EDUCATION

SERVICE

COMFORT ANNOH

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BY

COMFORT ANNOH

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in Administration in Higher Education

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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature……………………   Date……………………

Name: Comfort Annoh

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature………………….

Date…………………

Name: Prof. George K.T. Oduro

Co-Supervisor's Signature ……………………   Date………………

Name: Dr. Francis Ansah

ABSTRACT

This study examined the records management practices of administrative staff at the Western Regional office of the Ghana Education Service. Among other things, it sought information on the availability, maintenance and utilization of records. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The site and the participants were selected through the purposive sampling technique. The study involved a sample of 16 participants which comprised 5 administrators, 2 secretaries, 8 human resource persons and a clerk. Data were gathered through the use of interviews and observation.

Findings from the study show that, almost all the respondents did not receive any form of training before assumption of duty, neither had they received any form of on the job training. This is really affecting their work. Based on the findings, the study recommends among others that, the GES should provide adequate training for any employee posted to assume any administrative duties, and existing staff must be given in-service training periodically. There must be a genuine development of a good record keeping system with regards to generation and maintenance of records of each department. Record keeping facilities must be provided. These facilities include files, cupboards, cabinets, shelves and computer sets. Again GES should equip the office with logistics for records storage.

KEY WORDS

Administrative Staff

Content

Context

Ghana Education Service

Management

Meaning

Official Records

Records

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

To my wonderful daughters Obenewaa and Ofosua, and to my husband who

are true vessels of my progress.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

For any organisation to function effectively and carry on with its services there must be one form of records or another (Iwhiwhu, 2005). Consequently records, regardless of their formats are important sources of information and knowledge. Newton (1986) posited that no institution could function effectively without accurate and up-to-date records. It is essential that every significant happening, event, action taken or decision made, is recorded. On their part, Shirley and Solity (1987) argued that the human memory is fallible, hence, the need for records keeping. Not only are records crucial for the proper functioning of individuals and organizations, but also to nations as they constitute their memory and history. The International Standards Organization 15489-1 (2001, p. 3) defines records as "information created, received, and maintained as evidence by an organization or person, in pursuance of legal obligations or in transaction of business". The Public Records and Archives Administration Act 535 of Ghana as cited in Akussah, and Asamoah, (2015). also defines records as "any recorded information regardless of form or medium created, received and maintained by any institution or individual in the pursuance of its or his legal obligations or in the transaction of its or his business" (Ghana Legal, 2015). These two definitions have some similarities as both view records as information that are created and maintained in pursuance of business activities.

Record keeping is very pertinent for management effectiveness in any organization or institution. Babayemi (2009) noted that records are sets of

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information put down in books, files and other documents on every event that goes on in an organization. He went further to define it as the creation, storage, retrieval, retention and disposition of all information relating to what goes on in an organization, the personnel, equipment and other information for the accomplishment of the organizational growth.

It is not enough to just keep records, whether statutory or non-statutory, but it should be noted that how records are kept or manage, and used should be seen as essential for management effectiveness. Weggant (2005) opined that records are information or data on a particular subject or activity collected and preserved for future use. The essence of record keeping is to enable the management or educators make effective decision and formulate relevant policies. An organization or any educational system that refuses to attach importance to proper records management would run into liquidation at the long run. It is the records of the past events or activities which were preserved that are used by administrators for planning and control of the present programmes or activities.

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 clear all doubt and establish the accuracy and authenticity of such documents is to delve deep into the archives of the school's academic records and bring out the original documents for verification and confirmation.

According to Coetzer (2012), records are 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 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. They also protect the interest of the school, the right of the students, and help the school to run its affairs and deliver its services in consistent and equitable ways.

Institutions by their nature generate a lot of records. There are records about students' 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 administrators of every institution 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 all records generated and or received by institutions in the course of their activities must be organized to allow easy access whenever the need arises.

These contrasting views notwithstanding, it is generally agreed that accurate and up-to-date records keeping is indispensable in organizational development. For organisations to maximise the benefits of records, the records must be managed; hence records management has become a major issue in administration at all levels of education. As far back as 1994, Penn and Pennix defined records management as a logical and practical approach to the creation, maintenance, use and disposition of records and therefore of the information that those records contain. Records management helps an organisation to control both the quality and quantity of information that it creates; it can maintain the information in a manner that effectively serve it needs, and can efficiently dispose of recorded information when it is no longer valuable. In this context, administrative records management occupies a strategic position in the efficient and effective management in educational institutions. It is central in ensuring the credibility for verification and confirmation in times of dispute. For instance, one could apply for further studies, employment or a ministerial appointment so many years after completing a school. This might call for verification of the fact that the applicant completed a school. Such verification might request for the student's continuous assessment, year of admission and year of completing the school as well as, his/her total attendance to find out if he/she was not a truant.

A well planned and carefully maintained system of administrative records is essential if the institution has to meet the various requests for information about people within the institution. The administrator of an institution is required to keep accurate and up-to-date records of everything since he is accountable to all stakeholders. In the absence of a well-

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functioning records management system, decisions are made without detailed information (Ngoepe, 2008; Thurston, 2005; Wamukoya & Mutula, 2005b). Moreover, documents are likely to be disorganized, lost, destroyed or tampered with which ultimately results in poor planning and defective scheduling of activities (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2006). In the end, management is handicapped in its decision making processes and organizations are unable to fulfill their statutory obligations (Iwhiwhu, 2005; Mjnama, 2004). Also, knowledge of the inventories informs him/her about the current stock of materials, and about which materials are running out and how to get additional supplies to replenish the depleting ones, and to retrieve those items that were given out. In this way materials will not get lost. Whilst personnel are on the job, the head through the administrators and secretaries, must keep records on them as well. He must receive and file letters of appointment, confirmations, promotions and leaves of absence of every employer.

Thomas (1990) posited that educational efficiency could be viewed from internal and external perspectives. The system of education must not only be effective but also efficient. By effectiveness is meant that the organisation has achieved or is drawing closer to achieving its goals or objectives. And organisational efficiency is a measure of the relationship between organisational inputs (resources) and the outputs (goods and services provided). In simple term, the more output an organisation can achieve with a given amount of input or resources, the more efficient the organisation is. An activity is effective if it achieves its goals. The main objective and goal of any educational institution is the ability to perform the tasks assigned to it.

From Haskew and Mclendon's (1968) analysis, it is explicit that records can serve as a guide to new administrators who have been posted to an institution. This is because the administrator could refer to the records for possible explanation to certain issues. When such observations are made the administrator can adopt appropriate measures to rectify the problem.

The foregoing discussion points to the fact that institutions such as the Regional Office of the Ghana Education Service needs to manage a number of records well. These records could broadly be classified into three, namely; Personnel records, Academic records, and Administrative records. For this study however, administrative records would be taken into account in order to determine precisely the management practices of administrative staff at the said office. The issue of personnel records management in the educational directorate at the regional levels became a matter of concern in the early part of 2008 when the GES found it prudent to update its records on its personnel. To make this feasible, it requested from its personnel, particularly teachers, all personal records of their profession. These included their first appointment letters, letters of confirmation, certificates, all promotion letters, birth or baptismal certificates, among others. This brought about great anxiety among some teachers as they could not trace some of these records particularly their first appointment letters. An antidote had to be found for teachers who could not get their first appointment letters. They had to produce a photocopy of the page of the log book that their head teachers had logged on their assumption of duty; that is, their first day in the service. This took many teachers back to their first stations in search of these records. Some teachers who had then moved far away from their first stations and were now in distant regions or

districts had to return by travelling long distances to their first stations in search of these records. Whilst some were fortunate to get them, others could not, either because the head teachers did not record the teacher's assumption of duty on that day, or did so, but the log book or other relevant records had been misplaced or destroyed. This indeed was a bitter experience for many teachers. As a teacher myself, I experienced such frustration. Though I was fortunate to get mine, it was still a bitter experience for me because of the transportation difficulties, inconveniences, time and expenses I incurred.

The issue of records management is not only critical in education but traverses other spectres of human endeavour such as economy, finance, agriculture, and even government. For example, Dzandu (2006) wrote "Record keeping - key to good governance" (p.10). He maintained that records helped to promote the rule of law, protect human rights, involve stakeholders in the decision making process, and thereby inhibit autocratic rule. The regional education office is composed of quite a number of both teaching and non-teaching staff who have rights and responsibilities. Records help to guarantee these rights as well as confirm that decisions are well taken and actions are well executed.

To Dzandu, good records enhance good leadership and governance, good management and administration, transparency and accountability. He emphasized that citizens trusted their leaders and became more committed to their duties and responsibilities when they realized that decisions taken were open and followed laid-down rules and regulations in record materials. Without records, it would be difficult to hold people in authority accountable for whatever they said or did. The issue of public office holders accounting for

their stewardship has been a big problem in Ghana. Not only have some heads of institutions that have been transferred, failed to handover properly to incoming ones, but also, whenever there is an election and a new political party comes into power, there have been reports of the misuse of public money and the inability of public officials to account for their stewardship.

Afful-Broni (2004) underscores the importance of record keeping by observing that there have been periods in Ghana's life in which public officers have been called upon to render account of their stewardship, notable among these were the 1980s and after the 2008 elections. The 1980s witnessed a remarkable era of probity and accountability in Ghana. The government called many school heads and financial administrators to render account of their stewardship. A good number of them got into trouble and were subsequently suspended, dismissed or demoted and made to pay back the large sums of money which had been misappropriated or embezzled. It is however significant to note that in most of these cases, these headmasters had not themselves taken any monies; most often, they had failed to supervise those in charge of the financial management of their schools. Though they had not stolen the monies, they were sanctioned for financial malpractices because they did not keep proper records of the schools income and expenditure in their books and so could not remember how the monies were spent. Good record keeping would have ensured ease of accountability during checking by the auditors. Records management, crucial as it is implies that, research has to be done at the Regional office of the GES in Sekondi hence, this endeavour.

Statement of the Problem

Some researchers have looked into the importance of records management. This is evident, firstly, in Tagbotor et al (2015) analysis of records management and organizational performance in Ghana, which concluded that keeping accurate and up-to-date records is vital to the success of any institution; Secondly, Coetzer (2012), arguing from the western context, observed that records are a vital asset in ensuring that an educational institution is governed effectively and efficiently, and is accountable to its staff. Thirdly, Iwhiwhu (2005) reports that for an organisation to function effectively and carry on with its services, there must be one form of record or another. Similarly, Farrant (2004) articulated that much of the efficiency of the head of an institution's decision-making depends on the quality of information about the institution that is available to him.

The studies by Tagbotor et al. (2015), Coetzer (2012), Iwhiwhu (2005), Farrant (2004), Afful-Broni (2004) and others, focused on the importance and the use of records but were silent on the proper and safe keeping of records in institutions. Again, my close working experience with the Western Regional Education Office has revealed that a lot of data is generated at the office but records on the data are not properly kept, which poses challenge whenever information is needed. My experience at the Regional Education office, raise questions as to how administrators perceive records at the Office? To what extent do they value the keeping of proper records? How do they interpret the effects of unprotected records in administrative performance? Questions such as these require research but my research suggest that studies needs to be

carried out in the area within the Western Regional Education office of the GES.

Purpose of the study

The study sought to find out the records management practices of administrative staff at the Western Regional Education Office in Sekondi. Specifically, the study sought to:

1.   investigate meaning that administrators attach to administrative records management,

2.   find out how administrators perceive the records storing facilities available,

3.   find out the challenges administrators encounter in managing administrative records and

4.   explore administrators' capacity to properly manage administrative records.

Research Questions

To achieve the purpose for the study, the following research questions were formulated.

1.   What are administrators' views on the importance of record keeping to administrative work?

2.   How do administrators view administrative practices that characterized record keeping at the Western Regional Office of the GES?

3.   How do administrators perceive records storing facilities available at the office under study?

4.   What challenges are associated with records keeping at the Western Regional office of the GES?

5. In what ways can records management be improved?

Significance of the study

The result of this study may have a number of significance aspects. The findings when disseminated can help raise the level of consciousness of administrators about the need to keep and preserve administrative records. It can also help in sensitizing administrators to appreciate proper records keeping as an integral part of their work. In addition, the findings can also serve as a reminder to stakeholders to provide adequate storage facilities and ensure proper records keeping at the Western Regional Office of the GES. The findings may also contribute to the training of administrators in the region.

Delimitation

This study was confined to the Western Regional office of the GES. The researcher only sought to explore views of administrators on records management practices of Records keeping, the availability of storage facilities, challenges associated with Records keeping and the ability of the staff of the Western Regional Education Office of the GES to properly managing administrative records.

Limitation

A major limitation identified with this study was that each of the sixteen respondents was interviewed which was time consuming. This is because none of the respondents agreed for the interview to be recorded. The transcription delayed the entire process. Moreover, part of the interview was conducted in the local language. The fact that it is difficult for one to get the exact equivalence of meanings of some Fante terminologies in the English language does not make the transcription perfect. There could be the

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possibility of having misinterpreted responses and thereby losing their actual meanings.

Definition of Key Terms

Administrative staff: For the purpose of this study, administrative staff refers to the personnel in charge of overseeing records keeping, drafting and interpreting regulations, dealing with queries and complaints procedures, assisting with transfer/recruitment/leaves and retirement. They also perform a wide range of office support duties including data entry, photocopying, filing and answering the telephone.

Ghana Education Service: The service provides and oversees Basic Education, Senior High Education, Technical Education as well as Special Education.GES perform the following duties;

- Register, supervise and inspect both private and public pre-tertiary educational institutions.

- Submit to the Minister of education the recommendations for educational policies and programmes

- Promote the efficiency and full development of talents among its members

- Register teachers and keep an up-to-date register of all teachers in the public system

- Carry out such other functions as are incidental to the attainment of the functions specified above.

- Maintain professional standards and the conduct of its personnel

Management: In the context of this work, management refers to the ability or the process of creating or acquiring, organising, utilizing, maintaining and disposal of the records of Ghana Education Office throughout their entire life cycle and in making the information they contain accessible in support of decision making and planning.

Official Records: Not all records and information need to be retained. Records and information that should be retained as part of a records management are records that:

1. are required to support daily operations; or

2. will have some future organizational, financial, or archival value to the government and public; or

3. are personal information that has been used by the organization which is required to be retained pursuant to the legislation; or

4. evidence of compliance with a duty/responsibility

Records: For the purpose of this study, records include all documents, diskettes and files that contain information on what goes on within Ghana Education Service as well as other relevant information pertaining to its growth and development. Every record should have;

Content: A record should reflect what was communicated or decided or what action was taken, and should provide enough information so that it is understood.

Context: It should reflect how it was used or why it was created (purpose), the date, the time, and the participants.

Meaning: It should be linked to other documents or information to which it relates.

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Organisation of the study

This thesis is presented in five chapters. Chapter one presents introduction to the study. It discussed the background to the study and statement of the problem. The purpose of the study, the main research questions which guided the study and the significance of the study are also addressed. The later part of the chapter examined the limitation and the delimitation of the study. Chapter two covered the necessary theoretical literatures on records management. The chapter further uses the Hybrid Records Life Cycle Model which encompasses the pre-natal phase of the Records Continuum Model and the conceptual stages of the Records Life Cycle as its underpinning model to inquire into the role of records management practices of the administrative staff of the western region office of GES. Chapter three is the Methodology. It is made up of the population, sample and sample selection, the research instrument and its design, the data collection and data analysis procedure. Chapter four presents the results and discussions of findings. The fifth chapter provides a summary of the report, conclusion, recommendation and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the related literature that guided the study. It examined the meaning of records, the meaning of records management, records management in historical perspectives, the importance of records management, principles of records management, the mechanics of records management, release for filing and utilization of records, good record keeping, records managers, location of records, the use of records, and the physical maintenance, retention and disposal of records.

A good theoretical literature needs to produce a conceptual framework, including philosophical stances and theoretical assumptions; key assumptions and theoretical problems or contradictions (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). In records management, the rules that guide the investigation of researchers into issues, problems or concepts are determined by records management theories and methods. Yet, there is a tendency amongst organizations not to base their records management practices on existing theories or principles of records management (Ngulube, 2003). In this sense, some practices in records management may not be based on any theory. It may also be assumed that records management does not locate itself in any particular theory. As Cox (2001) argues, however, records management has revolved around a specific body of knowledge and is strongly supported by its own theory. This development informs this study to adopt the Hybrid Records Life Cycle Model proposed by Chachage and Ngulube (2006) for records management which functions in both paper and electronic environments.

Hybrid/Modified Records Life Cycle Model

The evolvement of records management models from the Records Life Cycle Model to the Records Continuum Model leads to the development of the Hybrid Records Life Cycle Model. The records continuum is the whole extent of a record's existence. It refers to a consistent and coherent regime of management processes from the time of the creation of records through to the preservation and use of records as archives. Bettington et al (2008).

The Hybrid Records Life Cycle Model blends the pre-natal phase of the Records Continuum Model and the conceptual phases of the Records Life Cycle Model (Chachage & Ngulube, 2006). The Records Life Cycle Model developed by the American, R.T. Schellenberg (Shepherd and Yeo, 2003) has guided the management of paper records in many organizations. The Records Life Cycle Model perceives records as an analogy of a biological organism, which is born, lives and dies, and a record, which is created, maintained and used for as long as it has continuing value and is then disposed of either by destruction or by archival (Northwest Territories, 2012; Shepherd & Yeo, 2003). The features of the Records Life Cycle Model imply that the model is more applicable and suitable for organizations dealing with the management of paper records (Yusof & Chell, 2000).

Nonetheless the goodness of the Records Life Cycle Model, Yusof and Chell (2002) point out that the Records Life Cycle Model is not suitable for organizations or studies investigating the management of electronic records and calls for the need to replace it with a model that appropriately reflects the special characteristics of electronic records. The perceived weaknesses of the

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Records Life Cycle Model conspicuously led to the development of the Records Continuum Model.

The Records Continuum Model originated in Canada but was developed and adopted in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s by Australian archival theorist, Frank Upward (Bantin, 2002). The Records Continuum Model refers to the consistent and systematic way of managing records from the development of record keeping systems to the final disposition stage that is either by destruction or preservation or use as archives (IRMT, 2009). Jackson (2008) justifies that the Records Continuum Model works effectively in an organization that operates in an electronic environment. Dikopoulou and Mihiotis (2012) and Kemoni et al. (2007) state that the adoption of the Records Continuum Model is very useful as it facilitates policy making, constitutes organizational memory, enhances compliance and enhances security. The most significant feature of the Records Continuum Model is its participatory nature of the design phase whereby records professionals and systems designers participate in the designing of the system. The design phase of the Records Continuum Model is normally referred to as the pre-natal phase (Flynn, 2001).

Chachage and Ngulube (2006) give a simplified explanation of the Hybrid Records Life Cycle as the fusion of the pre-natal stage of the Records Continuum Model with the conceptual stages of the Records Life Cycle Model. At the design stage, Records Managers and Archivists appraise records and decide on what records would support the functions of the organization during the records continuum. The collaboration between these stakeholders in the system design enables the creation of the right records containing the right

information in the right formats; organizing the records to facilitate their use; systematically disposing of records that are no longer required; and protecting and preserving records. Yusof and Chell (2002) assert that management in organizations should merge both the pre-natal phase of the Hybrid Records Life Cycle Model and that of the conceptual phases of the Records Life Cycle Model in the management of records as they do not exist independently of each other. The relevance of the Hybrid Records Life Cycle Model informed the study. Figure 4 shows the Conceptual Framework of Hybrid Records Life Cycle Mode

Records Management

PRE NATAL PHASE
- Participation in System Design

ACTIVE PHASE
- Creation & Capturing
- -Use & Maintenance

SEMI-Active PHASE
- Use & Storage

Non-Active Phase
-Disposal & Destruction
-Archival & Preservation
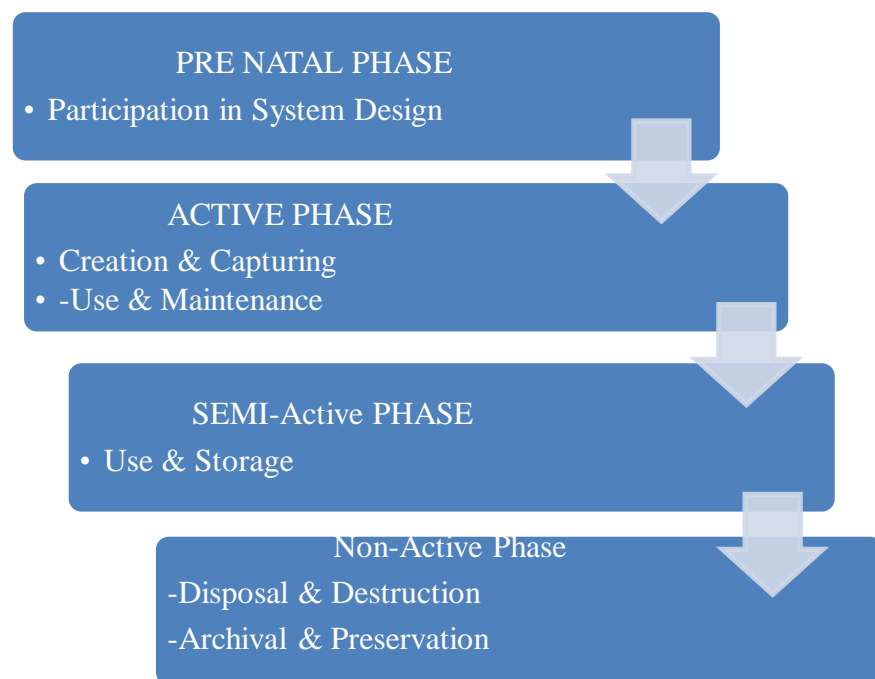
Figure 1: Conceptual framework of hybrid records life cycle mode

Pre-Natal Phase

At the pre-natal stage, a participatory design approach is considered. Here, records professionals (Records Managers, Archivists and administrators) and Management collaborate in the records keeping system design. Shepherd

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and Yeo (2003) and Myburgh (2005) emphasize that archivists, records managers and systems designers should collaborate in the designing of record keeping systems. The engagement of records professionals is essential because in the absence of engaging the records professionals in the system design, the ramifications are that some records are likely to disappear in the sub-systems due to a lack of records management and archival knowledge on the part of system designers (Chachage & Ngulube, 2006). Moreover, the creation and preservation of reliable and authentic records require a shared purposive activity among the system designers and users of records in organizations (Lyytinen & Ngwenyama, 1992).

Active Phase

This phase synthesizes records creation, storage and maintenance for both administrative and management uses. The activities of organizations involve the creation and maintenance of records and most importantly, render services and make decisions in the interest of the public. For instance, in an institution, once a record is created, it could be classified as confidential or non-confidential and current or non-current depending on the type of information they contain (Iwhiwhu, 2005). In most instances, organizations' records created are classified based on dates, numbers and alphabets. These records keeping classifications are meant to facilitate easy retrieval and security of records. For organizations that use electronic records management systems, records are created automatically by the system. On the other hand, organizations that deals with manual records, individuals are required to create records manually (Tucker, 2012).

Semi-Active Phase

At this phase, some records are rarely used for day-to-day activities. After some time the record becomes less frequently used and enters the in-active period. At this stage, records must be stored in easily accessible, conducive and a good room temperature prior to being destroyed according to the country's or organization's records retention and destruction policy. Records are often stored at a lower cost in an archive pending ultimate disposal. The essence of proper storage relates to privacy issues, security issues, access controls and unauthorized destruction of records. Organizations such as educational institutions maintain and preserve records for reference, and financial reasons (Northwest Territories, 2012).

Non-Active Phase

Here, records are considered to have finished their active life and are not needed for immediate use in the current records systems and have no more value to organizations. The majority of the records are destroyed and a limited number are transferred to archival repositories for preservation (Northwest Territories, 2012). Organizational policy on the disposal of records should be communicated to employees to ensure that confidential information is not leaked out to external parties. Generally, records must be accessible for a certain number of years to comply with state laws before being disposed or destroyed (Tucker, 2012).

Linking the Hybrid Records Life Cycle Model to the Study

Archival and records management theories and principles according to Bilotto & Guercio,(2003) are increasingly becoming relevant in organizations such as educational institution. This is due to the fact that educational

institutions on daily basis create, use, maintain, preserve and dispose of records. For organizations to go through the life cycle of records successfully, organizations must be guided by set of principles in order to fulfill its legal and financial obligations.

Organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa, according to Lyytinen & Ngwenyama, (1992) continue to practice both paper and paperless records and this necessitates the adoption of the Hybrid Life Cycle Model. Moreover, the adoption of records management systems in organizations are likely to create records management challenges if records professionals are not involved at the design stage of records management systems. However, the engagement of records professionals in system design ensure that records management systems are successfully implemented and practiced. This is because the creation and preservation of reliable and authentic records require a shared purposive activity between system designers, records professionals and management (Lyytinen & Ngwenyama, 1992).

In view of this The Model is seen by the researcher as appropriate because it looks into the 'life span' of records, from its creation through to preservation (in archives) or disposal. This will help to investigate how the administrative staffs perceive records keeping at the Western Regional office of the Ghana Education Service.

Meaning of Record

In order to define records management, the concept of "record" needs to be fully explored. A record is defined either in terms of the physical tangible format in which it appears, or in terms of the information it contains. It must be noted that records differ in format or size, and have different

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contents. The term record comes from the Latin word "recordari", which means to recall, or to remember, or bring back to mind, and this is exactly what records do (Pember and Cowan, 2010). Cox (2001) also explained records as an extension of human memory, purposefully created to record information, document transactions, communicate thoughts, substantiate claims, advance explanations, offer justifications and provide lasting evidence events.

Records is defined by Shirley and Solity (1987) as "documented information, in any form, created or received and maintained by an organization or person in the transaction of business or conduct of affairs and kept as evidence of such activity". Again, Langemo (1995) defines a record as the memory of the organization, the raw material for decision making and the basis for legal defensibility (UEW Records Management Policy Framework, 2000). Kallus (1991) further defines a record as written or oral evidence that has been collected and kept for use in making decisions. The most common records (such as forms, correspondence, reports and books) are written, printed or typed on paper. Oral records capture the human voice on tape, and are stored on cassettes or on other magnetic media. In support of Kallus's (1991) definition, Quible (1996) further defines records as informational documents such as forms, letters, memoranda, reports and manuals used to carry out various functions.

The concept "record" can be defined as the information captured for re-use at a later stage as evidence of an activity or action undertaken, and a basis on which future decisions are made. Records are important and it is

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difficult to imagine life without them, particularly in the running of an organization (Penn et al., 1994).

Records, according to *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* is: (i) a written statement of facts, events, etc (ii) the known of someone's past behaviour (iii) anything that provides information about the past, etc. The Oxford Dictionary defines records as the permanent accounts of something that is kept for future evidence or information. The Cambridge Dictionary defines Records as a piece of information or a description of an event that is written on paper or stored on a device. The Business Dictionary also defines Records as document that memorizes and provides objective evidence of activities performed, events occurred, results achieved, or statements made. From these dictionary definitions, one can safely say that records are written statements of information (facts, events, etc) about an organisation's life. Tella (1991) defines records as "the totality of documents, structures (of relatively permanent nature) that are of sentimental, economic or historical value to a particular institution. On the other hand, Ajayi and Ayodele (2002) see records as "pieces of information on relevant events". These definitions corroborate the one given by the dictionary in one way or the other. Records can therefore be defined /described as information keeping documents on institution. They are at times referred to as the encyclopedia of activities.

Record management could be defined as the planning, controlling, directing, organizing, promoting and other managerial activities involved with regards to record creation, maintenance and disposition. International Organization for Standardization (2011) cited in Ojo (2012) defines record management as the field of management responsible for the efficient and

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systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records, including the process for capturing and maintaining evidence of and information about business, activities and transactions in the form of records.

However, Popoola (2001a, b) defines record management as a skill that deals with the control of recorded information throughout their lifecycle from creation to destruction or transfer to achieve as records of permanent value. If school records are not properly managed according to Popoola (2001a, b) as corporate resource, the entire school system could be disorganized. The International Organization for Standardization (2011) cited in Ojo (2012) submitted that records management include: setting policies and standards; assigning responsibilities and authorities; establishing and promulgating procedures and guidelines; providing a range of services relating to the management and use of records; designing, implementing and administering specialized systems for managing records and integrating records management into business system and processes. Obadara (2016) submitted that record keeping and management should achieve the following objectives: to make available accurate and complete information when it is needed in order to manage and operate the school system efficiently and effectively; to process and handle recorded information efficiently; to provide information and records at the minimum possible cost and to render maximum service to the users of the records. According to Babayemi (2009), there are three phases of record keeping and they are:

1. *Record Creation*: This is the first phase of record creation and most records in the school system are internally generated from within. This does not mean that there are not externally generated records from external examination

bodies, such as, West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO) etc., and increase in both internal and external records lead to the problems of administration, management and appraisal of record.

2. *Records Use and Maintenance:* Here, the already generated internal and external records are put into use and are well maintained. Proper maintenance and storage of records are necessary for easy access to such records. Adequate security is so vital to safeguard the records from hazards like flood, fire, dust, insects, misplacement and disappearance etc.

3. *Record Disposition:* This is the phase that involves discarding records that are no longer in use again. Retention or destruction of school records is a function of storage facilities available. The record management involves the following activities: creation and distribution, use, retention, storage, retrieval, protection, preservation and final disposal. Each of these has a direct influence on the information availability within the organisational system and the responsibility for each of the record management activities vary.

Ozigi (1977) stressed that "Education law demands that every educational institution keep certain records". Records are also kept because of the useful information they provide about educational system in general. Not all documents/information are identified as a 'record'. A document becomes a record at the point in its lifetime when it:

1. is sent to others for comment, advice or approval;

2. contains evidence of a decision making process; or

3. contains evidence of business activities.

Some documents and messages such as emails are automatically records, because they are transmitted between individuals in the course of business. However, not all records will have long term value and therefore not all need to be kept for an extended period of time.

According to Emery (2005), records are the various documents that are generated, received and filed by any office. Records are the written matter or documents prepared or received for future use. Record could be a format-paper, electronic or computerized, digital and or voice. Bhatia (2005) also posits that a record could be in the form of correspondence such as a letter, notice, circular, memos, agendas, minutes, agenda, invoice, voucher, picture, chart, diagram, report, return or statement, fliers, news clippings, transcripts, certificates, testimonials, books of account, purchase orders, tapes and microfilms or any other documents. Record can take the form of a database or its elements like film sound recording, among others. Records could be in manual or electronic such as the automated records management control system. An automated records management control system uses database technology to index records for storage.

Record constitutes some form of tangible evidence of the operations or transactions of an enterprise. For instance, a receipt stamped 'paid' confirms that an amount of money was paid on such a day to such a person or institution; the minutes of meetings attest to the fact that the meeting was held in such a venue, at such a time, and was chaired by such a person, and the members who were present or attended were such people. They are the outputs that record each and every business and administrative transactions of an institution and details about its members of staff and all its external contacts.

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For instance, Teachers' promotion letters testify that they have been graded to such ranks and their pay slips confirm the salaries that they receive. A record is the final statement about the transaction, business process or what happened. Records are the products or outputs that record activities, administrative, and transactions of institutions and are required to provide detailed information about listeners, members of staff as well as the resources, among others. The institution's survival, progress and continuation hinge on it. Records form the collective memory of the organisation that must be available beyond the memory or working life of any single member of the institution. This is so because individuals in the organisation come and go as some are transferred, retire, or die, but the organisation exists for a very long time.

Record could be a tangible object or digital information such as ex-rays, medical certificates, databases, e-mails, or office documents, among others. Once written, the record must not be altered across time. Records substantiate what were, when, why, or how employees of the institution did something for, and on behalf of.

A commonly held view is that "all records are documents, but not all documents are records". This quotation is from Peterson (1991, p. 193), but the same opinion has been expressed by Barry (1993, p. 27) and Livelton (1996, p. 64), among others. The view that not all documents are records may, on the surface, appear easy to   accept but on critical level, it raises many questions as to why some documents cannot be considered as records. It is therefore important that we focus on the attributes of records rather than the meaning of records.

Attributes of Records

According to Gbadegesin, Adu and Ojo (2017), for records to be useful and profit maximally, they must display the following attributes:

Accessibility

This is the ease and speed with which records are stored, maintained and retrieved. The record users must be able to retrieve the records when needed.

Consistency

The record keeper needs to be consistent and not vary the method of recording for easy accessibility.

Completeness

Records need to be filled regularly. This is because incomplete records are not useful to the school administrators because they could not serve the purpose of record management.

Accuracy

This is the degree of freedom from error. Sometimes, large data have error of transcript and computation. But if there are too many errors, the data are invalid.

Variability

This is the degree of consensus arrived at among various users of records that are kept and managed, the greater the consensus among users the better.

Maintenance

This involves all activities that ensure that they are in good condition and kept in an orderly state. This is the main thing in record management.

Quality

The information contained in any records must be accurate and reliable, the greater the level of accuracy and reliability, the higher the quality of information.

Relevance

A relevant record is one that is useful to the needs of the school system. Data that are no longer relevant are required and should be securely disposed of.

Timeliness

Information contained in a record should be retrievable at the time of need rather than offer vital decisions have been made.

Truthfulness

Data should not be cooled or exaggerated. Dishonest records are very harmful to the accomplishment of the school goal.

Objectivity

This principle stresses that information recorded by the record keeper, should be objective. The record should not be subjected to personal interpretation. It should have the attribute of verifiability. According to Ololube (2013, p. 103), "the importance of good record keeping transcends into short and long term benefits and affects the overall achievement of educational objectives". Ololube (2013, pp. 103-104) identified some additional and important reasons for records keeping in schools:

Accountability

Record keeping is vital to an education system's information cycle as a whole, because of its fundamental role in the process of efficient information production and collection. School records are an important means of

accountability because they provide proof. Records such as cash books and stock books help to ensure accountability as they show income, expenditures and stock levels in a school. These cash and the stock books can then be made available to auditors on demand for the auditing of school funds and facilities.

Decision Making

Records help administrators to make decisions. Records provide raw data that enable coherent, balanced and objective decisions on issues such as promotion, student and staff discipline, and teaching and learning performances.

Employment

Properly kept records on the human resources serve useful employment and planning related purposes. The number of staff, their areas of specialization, qualifications, age, gender, and so on will help the principle to determine the human resource needs and assets of his or her school. Consistent information kept about employees can also be used in employee performance appraisals.

Guidance Counselors

School records are of great importance to school guidance counsellors as these records can provide counsellors with a holistic picture of the students they counsel (academic grades and achievements, disciplinary measures taken and/or extracurricular activities) and can help counsellors to track student progress.

Information Bank

Records kept in an institution serve as an information bank from which the administrators of the institution can recall information when needed. However,

the extent to which the usefulness of records could be managed depends on how such records are managed.

Categories of Information

The most common groups and categories of information according to Chifiwepa (2014) are discussed below:

Action Information

This requires the recipient to respond quickly. Example of such action information includes instructions, requests, applications letters which could border an application letters or letters of transfer. Action information could also be related to acquisition of materials or introduction of disciplinary measures.

Non-action Information

This does not necessarily require immediate action or response. For instance, when a new policy is introduced, certain procedures change and some behavioural patterns may need adjusting.

Recurring Information

This is concerned with the activities or events that keep recurring intervals. Examples of recurring information within an institution may include student attendance, assessment results, accounting, examination results, and psychomotor, affective and cognitive evaluations. Others include the termly or semester per annual reports, sport competitions, cultural activities etc.

Non-recurring Information

This is the information which may not recur on a regular basis during the life of the organization. For instance, capital projects such as building laboratory, classroom take place when necessary resources are available.

Internal Information

Information which is meant for internal use is generated by an organisation system during its operation. When school holds meeting, the information generated may be for internal use only. Such internal information includes different letters either from the head of the organisation to the subordinates or vice versa.

External Information

This type of information counts from outside the system. It could be from the ministry of education, other schools, and parents or even from external organizations.

Historical Information

This category of information relates to that post activities and events. This is usually non action information about the school activities undertaken by the school. Action information becomes historical information after a while.

The Purpose of Records in Organisations

Basically records serve three major purposes. First, they serve as an administrative record of the recent activities of any office or department, and thus, assist departmental members with day- to- day operation of the department or office. Secondly, records serve legal purposes, and finally, they serve as an historic record of the activities of an office, department or institution.

Cheryl and Stiegler (1989) posited that records provide essential information to educational administrators, managers, government and other stakeholders to base their decisions. Records provide the necessary information through past and present records for the purpose of planning,

policy making, coordination and control functions, provided these records are properly classified and preserved so as to be located promptly as and when needed. Consequently, records have to be systematically maintained, preserved with due care, and made available to management quickly and accurately. Not only do records provide information that is necessary for decision – making, but also they provide a history of the organisation and its activities. Records serve as memory units of the office. Records may be required and used for legal purposes. Compliance with legal and statutory requirements such as the maintenance of books of accounts and registers for a specified period is facilitated. Records in the form of summarized statements may be available to ascertain the financial health of business at a glance.

Whitehead (1993) argued that records are relevant for business to be efficiently carried out. They provide proof that contracts were made or whether obligations were fulfilled or not. In so doing, any questions could be answered efficiently and quickly. Accurate records enable queries to be easily dealt with and also make it possible to compare present performance with past achievements and to detect any problems arising long before they would otherwise be noticed.

Wherever records are stored they must be accessible. There are three types of access; open access, selected access, and closed access. Open access is where anybody can take and use the records. The danger here is that users may not return the records, or where they do, they will put them in the wrong place, or just dump them. Selective access is where only a few people are authorized to use the records. Closed access system happens where only the

staffs employed for the purpose extracts records for users. This is the best in terms of control of records.

In firms, businesses and institutions, systematic records have saved many from bankruptcy. For example, vital records such as book-keeping records have enabled them to know how much they owe creditors, and how much they are owed by debtors. Accurate and detailed information is important to management if they are to make right decisions and run their institutions properly. A lack of credible information causes costly errors to be made.

Place, Byers and Uthe (1980) pointed out that it has been estimated that one thousand, five hundred trillion pieces of paper are on file in offices and store rooms. Every year, the contents of 62 million file drawers are added to this total. Furthermore, studies show that, of the total, 35 percent could be destroyed today and not missed. Another 20 percent is equally useless. Of the remaining papers, 95 percent are useful for five years or less. About 50 percent of this bulk can be kept in low-cost storage rather than in high-cost office space. Only one percent must be kept permanently. There is also the need for simplicity in records management. The system used should be simple enough to be understood and operated easily to avoid any confusion that could lead to delays in retrieval. The equipment used and the methods of operation should be simple to understand and easy to remember and handle. The system should also be adaptable when circumstances change. That is, there should be flexibility and elasticity. The filing system should be flexible enough to allow desirable changes from time to time. It should also be flexible and elastic enough to provide for expansion to take increasing numbers of records.

Records also have an analytical function. Records facilitate comparison. They ease comparison of the performance of the organisation between one time and the other, and between organisations. The implication of this is that records make it easy to compare the performance of personnel between one time and the other, and between or among themselves, or the school's performance with others. Another important aspect of records is that they have a control function. There must be controls to keep track of any documents removed and to trace them where necessary. They help detect inefficiency and wastage of resources. Finally, some records are the result of legal formalities. Such records assist in the establishment of the genuineness of facts in disputes, serve as proof of transactions and may be used as evidence in the support of arguments in disputes or law suits. These records must be preserved for specified periods of time due to some laws.

The Concept of Records Management

According to Place, Byers, and Uthe (1980) records management is a process involving a life cycle which runs from the creation through retention, maintenance and preservation (retrieval is necessary) and the transferring them to long-term storage and finally to their ultimate disposal. It is the systematic management of all records and data that they contain. Cheryl and Stiegler (1989) similarly pointed out that records management involves creating, organizing, protecting, using, storing, and disposing records. Records management is primarily concerned with the evidence of an organisation's activities. In the past, records management was used to refer only to the management of records which were no longer in everyday use but still needed to be kept – 'semi-current' or 'inactive' records often stored in

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basements of offsite.   More modern usage tends to refer to the entire 'lifecycle' of records – from the point of creation right through until their eventual disposal.

Harvey (1989) supports this view when he opined that records management is concerned with the control of recorded information in an orderly way from the creation of the information through active use, inactive storage, and final disposition. It involves creating a system that will control the quantity, quality, and cost of records. Knowing what to store is important since it is not every material that is to be stored. In the school for instance, many kinds of documents are processed or received, but they are not all of equal value. Some have to be immediately thrown away after use or after they have been read since they will not be used afterwards. Students completed exercise books, report cards, staff attendance and movement books may not need to be kept for a long time after the end of the academic year. Others however, are of such vital nature that they are essential to the operation of the institution that they must not be destroyed, but instead, enter a records management system for varying lengths of time. The log book, admission register, students' attendance registers and the inventory book are vital records that must be preserved for varying lengths of time.

Littlefield and Peterson cited in Arrora (1980) hold a similar view that records management is concerned with the records creation, distribution, maintenance, retention, preservation, utilization, retrieval and disposal; and advanced to say that the term records management is broad and includes forms, reports, reproduction of written material, filing, records retention, microfilming and related services. Stewart and Westgate (2000), posit that

records management has some functions key to which is the creation of records. This refers to the development and design of new forms and their control. It deals with the development of efficient methods of entering data in the document as well as the length of time records to be stored.

Importance of Records Management

Record management is one of the most important administrative elements which administrators must adhere to. It is impossible to plan and administer any formal organisation effectively in which records are not kept or mismanaged. To successfully achieve this, record must be safely kept and managed. It should be borne in mind that management is an essential function within all organisations, a tool that is needed within every human association for the attainment of common goals. Therefore the importance of records management cannot be overemphasized. The emphasis placed on record management in institution was aptly elucidated by Okeke (2001) who observed that records, when properly kept serve as information bank from which the head of institution can recall stored information when needed. Furthermore, good records provide information for, counsellors, curriculum planners and instructional supervisors for planning and implementing instructional and administrative activities (Egwuyenga, 2000).

Administrators generate records in the institution by creating them. Almost every day administrators receive official letters and circulars from their authorities. Records are maintained as evidence by the institution or person in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transactions of business. Information in the minute books, cash books and receipt books provide evidential proof that some decisions were made, actions were taken or monies

were spent in the right manner. Any of the records could be tended in a court of law in evidence to a case.

Bhatia (2005) supported this view and proceeded to state that the aim of keeping records is to enable them to be readily available to management when required. While some records are required to be kept by law, others are to meet the needs of management in planning and controlling activities. Records management control could be the duty of one person such as the administrator or secretary. However, where the records system is large and complex, it may require a records manager and support staff with some special training. Procedures for the creation, retention, and discarding of records vary from office to office.

Records are kept and managed to enhance the smooth handing over from one generation to another with regards to change of leadership position (Ojo, 2012). Records management in institution keep the government at different levels and the society informed as to the need for further investment in education and the direction and dimension of such investment. Properly kept records could reflect good working climate while poorly kept records can give the impression of poor working climate and management. Records help to preserve the "cultural value system of the institution system."

Afful-Broni (2004) observed that records are said to be closely associated with bureaucracy. Characteristic of bureaucratic organization is in the maintenance of good and proper official records. Whatever decisions are made or activities are carried out in the organisation are formally recorded and safely preserved for future reference. This is possible by extensive filling system. Afful-Broni proceeded to argue that data are essential for an

organization to be able to achieve its objectives. Every organization needs to harness its human and material resources for its survival, growth and development which require adequate and up-to-date data. Leaders make decisions that affect the lives and destinies of many people. Whatever choices are made by these leaders should be based on sober reflection and critical thinking. Leaders must ensure that they have adequate information from their record books, that they can carefully think through and sift the facts from the chaff before taking any actions. Records are kept to provide evidence of the institution's activities, past actions and events, and to substantiate what was communicated or decided on.

Haskew and Mclendon (1968) pointed out that the best way of getting information for administrative purposes is to consult data recorded in record books and files. To them records furnish valuable evidence about the institution's physical characteristics and its activities. In similar vein, the administrator is well equipped with vital information about each employee through good records which otherwise might be hidden from him until later, if at all. By consulting these records early, the administrator is better placed in knowing his workers. The information found in administrative files sometimes helps the administrator to find solutions to problems workers meet in their work. They went on to draw an analogy between education and the military. Haskew and Mclendon (1968) recounted the slaying of a famous General, who once said that, "to have a good army, the soldiers must have one big thing to gripe about. It appeared that for administrators, records and reports provided the gripping outlet in administration" (p 65). What they meant was that most often an army complained or grumbled bitterly about certain happenings or

why they were made to perform certain actions. Initially, they often do not understand why, however, most often in the end, they appreciate why they were made to do that. In the same way, heads of institution and their staff sometimes do not understand why they should be bothered to keep certain records like personnel files, containing teachers' appraisals, as well as, a record of their personal development which include personal records of staff, individual files containing staff certificates, promotion leaves, pay slips, and particulars such as registered numbers, identification numbers, academic and professional qualifications, staff appraisals, among others. Some heads do not appreciate why visiting officers should even ask for them to inspect. Though often they do not see the purpose for a given record or the need for a given report when they keep it, in the end they find it useful to themselves and their institution. As circumstances unfold and as they go into the matter with the administrators, they come to the realization that it is in their interest to keep these records and that there is no better option.

Well-kept records can lead to an all-round improvement in education. A good system provides the administrator with relevant information about the institution. This helps the administrator know the special interests, weaknesses, work habits, general interests, and ability of the employees as well as the employers. Records should be based on factual knowledge and not on opinions. Good record keeping help achieving this.

Dean (1987) supported this and added that a good reporting system gives the institution an overall view of its work and helps the administration to plan better programmes. By a good reporting system is meant that the keeping of records should not be lopsided but all embracive covering all facets of the

institution. A number of institutional benefits will accrue to any institution when proper records are kept. These benefits include better use of physical and server space, save staff time, improved control of valuable information resources, compliance with standards and reduction in its operational costs (UEW Records Management Policy Framework, 2000).

According to Sanderson and Ward (2003), the importance of records management is increasingly being recognized in organizations. It is therefore the responsibility of records managers to ensure that they gain the attention of decision-makers in their organizations. Gaining recognition is all about convincing management of the role of records management as enabling unit in an organization. Administrative staff required information in order to carry out their official duties and responsibilities efficiently and effectively in a transparent manner. Records represent major sources of information and are almost the only reliable and legally verifiable source of data that can serve as evidence of decisions, actions and transactions in an organization (Wamukoya, 2000). Again, Northwest Territories (2003) suggest that the role of records management is to ensure that members of staff involved in different operations have the information they need, when necessary. Also, De Wet and Du Toit (2000) stated that the service provided by records management is of vital importance to both employees (end users) and organizational success. The primary function of records management is to facilitate the free flow of records throughout the entire institution. Most importantly, it remains the function of records management to ensure that an organization's records are safe for future reference.

According to Palmer (2000), the role of a records management system is that it acts as a control system that reinforces other control systems such as internal and external auditing. The records themselves can serve to detect fraud and recover the loss. Since corruption creates an environment that allows opportunities to commit fraud, records can provide a trail for investigators to track the root of corruption. However, for records to be useful in this capacity, they must be accessible. In Hare and McLeod (1979) views, organizations keep records for the following reasons; information retrieval, evidence of organization's activities, compliance with regulations. In support of Hare and McLeod, Cowling (2003), further identified four main reasons motivating organizations to preserve records permanently as: administrative value, financial value, legal value and information value.

In summary, it may be appropriate to indicate that records exist in order to remind institutions of their previous activities. Hounsome (2001) noted that while records management may seem boring to many, it is hard to under-estimate in the role played by records management in organizations. The records are the corporate memory of the organization, evidence of what was done and why it was done. They provide information for different institutional purposes, such as decision making, financial accountability, performance measurement, strategic planning and research. Without divorcing themselves from the above scholars, Sanderson and Ward (2003) further explored the role of records management in an organization as avoiding the cost of litigation or failure to comply with regulatory bodies, preventing the loss of intellectual property or loss of corporate learning/corporate memory, preventing loss of information from disasters or theft and ensuring business

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continuity, maximizing the efficiency of operation and usage of information, responding in a timely and effective way to requirements of customers, protecting executives and their organizations from loss of reputation and credibility with the general public and customers by demonstrating good practice and providing accountability for their actions.

Thurston (2005) argues that dysfunctional records management undermines legal and judicial reform. Decisions are made without full information about cases, and the absence of systematic record management and controls leaves scope for corruption or collusion between court officials and lawyers. Court time is wasted, delays are created, and the judiciary's standing is lowered. The large volume of records passing through a typical court system, their sensitivity, and time pressures on courts makes effective records management essential.

Roper and Millar (1999) opine that, "records are fundamental to the efficient and effective operation of the legal system of a country and perhaps are even more crucial to the administration of law than to any other function of the public sector". They further stated that, "within the legal context", records serve several functions; they support legal rights and obligations within the legal system, they provide evidence or proof that a particular activity took place and they contribute to accountability in organizations and in government" (Roper & Millar, 1999). According to Sprehe (2002), records ensure that an organization can; conduct its business in an orderly, efficient, and accountable manner, deliver services consistently and equitably, document its policies, decisions, and outcomes to stakeholders and regulators, meet its legislative and regulatory requirements, including audits, protect itself in

litigation, function in a financially and ethically accountable manner, protect corporate interests as well as the rights of employees, clients, and other stakeholders, provide continuity of operations in an emergency or disaster, and maintain its corporate and institutional memory.

Zawiyah and Robert (1999) pointed the following as the benefits of accurate records management; speedy and accurate retrieval of records necessitates systematic filing and storage of records, saves space and prevents duplication of effort with similar records, easier retrieval, better utilization of space, and less frequent loss of documents. Records management is important because it reduces litigation risks, provides regulatory compliance and protects corporate assets (Porter-Roth, 2006). Blake (2014) also said that properly managed records can help reduce operating expenses, enhance customer service and ensure that the company is in compliance with laws and regulations. Without records, no assessment can be made of whether individuals, private and public organizations have actually carried out the actions and transactions that they had to execute, or whether they ensure that these actions and transactions meet the criteria of efficiency, legitimacy or the principles of good governance, and whether they had done things which they were not supposed to do (Thomassen, 2001)

Records as important resource for organizations should be harnessed through proper records management practices (Mutula and Wamukoya, 2009). Institutions and individuals create records in the conduct of their current business to support administration, to ensure accountability, and for cultural purposes, to meet the needs of society for collective memory and the preservation of individual and community identity and history (Shepherd,

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2010). Records can be used to ensure accountability, to make people and businesses account for their actions and obligations and when there is a need to prove that organizations have complied with legal or regulatory requirements or recognized best practice. Records enable institutions to meet legal, regulatory, and financial requirements, and to protect their assets and rights.

Proper records management helps to support the expectation of a democratic society for transparency and they protect citizen's rights. They enable governments to deliver electronically enabled services to citizens (e-government) and facilitate citizen participation through the provision of information and digital interaction (Shepherd, 2010). Thus, records have to be managed as a strategic resource so as to facilitate the day to day operations of the institution. For instance, Mnjama (2004) pointed out that there are several reasons why organizations should manage records as a key resource, including: Records themselves are organizational assets because they document organizational activities and are needed for audit trails, especially in establishing who did what, why and when. Records document financial activities. Without proper records, meaningful audits cannot be carried out, fraud cannot be proven, and those responsible for the financial management of the institutions cannot be held accountable for their actions.

Records management serves the cause of history by identifying and preserving important research records. Shepherd (2006) states that records which are managed as part of an appropriate records management programme will help the organisation to conduct business in an efficient, accountable manner, deliver services consistently, support managerial decision making and

transparent policy formulation and ensure continuity in policy execution, management and administration

Records Management in Historical Perspectives

The concept of records management is not new. Fess and Niswonger (1981) posited that people in all civilizations have maintained records of various kinds to determine the month's calendar of the year, farming seasons and business activities.

According to Read-Smith, Gina and Kallaus (2002), records management involves systematically controlling the creation, preservation, organisation, distribution, storage, and retrieval to the disposal of records. Indeed, it has been established that records management existed over 7,000 years ago, yet the concept is quite new, having its new routes in the mid of 20th century. they maintained that the Babylonians were known to have the oldest types of records which were clay tablet records concerning the payment of wages around 3600 B.C which were on cuneiform tablets. In the same way, the temple priests who controlled the Sumerian society managed these records which were predominantly concerned with business activities such as the collection of taxes, existing stocks and inventories of various resources and loans contracted. Penn and Pennix (1998)

It is noteworthy that there are numerous evidences of record keeping and system of accounting control in Babylonia during the dynasties of King Hammurabi (1792-1750 B.C.). (630-562 B.C.) also in ancient Egypt particularly during the time of the New empire (1530-1050 B.C.). Government and administration were executed through the creation and use of records, and all records were preserved in the libraries of the rulers. Later, the libraries

were used as safe keeping storing records such as literature collections, information on medicine, religion and science. As time went by, records management took various forms shifting from clay to papyrus, to parchment, and then to paper. The management of records was in the hands of scribes or teachers and literates such as philosophers, priests, nobles, landed gentry and rulers. Iwhiwhu (2005) similarly opined that records have been with man since his creation. The form in which it is managed however has not been static but dynamic and so keeping on changing with time.

A case file system was established in Rome in AD 1200 which instituted records retention and disposition practices. This system also saw the establishment of registries to manage records. By this system, documents that come into the organisation and those that went out of it were numbered. The system used numbering, logging, and registering of every incoming and outgoing document.

There were dramatic changes in records management towards the end of the 18th century and in the 1930s. France established the Archives Nationale in 1789 to unify the administration of archives as well as the records of public agencies. The Greek city states also managed records, whilst the earliest known English records, were compiled at the direction of William the Conqueror in the eleventh century to ascertain the financial resources of the kingdom. As some records were found to have outlived their usefulness and merely occupied space a British Order in Council was passed in 1877 authorizing the destruction of valueless material. Similarly, the first General Records Disposal Act was established by the United States Bureau of Efficiency in 1889. The United States Bureau of Efficiency did not relent in its

efforts to improve records management. Consequently in1913, it had the nod in its advocacy tor the introduction of labour-saving office equipment which has greatly influenced record keeping practices throughout the world. In 1934 the United State established its National Archives which resulted in the development of the life cycle concept of records management which has thrived to this day.

It is worthy to mention that records management is not alien to Africa. Anaman (1980) pointed out that, illiterate farmers in Africa over the ages used pieces of sticks, marbles and pebbles to count yields of crops and the number of animals a farmer had, as well as keep track of the months in the year so as to determine precisely the correct planting season. These were later kept as records. He maintained that Arabic language was used in some parts of Africa to keep farm records, and cowry shells for exchange currency.

In Ghana, the Public Records and Archives Administration Act (535) were passed in 1997. Consequently, a record management manual was prepared for records offices and archival administration in the country which has been in operation till now.

The archetypal record probably takes the form of a unit of text, more or less in narrative style, though possibly also containing graphics or images; few observers are likely to deny that records of this kind fall within the domain of documents. But most – probably all – records managers and archivists now recognise that records need not be inscribed text or static images, but could be (for example) voice recordings or moving films. An audiotape or film of a conference, a meeting or an interview is easily recognisable as a record of the event concerned. Acknowledgement of such

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records may make it more difficult for us to define a record as a kind of document. The difficulty grows larger if we accept that records can also take the form of three-dimensional artefacts. In earlier ages the recording of activities and events using such artefacts was often commonplace. In 1838 a Delaware farm worker sued his employer for non-payment of wages and won his case; like many illiterate farmhands at that time, he kept a notched stick as a record of the work he had done, and the court admitted the stick as evidence, apparently relying on the principle – still followed in courts of law today – that "regular entries made in the routine of business" constituted an admissible record (Fishbein, 1982). Notched sticks and bones have a long history as a form of record. Archaeologists investigating hunter-gatherer societies in Africa and Europe have found notched animal bones more than 20,000 years old, and these are sometimes thought to have been records kept by hunters of the number of kills they had made (Joseph, 1991, p. 24). At a more sophisticated level, in medieval and post-medieval England, notched wooden tallies were used as financial receipts, with different sums of money recorded using notches of varying sizes and intervals. Tallies were split lengthwise to give each party an identical record, thus providing security against forgery or falsification. In the Exchequer their use continued until 1826; as is well known, a few years later when the tallies were ordered to be burnt, the fire accidentally spread and destroyed the Houses of Parliament (Jenkinson, 1911; Baxter, 1994).

An even more sophisticated example of record keeping using a three-dimensional artifact is the *quipu*, a type of knotted string device used by Inca rulers in preliterate South America to issue orders, convey messages and

record tribute payments, inventories and population censuses. The Incas were able to record all these things using strings and clusters of knots, and although the precise recording system is not fully understood it probably employed the material, colour and construction of the strings, the number and directionality of the knots and their distance from a primary string, to serve purposes similar to those for which other cultures use writing (Urton, 1998). The Spanish conquerors of South America admitted *quipu* records as evidence in their courts. When we consider such arte factual records that make no use of written text, we may wish to question how far definitions of a record as a kind of document merely reflect practices predominant in western cultures at particular periods of history.

Documents and data in our own era, computing specialists often distinguish data from documents, and computer technology has introduced us to the possibility of maintaining and processing data using methods that are independent of documentary formats. In digital environments, documents are seen as the domain of word-processing and similar software, while data are usually associated with separate applications built around database technology.

The distinction between data and documents is sometimes presented as a distinction between structured and unstructured resources. Those who adopt this view characterise documents as "unstructured text created in a non-repetitive manner", in contrast to data, defined as "structured information created on a repetitive basis" (McDonald, 1989, p. 7). Allusions to structured and unstructured information are common in computing magazines and web sites (e.g. Blumberg & Atre, 2003; Tyler, 2003; Robb, 2004; Dorion, 2007)

and sometimes find their way into the records management press, particularly in articles placed by software vendors. Writers who use this terminology often give examples, especially of "unstructured" resources, which are frequently said to include memoranda, reports, correspondence and other "narrative text", as well as images and graphics (McDonald, 1989; Tyler, 2003; Cimtech, 2007,).

The notion that documents are unstructured is open to dispute, and I would argue that it is misleading. Creators of documents seek to convey meaning by imposing linear structures on the words, phrases, sentences and other components they employ. Although in a typical document few of the structural elements are formally labelled, the document's intelligibility derives from its internal structure and the relationships between the textual (and sometimes visual) elements of which it is composed. With databases, processing by users is normal and the utility of a dataset is independent of the order in which it is presented; but when we view documents they have been pre-packaged with an intention that they should be intelligible without further processing, and the ordering of their components is fundamental. The advent of computing, textual records seemed inextricably tied to documentary formats, but the digital revolution has made the view that "all records are documents" implausible. In many workplaces, entry of data into databases has been in operation till now.

The Mechanics of Records Management

This refers to directives, forms, and filing systems in records management. According to Penn and Pennix (1989), directive system is the policy and procedure statement issued by an organisation that governs its

records management. Form systems: Records management often requires the use of forms. A form is a tool used to create or collect, organise and transmit information. Daver (1988) outlined five important aspects of forms. These are that, records managers have to design forms in a manner that is easy to complete and provide data that can easily be used; give specific instructions on how the form is to be used; identify each form with a number; centralize the responsibility for both control and design of the form, and avoid the proper storage of records is crucial.

Records management is concerned with developing a system of storing records and identifying which records will be kept; arranging records in an organised manner so that they can be found quickly; duplication of entries in different forms, protecting records from damages or loss, and determining how long records should be stored. Today, records may be stored by manual or automatic methods, the latter being electronic storage via the computer. As an organisation expands, its filing and retrieval activities may become mechanized or automated. As a business gets closer to the concept of a total information system, the closer it gets to the integration and centralization of its filing functions. The organisation may therefore use computer for storing, interrelating, and retrieving a mass of information with speed and precision which otherwise would have been impossible through manual or semi-automatic process.

Records management by electronic means is still low in some offices such as the Western Regional office of Ghana Education office. Most rural communities have no electricity, moreover few schools have computers. The storage of records has to do with the creation and retention of the right

material at a place which is accessible to the persons using them and the protection of records against theft, fire, unauthorized use and deterioration. To regulate or control the ever increasing volume of paper work, management needs to decide on what is to be kept, where, for how long, and when and how it is to be disposed of. Equally important is the implementation of such decisions by personnel responsible for this. Critical of these is the administrator or the secretary who must conscientiously follow institutional guidelines on what should and what should not be stored, and what system is to be used to file what is kept. This involves two control measures, namely, filing management and filing operation. By filing management is meant that measures are taken to stop the production and retention of useless papers. By filing operation, specific procedures are formulated to identify the most efficient and economic ways to file and make accessible those papers that are found to be useful. Records may be stored in any of the following storage equipment;

File folders. File folders are used for keeping varied documents that are placed in a file on a given topic or subject. They facilitate the grouping of records and protect them.

Subdivision Guides: Subdivision guides are made of rigid material like heavy pressed cardboard. Each one bears a metal tab into which is inserted a card indicating the subdivision of file folders that follow it. These rigid guides divide the file drawer into sections and so make it easier to locate records quickly.

Storage racks and filing cabinets: File folders could be kept together in special racks or cabinets. Filing cabinets are very common in offices. Most

cabinets consist of a vertical arrangement of drawers; others are pull-drawer filing cabinets, and lateral or shelf-style cabinets. External labels are often affixed to the outside of the filing cabinets. Each drawer may be labelled so that its contents are easy to identify.

Electronic records: These are computer generated word – processing storage media which include cassettes and cartridges, disks and diskettes, and video tapes and microfilm.

Principles of Records Management

Harvey (1989) posited that a number of principles needed to be followed when devising a system for filing. Bhatia (2005) was of the same view and identified these principles as the objectives of records management. The principles include that, records have a historical function. Records provide an orderly account of progress and make it possible for management to check on the progress of activities, business or work. For instance, in the basic school the log book and admission register provide valuable history about the school and its personnel. The log book tells the exact date the school was established, who established it, which teachers were present, the number of pupils who were used to start it and the teachers who have worked in it till the present time. It further records the significant happenings in the school.

Also, the reputation of records is justified by references to costs involved and purpose to serve. Records are created for various purposes and not just for the sake of creating them. The creation and storage of records should be economical in terms of equipment used and space occupied. Economy in the cost of installing the system, capital cost, running costs, and labour costs have to be taken into account. Compactness has to be considered

as the system may or may not fit into the available space. The safety of records is also crucial in an organisation. Records need to be safely preserved to prevent mutilation, loss or misuse. Records should be safe from damage against such things as fire, deterioration from dirt, dust and loss, and the security of confidential records.

Furthermore records should be suitable. The overall suitability of the system for its purpose within the context of the conditions in which the entity operates is essential. This implies that the institution has a purpose and the records are designed to fulfill those purposes. Each institution may have peculiar circumstances, so the records management of each institution may vary to some extent, yet serve the same purposes. For example, institutions in deprived communities might not have storage infrastructure like offices and storerooms in keeping materials including records. However, it is still required that the administrators of these deprived areas manage records well, preserve, use, and dispose of obsolete records that are no more useful. The indexing of the system must be appropriate for the purpose and provide enough cross referencing for documents that cover a number of areas.

Again, records have periodicity. Records have to be preserved only for the period that they are useful. Another issue with records is the need for verification. The import of this is that administrators must ensure that records are accurate and authentic; so they must be verified from other evidence. For instance, whether employers attend work regularly and punctually must be evidenced not only in the attendance books but also in the log book, queries and other reports. For example in the school, whether students are progressing or not must be reflected not only in their class exercise books, homework

books but also in their continuous assessment records and report cards. The system should be accurate and up-to-date with the filing not lagging behind. As such, each organisation must tailor its filing system to its needs and ensure that it is flexible enough to cope with changes, particularly those related to the expansion of the system and the current requirements of management.

Furthermore, there is the need for classification of records. Records should be classified according to any or a combination of these; chronology, alphabetic, numeric, alpha-numeric, geographic, departmental, subject, among others. Added to this is the issue of accessibility. Records should facilitate the preparation of statements or reports regarding the current business position or school situation. By means of up-to-date records, the business position of the organisation can be known. Records ensure the availability of information speedily and in form. For records to be useful, they must be promptly located and made available when required.

Categorizing records is also known as classifying, unitizing or filing records. Cheryl and Stiegler (1989) argued that records could be categorized according to their degree of importance such as vital, important, useful, and nonessential; or alphabetic, numeric, and alphanumeric; subject, departmental or chronological. This view is equally supported by Harvey (1989) and Stewart and Westgate (2000). Vital records are materials that are so important that the organisation cannot function well without them. Such records are kept in order to protect the organisation from legal action or to prove that laws are being followed, hence provide it with security. Records providing proof of ownership of property, inventories, machinery, and buildings are original records that cannot be replaced and must be kept well for a length of time

specified by law. In schools, the log book, admission register, inventory books, certificates and promotion letters are examples. Since these records cannot easily be replaced, they must be stored where they are safe from theft, fire and other damage. Important records are necessary for the continued operation of the organisation. Unlike vital records, important records can be replaced, though replacement can be both difficult and expensive. These records include invoices, accounting records, payroll records, personnel records, and cumulative records of learners.

Useful records are essential for the smooth running of the day-to-day functioning of the organisation. Though they can be replaced, their loss could cause a lot of inconvenience. Non-essential records provide useful information, but are not of lasting interest to the institution. Examples include notices of meetings or workshops, advertisements, news releases and requests for information. Once they have served the purpose they have to be disposed of.

Records could also be classified according to classes, forms or grade levels, subject areas or by individuals. Records could also be unitized according to clients, names of projects, names of departments, or names of locations. Again, records may be unitized by time period (chronology), alphabetic order, numeric, and alphanumeric. Records could be unitized by names of clients. The records of each individual go into one file folder. Examples are files of teachers or students. Stewart and Westgate (2000) posited that utilization of records is concerned with the development of efficient procedure through which the records move. Efficient utilization of records largely depends on the quality with which the information is entered

into the records. This makes it easy for the desired records to be retrieved and delivered to the desired place in time.

According to Bhatia (2005) records could be transferred annually, twice-yearly or perpetually. Annual transfer: This system involves the transfer of the contents of the files to less expensive storage areas at the end of the year. Twice-yearly transfer plan happens when files are transferred twice a year in two phases. At the end of six months, the records are transferred to a half way location. Six months later, the records in the halfway location are moved into storage, and a new set moved into the halfway location. Perpetual transfer takes place when files are regularly examined and material that is no longer needed are pulled and placed in a transfer file. GES (1994) suggests that to keep efficient records, it is important for the administrators to observe the following; to make prompt entries into the record books, ensure that no erasures are made in accounts books; cancel wrong entries and mistakes neatly and initial them. Managing records effectively has several advantages. When records are well organised, information is easily retrieved. Records that are correctly filed and stored are easily accessible, and this facilitates transparency, accountability and democracy. Orderly and efficient flow of information enables the organisation to function effectively and efficiently, reliable records that are also authoritative are created and maintained in an accessible, intelligent and usable way.

There is the need for laid down procedures regarding records management. A retention and disposal programme ensures that the organisation maintains only those records it really needs to function; controls are exercised to ensure that only authorized persons have access to the

information, thus preventing information or the records themselves from being stolen or damaged. This guarantees the confidentiality and privacy of records, and prevents the inappropriate disclosure of information that could harm the institution or infringe the privacy rights of individuals. Managing physical records require some effort. Records need to be identified and authenticated. Records have to be examined, filed, carefully handled and retrieved when needed. It is always necessary to examine a record to ensure that it is authentic and that it has not been forged, and that any damage, alteration or missing content is documented. In extreme cases records are subjected to x-ray, radio-carbon dating, microscope or chemical analysis. Again, in storing records, it is essential to ensure that they are accessible and safeguarded against environmental damage. For this purpose, file rooms may have specialized environmental controls against temperature and humidity. File cabinets may be used in offices. Vital records could be stored in disaster resistant safe or vault to protect them against fire, flood, earthquakes and conflicts. In extreme cases, records may require both disaster –proofing and public access. The circulation of records is equally important. When a record is retrieved for use, it is important to track it till it is returned to its normal storage area.

Disposal of records does not always mean their destruction. It may mean transfer to a historical archive, museum, or an individual. Destruction of records ought to be authorized by law, statute, regulation, or operating procedure, and the records should be disposed of with care to avoid inadvertent disclosure of information. The process needs to be well-documented, starting with a records retention schedule and policies and procedures that have been approved at the highest level. An inventory of the

records disposed of should be maintained, including certification that they have been destroyed. Records should never simply be discarded as refuse. Most organisations use processes including pulverization (crushing or grinding), paper shredding (cutting into pieces to render it unreadable), or incineration. The foregoing clearly clarifies what goes into records management. One implication that emerges from the review is that organisations would require records managers to ensure that records are efficiently and effectively managed in order that the benefits associated with records are maximised. In this review therefore, the role of record managers is explored.

The Role of Records Managers

A record manager is a professional responsible for records management in an organisation. The record manager is responsible for the effective management of the information that is received and generated by an organization. Information is at the center of everything an organisation does. How it manages this information can directly affects its ability to operate efficiently (Wikipedia) According to Stewart and Westgate (2000) ideally, the institution's records manager (the administrator or secretary) should be a fully trained and experienced professional. Whatever the level of experience, the institution still needs to give him/her the necessary training or courses as continuing professional development. People with Information Technology, Management Information System or data protection background may be seen as suitable. It should however not be assumed that previous experience is sufficient and therefore, further training is deemed unnecessary. Records management control could be the duty of one person such as the administrator

or secretary. However, where the records system is large and complex, it may require a records manager and support staff with some special training. The records manager, who is the administrator, is responsible for filing, retrieving, and organizing the files as well as signing files in and out of central records and keeping a log of who borrows the files. When this happens, all the office staff has to be familiar with the operation of central records and have to know the procedures to follow to obtain files. They must also know how to route documents for filing.

The Records Manager is responsible for drawing up guidance for good records management practice and ensuring compliance with the overall policy. Such guidance must be concerned about records creation, filing, classification schemes; retention schedules, storage and maintenance of records; and the final disposition of records to the historical archive or destruction. They should also be responsible for maintaining the audit trail of all records destroyed, codes of practice and legislation, and keep an accurate record of activities. Unfortunately however, most often they are not trained professionals in records management.

The Physical Maintenance, Retention and Disposal of records

Stewart and Westgate (2000) argued that this stage is concerned with the preservation of important and essential documents and the disposition of those which are unnecessary and are no longer required by the organisation. It is further concerned with the shifting of the records from high cost storage areas to low cost storage ones. Information on paper (manual) is still the commonest means of keeping records.

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The life cycle of all records is divided into four stages: creation, active use, inactive storage for occasional use or legal reasons, and final disposition – destruction or archival storage. Worthless records do not have to be stored, and stored records have to be periodically reviewed to dispose those that have become useless, and to transfer those that have permanent value or possible future use to inexpensive storage areas. A retention schedule that has been approved by top management helps office workers to identify different types of records and their disposition. Following a records retention schedule provides greater storing and retrieving efficiency and space savings are increased. Bhatia (2005) supported this view and argued that records may mount as they keep on coming into the school. Storage then becomes difficult unless something is done about this, cramming and overflow of material may occur. One solution to this is to file only essential records (those classified as vital, important, or useful). Another solution is to clean the file on a regular basis and dispose of records that are no longer needed. This is done according to a retention schedule or records management manual. The retention schedule tells how long each type of record should be kept and how records are to be disposed of.

Often, vital and important records are stored permanently; they are never destroyed. Useful records may be destroyed when they are no longer needed. Records are often divided into active and inactive files for storage purposes. Frequently used records are stored in the active files, whilst those no longer used on regular basis may be transferred to the inactive files.

Pruning procedures: This involves making decisions on records to be retained and stored and those that should be removed and destroyed at particular

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periods. Often, a list describing what information must remain on the file following the pruning process is provided. When overflow arises, a decision has to be made to withdraw and destroy the older documents or store them somewhere else as archival materials. When this happens, the records maintenance system will have the current records at hand for day-to-day use, whilst the archival files which are not likely to be required for immediate use, are often stored elsewhere where the space has less value.

Some archival records must by law be kept for a prescribed period. According to Kommeh (2008), King's College in London developed record keeping practices that captured, maintained, and disposed of, or destroy records with evidential characteristics in accordance with obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998, and the Limitation Act 1980. The provision of the disposal schedule offer guidance to staff on the need to retain certain records for periods as specified by law, to destroy some records when no longer needed, and to archive records of permanent value. Most departments and agencies have policies concerning when a record is to be declared dead and is to be disposed of. However, dead records are to be destroyed with special care for any confidential documents. Records could also be put under suspended animation in the archival storage when thinning and withdrawal takes place. In sum, records management is a process involving a life cycle of creation, maintenance, preservation, usage, retention and ultimate disposal. It includes forms, reports, reproduction of written material, filing, retention, microfilming, among others. Ideally, the institution's records manager should be a fully trained and experienced professional. Records management usually has a directive system that governs

its operation. Records management is not new. It has been with man since his creation. Records are the various documents generated, received and filed by an office. Records management is important because records help to control organizational resources thereby protecting materials from getting lost. Records protect and defend personnel in the organisation and reveal their performance with the view of enhancing their effectiveness and efficiency.

Location of Records

Cheryl and Stiegler (1989) posited that institutions often decide on their best places to store records. Factors to consider for the storage of records are convenience and security. For many administrators, the convenience storage includes the use of desk drawers, file cabinets, shelves and cupboards in offices or storerooms. GES (1994) points out that it is the administrator's responsibility that institution's items are kept. But wherever he keeps these materials he has to ensure that the room is airy enough and has sufficient sunlight; that from time to time, he has to open doors and windows to let in fresh air and some sunlight, he has to ensure that he does not place the record books on the bare floor or lean them directly against the wall to protect them from the destructive activities of termites and dampness. Finally, the doors and windows of the room must be lock and keep the keys. Security; it is essential that in making decisions for the storage of records, consideration should be given to protecting records from theft, loss, fire, and even from unauthorized eyes. Records may be stored in decentralized or centralized files. An institution may adopt a decentralized file storage system where the records are stored in many locations. Alternately, files may be stored or located in one place such as the school office. This is the centralized file system. Many

institutions find the centralized system preferable as it is easier to provide fireproof storage, locking doors, and limited access. Others use a combination of both.

Some renowned institutions have employee clerks who retrieve the records themselves, hence, do not allow any other person to do so. These clerks are solely responsible for filing and retrieving records. Since these clerks are trained in correct filing procedures, fewer records are lost or misfiled. Additionally, records are better protected from fire, smoke, water damage, or theft in centralized files. For example, records may be stored in locked cabinets in a fire-proof vault. The privacy and confidentiality of the records can also be protected by allowing only authorized employees to enter the filing area.

Comparison of Electronic Records Management with Manual Records

Both electronic and manual records management come with varied benefits to businesses and organizations in respect to data storage. However, current literature suggests that electronic records management have proven to be effective as compared to the manual. For instance, Iziomo (2014) identified that electronic records management gives unlimited storage space as compared to conventional method of office cataloging that involves categorizing several ink printed papers in a cabinet to allow for retrieval when needed.

Data retrieval is one area where computers clearly excel. Finding a particular piece of information is infinitely easier with a modern computer system than it is with reams of paper. Solving a particular problem may, in fact, take longer with Paper Patient Records (PPRs), despite the fact that reading from paper is generally easier. But finding a particular piece of

information presupposes one knows what one is looking for, which is not always the case. Gen (2008) stated that paper-based systems have improved communication, ability to have remote access of patient information, and improved revenues. He perceived that electronic health records (EHR) would provide improved communication between practitioners and patients. For instance, paper-based system improved communication between inpatient and ambulatory practices; information retrieval between these two is currently difficult and time-consuming.

According to Gen (2008), half of the paper-based system leaders were especially interested in having remote access to patient information. On the other hand, electronic health record would enable physicians to provide more knowledgeable advice during off-site/off-regular hours. He mentioned that there is an immense expectation of the EHR to improve overall practice efficiency and revenue. Also, enhanced efficiency would be created through decreasing time-consuming activities such as chart retrieval. Finally, he believed that the EHR would boost revenues by improving billing and collection by capturing the true work load O'Hara and Sellen (1998) studied the differences in process between reading paper documents versus electronic documents. Their experiments showed that there was a number of advantages to paper that must be addressed by the design of digital systems. Among the advantages that paper offers is the way it supports annotation while at the same time permitting quick and easy navigation, which in turn permits the user to develop a sense of overall structure.

Furthermore, they learned that improvements in navigation and control of spatial layout of individual and multiple documents must also be supported in electronic documents. In line with this, Ovsiannikov et al., (1999) showed

that digital systems can support annotation and that there can be a number of advantages to electronic annotation technology if properly implemented. For example, annotations can be stored in an annotation database and make retrieval and document summaries much easier, they can be linked permitting hypertext navigation, they can be easily shared. All this is not to say that paper is in and of itself superior to electronic media. Golovchinsky (1997) pointed out that users prefer interfaces that provide for multiple navigation options. Paper provides a very transparent interface, given its lack of modalities. It facilitates active reading and various modes of note taking (Niinimaki et al., 2000).

Schilit et al., (1998) attempted to duplicate this functionality of paper records with the XLibris project. XLibris used the paper document metaphor to provide computers with some of the affordances of paper. Xlibris, a tablet computer, has a flat panel display and permits pen input. Unlike paper, however, it permits multiple navigation mechanisms, including "turning pages", document view showing all pages of a document, and a history view that permits backtracking through a reading session.

According to Marchionini (1995), browsing is different from navigating and can be associated either with the goal of the activity or with the method used to achieve the goal. Paper facilitates browsing, even in a medical environment. It is easy to hold several pages next to one another for comparison.

Challenges Associated with Records Management

Brendan (2012) observed the following as the challenges associated with records management; First of all, he noted weak legislative and

organizational infrastructures as a major challenge. Studies by Kemoni and Wamukoya (2000), Iwhiwhu (2005), and Egwunyenga (2009) confirmed that African records managers lack the basic skills and competences for handling records and archives in the public sector. There is a serious problem of technophobia in most offices in Africa especially among the older employees. Due to inadequate skills in information technology, many traditional librarians, records managers, and archivists are very conservative and have phobia for computers. This may be due to generation gaps between the new and old professionals which led analogue information managers to perceive computers as a threat to their status as experts. Ezeani (2010) in her studies observed that younger administrators are faster in capturing the use of ICTs than the older administrators because "older administrators are finding it difficult to cope with the requirements of the digital age". Also, Ojedokun (2008) noted that older administrators are "too reluctant to jettison the old practices for new one". Successful application of information handling technologies in the management of electronic records in developing countries requires an ability to overcome staff and personal resistance.

Brendan (2012) opined that, growing use of information technologies in record management creates a lot of problems in the management of records in both public and private organizations. He added that in Africa and many developing countries governments are looking forward to computerizing their core functions and compelled most African countries to use ICTs in their public services by adopting e-government. Regrettably these projects fail to succeed because governments neither assess the available information framework suitable for electronic records management, nor consult the records

managers to determine how the process of automation will not affect the role of records managers in providing reliable and authentic evidence.

In Miller's (2004) view, the conversion from traditional records management activities to electronic environment will not succeed in Africa if the underlying processes are not structured in an efficient and effective fashion. Many African states are jumping into the information technology bandwagon without adequately incorporating good records management strategies.

Lawal (2007) attributed the challenges associated with records management in most organizations to corruption or inadequate finance. According to him, corrupt leaders in Africa do not provide adequate funds, facilities, and infrastructure for proper and efficient electronic record management. Instead, corrupt bureaucrats intentionally distort public policies, public records, decision-making apparatuses, and sometimes go to a length to transfer experienced records managers in a bid to create opportunities for embezzlement.

Otuama (2010) mentioned the following as the problems associated with records management in most organizations; Absence of an archival institution, the problem of oral traditions, inadequate skills and high staff turn-over, inadequate funding, poor housing and equipment, absence of an archival law, high levels of illiteracy, Poor transport and communication network. Ilana (2008) identified lost records and record storage as challenges associated with records management. According to her, lost records can range from a minor inconvenience for businesses to an enormous hassle that takes months, or even years, to resolve. Thus, if clients request documents from the company on a

regular basis and the company is unable to provide them in a timely manner (or at all), the company risks the loss of their business in the future. If important records are needed for a legal matter, such as defending the company against a lawsuit, not supplying the appropriate documents can cost huge sums of money, or even mean the dissolution of the business entirely. On record storage, she stated that, depending upon the type of business for which the company keeps records, as well as how long the company has operated, the company may find itself running out of space.
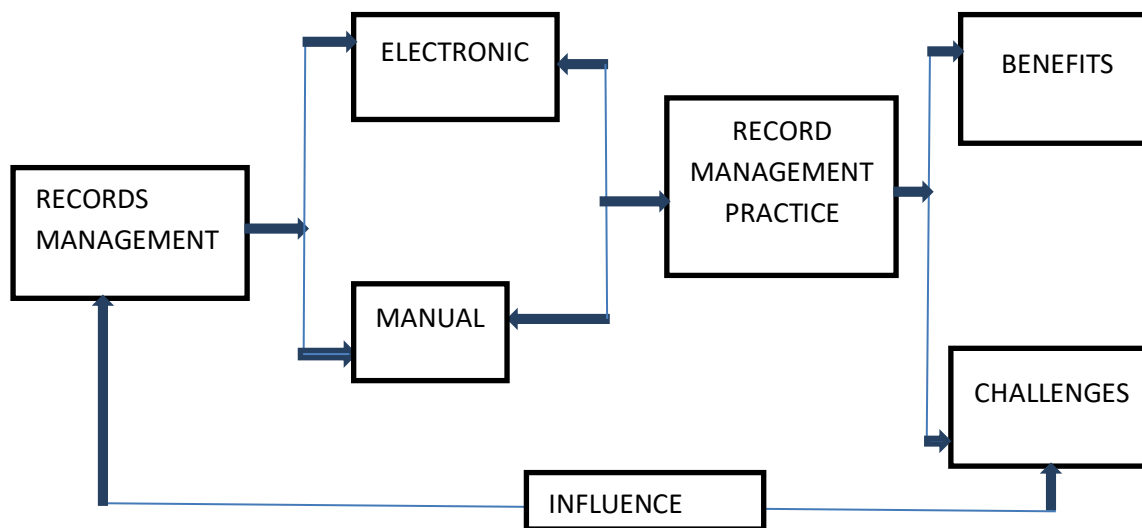
Figure 2: Annoh framework on records management practices

Based on the literature review, a conceptual framework developed in Figure 2 shows that records management is made up of two forms. These forms are electronics and manual records management. The proper and continuous management of these two forms of records management produce the records management practices in organizations. The records management practices has both benefits and challenges which influences the way and manner in which records are managed within organization.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter discusses the research design that informed the study, population, sample and sampling procedure. It also discusses the method used in gathering the data, data collection procedures and data analysis technique.

Research Design

This study adopted the descriptive survey approach with qualitative method to solicit facts on records management practices of the administrative staff at the western regional GES office. The researcher selected the survey design since it is better able to allow the researcher to describe things as they are and to be able to generalise from a sample to a larger population. In other words generalisation on the phenomenon can be derived from one corner of the nation to the whole nation.

Researchers like Nwana (1981). Gay (1992), Oppenhiem (1996) as well as Cooper and Schindler (2000) posit that the research design is the researcher's overall plan or blue print that guides him in the collection, measurement and analysis of data. They recommend that every research requires a design which clearly spells out what the variables, hypotheses or research questions are, the timing and frequency of collecting the data to answer the research questions, the setting in which the data is to be collected, and the nature of communications with subjects.

According to Osuala (1987) a descriptive research design is a study which investigates the nature of a phenomenon with the view of giving a picture of a situation or a population. Leedy (1989) also explains that the method "looks with intense accuracy at the phenomena at the moment and

describes precisely what the researcher sees" (p.140). It is appropriate for scientific studies that basically seek to observe and describe the behavior of a subject without influencing it in any way. Scientific disciplines, especially social science and psychology, use this method to obtain a general overview of the subject

Descriptive survey aims principally at observing, describing and documenting aspects of a situation as it naturally occurs rather than explaining them. Furthermore, renowned researchers like Best and Khan (1998) posited that, given phenomena often followed a common pattern. Whatever one observed about people at any particular time could be replicated at other times provided the same conditions pertained. Neuman (2003) equally supported this view.

A few criticisms have been leveled against the descriptive research design by researchers like Fraenkel and Wallen (2001). They argued that the descriptive survey had several setbacks as items in the instruments could lack clarity and could be misleading such that the survey results could vary significantly depending on the wording of the items. Again, they contended that questions or statements that respondents have to respond to may lack clarity or could even be misleading. Furthermore, they maintained that untrustworthy results could come about as respondents could opt not to tell the truth.

Despite these seeming criticisms, the researcher finds the descriptive survey design as most appropriate for exploring the overarching questions formulated for the study. Firstly, the descriptive survey design permits triangulation of data collection methods. In this sense, it will offer me the

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opportunity to triangulate or use varied methods in gathering data in response to the research questions. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), triangulation is the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour. They argued that where triangulation is used in interpretive research to investigate different actors' viewpoints, the same method or accounts will naturally produce different sets of data.

Again, the method is found appropriate as the variables and procedures could be determined and described as accurately and completely as possible, and the data analyzed, organised and presented systematically using tables, frequencies and percentages to arrive at valid and accurate conclusions

Population

The population for this study consisted of all the 16 administrative staff at the Western Regional Office of the GES. This comprised 5 administrators, 2 secretaries, 8 human resource persons and a clerk. All the 16 participants were included (census) in the study due to their small size.

Instruments

The researcher employed two data collecting instruments to source for information. That is observation check list (See Appendix A) and semi-structured interview guide (See Appendix B). The interview guide had three sections. The first section which is section A, addressed the ice breaking activities. The second section which is section B gives the background information of respondents. The third section, which is the main issues, addressed the five research questions. In all fifty items were used.

Observation Checklist

Observation checklist according to Marshall and Rossman, (1989, p. 79), guides the researcher to do systematic description of the events, behaviors, and artifacts of a social setting. The researcher preferred the overt observation. According to Gold (1958) in overt observation, the participants being observed are aware and that, the research purposes are not hidden from them. The instrument was constructed in a way to address all the research questions.

Observation

Observation literally means a method of collecting data that employs vision as its main means of data collection, (Sarantakos, 1998). This observational method of collecting data is used to complement the interview instrument. This method provided the researcher with primary data or first-hand information for a more accurate description and interpretation. She also had direct access to research phenomena, with high levels of flexibility in terms of application and generating information about the physical environment and human behavlour without having to rely on the retrospective or anticipatory accounts of others. Researcher was able to gather information or data needed to describe the aspect of a variable being studied which could not be described accurately without observation. data when respondents are unable or unwilling to cooperate or to offer information

However, during the observation, the researcher realized that her presence changed the behavior of those who were observed. This according to Aislinn (2016) is known as 'The Hawthorne Effect'. She opined that, The Hawthorne Effect is when the presence of an observer changes the behavior of

those being observed. For example: factory workers notice an industrial-organizational psychologist observing them and trying to understand low employee morale. The employees are pleased that their concerns will soon be addressed and become happier without any changes in their working conditions.

Semi-structured interview guide

The interview is a 'form of questioning characterized by the fact that it employs verbal questioning as its principle technique of collecting data' (Sarantakos 1998, p.246). The semi-structured interview guide will be used because of its strength in the area of,

1. being adjustable to meet all situations

2. easing the soliciting of information even from illustrates

3. granting the researcher the chance to observing non-verbal behaviour

4. having the capacity of correcting misunderstandings by correspondents

5. granting more complex questions to be used since the presence of the interviewer can assist in explaining questions.

However, the semi-structured interview guide had some weaknesses in the sense that it;

1. is more costly and time consuming than other methods

2. can be more inconvenient than other methods

3. Offers less anonymity, for the interviewer knows the identity and other personal details and other personal details of the respondents.

4. Is less effective than other methods when sensitive issues are discussed; and

5. Is affected by the factor 'interview' and the possible biases associated with interview.

In a nutshell, the interview instrument was selected due to the fact that it clarifies the meanings interviewees attribute to a given situation and helps the researcher see situation in the eyes of the participants (Sharp & Howard, 1996) Through the interview, participants were able to respond to questions in detail in a natural setting. The observation helped researcher to gather further data in relation to the interviewees' responses.

In a nutshell, the interview instrument was selected due to the fact that it clarifies the meanings interviewers attributed to a given situation and helped the researcher see situations in the eyes of the participants (Sharp & Howard, 1996). Therefore five (5) administrators, two (2) secretaries, a clerk and eight (8) human resource personnel representing the administrative staff at the western regional office of GES were interviewed to seek clarifications on record management practices. And to get further explanation on some issues that may come up in course of the research.

In applying the interview instrument, interview guides were taken along so as to guide the researcher question the interviewees. In structuring the interviews the researcher was guided by Drever and Muun's (1990) guidelines for using semi-structured interviews to draw out an appropriate guide. Drever and Muun's (1990) guidelines for interviews ensured that, no important issue relevant to the study was overlooked, nor, escaped the mind of the researcher. Another important reason for the usage of the interview guide was to expose

the administrative staff to the same set of questions to bring out the consistency in the instrument.

On the whole four days were used to conduct the interview, with an average of forty minutes on each of the interviewee interviewed. Only one of the interviews was recorded since the remaining fifteen out of the sixteen interviewees did not allow the researcher to do recording of the interview. However, since the interview might result in biased responses, especially because of the presence of the researcher, the researcher therefore applies the observation instrument to authenticate the responses of the respondents.

Pilot testing the instruments

The data collection procedure started with a pilot testing of the instruments. The pilot-test was conducted on 6th and 7th February 2019 with a view of finding out the suitability and internal consistency of the instruments with regard to their strengths and weaknesses. This was in line with Leedy (1989) who posited that, all data collection instrument need to be pilot-tested on a small population of similar characteristics. Such a procedure became necessary in order that researcher could discover whether there were some items that were ambiguous and difficult to be understood by respondents, or whether they were requesting for information researcher never intended to. Neuman (2003), for example, argued that the conduct of a pilot-test is essential as it "is a means of improving the quality and reliability" of the instruments (pp. 181, 182).

It was conducted at the Presbyterian Education Unit office, Sekondi. This office was selected as it has similar characteristics with the Western Regional office of the GES. Geographically, both are in the Western Region of

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Ghana. They share common borders. The items were strictly based on records management practices of administrative staff which is the content of the thesis. The results of the test helped in reshaping the items in the interviews. It also helped researcher in estimating more accurately the length of time required for interviewing each participant in the main study. The researcher purposively selected three groups of respondents. The groups comprised of one (1) administrator, one (1) human resource person and a clerk.

Data Collection Procedure

The interview

The interview guide which was the main instrument used in collecting data from the sixteen administrative staff was semi-structured. The interview was held at the office of each of the participants. This was supported with an observation check list that was used to find out the state of records keeping facilities and the security measures in place.

The observation

The observation check list was used to find out the state of records keeping facilities and the security measures on records management. An observation was made on how records are kept at the Education Management Information System (EMIS) of the office, how the various officers keep the records at their outfit and how secured the records are kept. In all the observation took two working days.

Data Processing and Analysis

Information on acquisition, usage and management of records were collected using interview guide and observation check list. A thematic analysis was used to identify patterns of themes in the interview data. This was

done in phases. During the first phase, the researcher made familiarization with the data. This was done by going through all the data from the entire interviews to mark preliminary ideas for codes. The second phase was the generating of codes. This was done by brief description of what the participants said in the interviews. With this researcher was able to organize the data into meaningful groups by matching the codes to sections that fit. The codes were then collated into broader themes which involved active interpretations. Researcher then reviewed the themes by reading through all the extracts related to the codes in order to explore if they support the theme. The essence that each theme is about is then defined. Based on this the final report is produced.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents a detailed discussion of the results of the data analysis. The presentation begins with a reflection on lessons learnt during the pilot study and how they contributed to shaping the conduct of the study. After that, results of the data analysis are presented and discussed within the frame of the objectives formulated for the study and the research questions that informed the study. The discussion is supported with relevant literature drawn from the reviewed literature in chapter two.

Biographic Data

The study commenced with the gathering of background information on the participants. Although, the reader will note that the researcher has made little use of the background data in analysing responses to the research questions, the data had a purpose. Primarily, it aimed at making the researcher aware of the nature of the participants. It provided her with an understanding of the characteristics of the people who participated in the study. The biographic data were limited to the participants' age and gender, professional qualification and working experience.

Table 1: Age of Participants

Age	No.	%
26-30	3	18.8%
31-35	9	56.3%
36-40	-	-
41-45	3	18.8%
46-50	1	6.6%
Total	16	100.0

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As illustrated in Table 1, the ages of the respondents ranged from 25 years to 50 years. The majority of the respondents (seven) are between the ages of 31 and 35 years. Only one of the respondents is within the range of 46 and 50 years of age. Three of the respondents are below age 31. Whereas the ages of the remaining 3 fall within the range of 41-45 years

Table 2: Gender

Gender	No.	%
Male	7	61.5
Female	9	38.5
Total	16	100.0

The table 2 indicates that seven of the respondents were males and nine out of the 16 respondents were females.

Table 3: Level of Education of Participants

Level of education	No.	%
Secondary	4	25%
Tertiary	3	18.75%
Professional	9	56.25%
Total	16	100.0

As illustrated in Table 3, nine of the respondents perceived to be teachers were professionals. Three of the respondents had tertiary level qualification. The remaining four were secondary school leavers. One reason that appeared to have led to this scenario is that most of the respondents were classroom teachers who by one reason or the other were transferred to the

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office and were given administrative schedules. Unfortunately, none of the respondents had received any on-the-job training.

Working Experience

In terms of working experience, a question was posed to explore the number of years respondents had been working at the office. Table 4 illustrates the distribution of the working experience of respondents.

Table 4: Working Experience of Respondents

Working experience	No.	%
1-5year	9	56.25%
6-10year	6	37.50%
11-15years	1	6.25%
Total	16	100.0

As shown in Table 4, the majority of respondents (nine) had working experience between the range of one and five years. Respondents with working experience between the ranges of six and ten years were six. This suggests that, there were few junior officers who participated in the study compared to the senior officers. The most senior officer was one with fifteen years' working experience. The most senior officer was the overall boss of all the administrative staff. Most of the remaining respondents take instruction from him.

Responses to Research Questions

As outlined in Chapter One, five questions were formulated to guide the study. These sought to explore

(1) the administrators' views on the importance of record keeping, (2) how administrators view administrative practices that characterized record keeping (3) how the administrators perceive records storing facilities available to them, (4) the challenges associated with records keeping and (5) the proposed strategy for improving records management by the administrators. The main data analysis in this chapter is those that emerged from the background of the interviewees. Other issues that emerged from the interview and the observation are used for more discussions. Findings in relation to each research question are thus presented below. The pseudonym **RES** followed by a number (e.g. **RES** 1, **RES** 2 etc.) is used to represent each participant.

Importance of Records Keeping

Research Question 1: What are administrators' views on the importance of record keeping to administrative work?

This question explored the opinion of respondents on the importance of record keeping to administrative work. The researcher deemed this question relevant because effective administrative work requires proper record keeping. Efficient records keeping practices in public institution are likely to eliminate the problem of missing files, misfiling, shortage of physical filing space, lengthy turnaround time in retrieving files and lengthy people waiting time (Ojo, 2009).

All the sixteen respondents underscored the importance of record keeping. The following were views expressed by some of the respondents.

> **RES 1** I *see records as vital tools in every administrative work. Every decision is made based on available records. Without records, informed decision cannot be made*.

While **RES 2** said; *Records keeping enable management to build dossier on staff members who put up unacceptable behaviour for the necessary sanction.*

RES 3 commented that, *records are kept for future occurrences. If a member of staff dies, the family can contact management for his or her benefit if there is any. Records on that member can easily guide management as what to do.* He further said, *some information is not supposed to be at the public domain. Records are kept for confidentiality.*

RES 4 outlined as follows; *Management cannot function effectively if records are not kept. For example, an officer may receive an invitation, if such an invitation is not kept, who then will remind the officer concern to honour it. Records are kept to remind us of our responsibility. Record keeping is very important because records serve as reference point.*

RES 5 Added that; '*records enable management to make meaningful decisions. The records serve as a guide to the management. What I mean is that at every point in administration, it is good to refer to the past to build the future. Therefore, records are seen as important tool in management.*

Administrative Practice Characterising Record Keeping

Research Question 2: How administrators view administrative practices that characterized record keeping management at the Western Regional Office of the GES?

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The researcher considered this question very necessary since it looked much into the mechanics of records keeping at the Western Regional Office of the GES. This refers to directives, forms, and filing systems in records management. Directive system as already stated in Chapter two is the policy and procedure statement issued by an organisation that governs its records management. All the sixteen respondents accepted that records management is one of their major responsibilities. All of them unanimously agreed that they keep the essential records. Since they considered records keeping as a major duty, majority of them spent a good deal of time managing them. These results conform to Kochhar (1970), Farrant (2004) and Bhatia (2005), who all opined that the administrators owed it a duty to keep the essential records. Unfortunately, the office has no policy that governs records keeping.

With regards to the forms, the observation revealed that majority of the respondents' received and work with manual records level of adoption of modern record keeping approaches as indicated on Table 5.

Table 5: Forms of Records

Forms of records	No.	%
Secondary	11	68.8%
Tertiary	2	12.5%
Professional	3	18.8%
Total	16	100.0

Table 5 shows that majority of the respondents numbering 11, receive and work with manual records. The problem associated with this is that some of respondents are computer illiterate. As is said earlier some of the

respondents were classroom teachers and were posted to the office due to one reason or the other. The unfortunate thing is almost all of them did not receive any training in relation to their schedule. Cupboards in some of the offices are choked with papers and files such that the cupboards are nearly breaking apart, drawers are full of papers and tables carrying loads of files. Only 2 of respondents keep records electronically. This is associated with inadequate computers in the system. It was also discovered that two officers are assigned to one computer. One of the officers for example lamented as follows:

> '*As you can see around me, we file most of our records. That is the reason why the place is choked. We will transfer them to the EMIS, even that place is full of files. Some are stored on the computer. But the unfortunate thing is that two officers are assign to one computer so when an officer is working, the other one have to wait which I think is not the best. Aside the ventilation in this room is not proper, the room is very stuffy'.*

It was also found out that three of the respondents managed both electronic and manual records. Another concern raised by a respondent related to an issue of security. To a question as to whether security is a reason they would consider, all the respondents ended in the affirmative. Eleven respondents who managed records manually indicated that the filing system of records did not provide security and access control for records. One of the respondents for example remarked '*If the records are not secured it will lose the main reason for keeping them and again they would be exposed to wear and tear'* RES. Others considered confidentiality as key reason for which security of record must be ensured .One respondent articulated this view by

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stating '*confidentiality is one of the key element in records management, records must be protected and kept safe. The safe here means it must not be exposed to those who do not matter'*

Effectiveness of filing systems

With respect to the effectiveness of the personnel filing system, majority (10) of the participants were of the opinion that the filing system was not effective, only six (6) out of the sixteen respondents were of the opinion that the system was effective. Out of the six four outline that the system was very effective. With regards to Functionality of the system two of respondents opined that it was ineffective. Details are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Effectiveness of Filing System

Personnel Filing System	No.
Very Effective	4
Effective	2
Ineffective	10
Functional Filling System	
Very Effective	4
Effective	10
Ineffective	2

Records Storing Facilities

Research Question 3: How do administrators perceive records storing facilities available at the Regional Office of GES?

This question explored the opinion of respondents about the records storing facilities, their conditions and suitability at the Regional Office of the

GES, Sekondi. The researcher deemed this question relevant because record keeping, according to Read-Smith, Ginn, and Kallaus (2002), involves systematically controlling the creation, preservation, organisation, distribution, storage and retrieval to the disposal of records. Weggant (2005) opined that records are information or data on a particular subject or activity collected and preserved for future use. It is therefore necessary to keep records well and save so as to make it easily accessible and be in good condition.

Table 7 shows the status of the storage facilities available at the research site.

Table 7: Storage Facilities Available

Storage facility	Available	Not available
Cabinets	2	14
Location (Space)	4	12
Files	13	3
Computers	2	14

Table 7 indicates that a lot of manual records were being used at the office. As shown in the table, files are the most available storage facility at the office. Thirteen out of the 16 respondents indicated that records kept at the office were stored in files. It was also observed that the files were not properly secured since only 2 out the 16 respondents said they had cabinet in their offices. In the same vein, only 2 out of the 16 had access to computers. One of the respondents commenting on the available storage facilities when interviewed remarked as follows:

> *We don't have enough storage facilities. The cabinets here are choked*
>
> *with old files and almost breaking apart. The drawers are not in good*

conditions. There are tables carrying files and other documents in almost every office. The computers are few so how can we store information on them? The office generates a lot of records which calls for proper storage facility.

In addition to the inadequate cabinet and computers it also emerged from the study that, storage space available at the offices was inadequate. Only 4 out of the 16 respondents said they had storage space available, while the majority (12) expressed concern about inadequate storage space. The lack of adequate record storage facility at the office has implication for secured management of staff and other administrative records. This is because the office generates a lot of records which calls for proper storage facility. Another respondent (**RES 2**) expressed his view as follows;

I think is time the government come to our aid. The space available to us is not enough. You can see things for yourself. The cabinets here are not good. Look at the load they are carrying all because there is no other alternative. We need more space to keep our records. A whole regional office, sometimes we are compelled to leave files on the bare floor which is very wrong. I am looking up the day this problem would be solved.

On the whole, the responses to the interviews and the observations made by the researcher suggested that the office lacked adequate and proper storage facilities. Majority of the administrative staff saw this as challenge that had to be addressed since it had adverse effect on good records keeping.

Condition of available storage facilities

A probing question was posed to seek the views of respondents on the available storage facilities in their offices, table 8 below indicate their views.

Table 8: Conditions of Available Storage Facilities

Storage Facility	Good Condition	Bad Condition
Cabinet	2	14
Files	4	12
Computers	14	2
Location (Space)	6	10

It can be deduced that greater number (14) of the respondents opined that the cabinet were in bad condition. Asked to explain why the cabinets were in bad condition, one of the respondents remarked as follows:

> *The cabinets are in bad condition, yes, because papers, needed and not needed are kept. And wonder the last time the unwanted records were disposed off. Is time we store all our information electronically. All the cabinets here are full and the records in them are becoming weaker day in and day out because of how they've been packed. Even the metal ones are not good. Look at how rusted they are. Most of them cannot be locked up. It is a pity. I think is time we sort these records and dispose of what are no longer needed. Records should be properly arranged and secured in locked up cabinet to prevent*

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them from natural hazards such as flooding, insects, rain, sun, termites and wind. (**RES.1**)

One other (**RES 6**) said *Looking at the documents generated at this office, larger or bigger space is needed. Look at this room for instance; I believe shelves or cabinet would be of good help. The only cabinet here is breaking down because of the overweight it is carrying. It is not the best keeping files on the bear floor. But as you can see, it is happening right here. I wonder what some of the records are still here. I tell you some are older than me but the system is such that we cannot dispose them off*

As earlier mentioned, the office lacked good storage facility and therefore affects the conditions. As a result files are not properly kept leading to their bad state. Majority of the files used by the office were in bad condition. Though the office generates records manually, good space for keeping them is inadequate. Most of the files were in bad condition. Asked what had led to the bad conditions, one of the respondents lamented as follows:

It's due to how they are handled. One file can move to two to three officers before finally coming to the registry. Coupled with this, are the inadequate storage facilities such as cupboards, storage racks, filing cabinets, boxes and open shelves. This makes the office incomplete for effective work since some of the rooms are choked with both new and old files. In addition, there is no manual that guides us on how to manage the records at their disposal. Due to this there are

> *a lot of complains about missing files and misfiling. And because the*
>
> *office lacks adequate storage facilities they are squeezed to the*
>
> *already filled up cabinets. The weight is too much. How do you expect*
>
> *them to be in good condition*? **(RES 7)**

Although the offices had few computers all respondents said the computers were in good condition. **RES 1's statement below sums up the views expressed by the participants:**

> *The computers are few but they are in good conditions. They work*
>
> *perfectly and I am comfortable working with it. I wish each officer is*
>
> *assigned a computer. That would have make our work here more*
>
> *efficient.*

Challenges Associated With Records Keeping

Achieving a feat in managing records can be very challenging.. However, prior to the commencement of this research, it was not clear what the challenges would be in the Western Regional office of the GES. Therefore the research question, 'What challenges are associated with records keeping at the Western Regional office of the GES?' was formulated to explore the challenges faced by the respondents:

In response to this question, many challenges were identified by the respondents which, according to them, adversely affected their records keeping activities. Central to these challenges is lack of in-service training, which emerged as a common challenge for the respondents. One of the respondents **(RES 8)** remarked;

> *I was a classroom teacher before transferred to this office and was*
>
> *given administrative duty. Unfortunately I have not received any form*

> *of training neither do I a certificate in administration. This is my second year in this office. Is the clerk who is mentoring me. I don't understand if my transfer was a punitive one or not. I was Pre-Tech teacher, and it has nothing to do with what I'm doing now*

This view was corroborated by **RES 1**:

> *One of the challenges we are facing is lack of in-service training on records management, particularly the newly posted ones. Some of us were transferred from the classroom to this office without any orientation or training. Because of this some of us find it difficult to manage the records within our domain since we lack the requisite knowledge and expertise on how records are managed. Sometimes we become staged in our operations. I also consider poor supervision of records management as constituted another challenge. No one is supervising how we are managing the records here. I think there should be proper supervision on who is managing which records*

Another respondent (**RES 9**) supported the view that lack of training was a challenge for record managers at the office. He, however, clarified as follows;

> *Most of us lack on the job training. This is not just training but well-structured training. Which shouldn't be 'a nine day wonder' training but from time to time. It could be at least twice every year. I have even decided to be enrolled for a Sandwich program in Administration for self-upgrading.*

Thus, while all the 16 respondents identified lack of training as a challenge, **RES 2** laid emphasis on structured training. He explained that all the record

keeping knowledge he had acquired was through personal learning. He remarked:

> *One of our major challenges is the lack of structured training on records management. I have been working in this office for over twelve years now but I have not received a single training on the job. I am learning on my own, how?*

Other respondents raised challenges relating to lack of manuals to support the management of records in their offices. **RES10,** for example, said:

> *Another challenge is the lack of manual on records management. As I speak the General Manual for public service is what we are using, which I think is not the best. There is nothing guiding our work as record managers. Guidelines in my view are like rules and regulations to our work. Without it is difficult to know whether one is deviating or going astray or not*

In addition to the aforementioned challenges, some of the respondents identified irregular electricity power supplies their major challenge. They expressed much concern about electricity power outages because they relied on computers in keeping and retrieving records. They said that they become handicapped whenever there is power cut off during working hours. **RES 3** articulated this challenge as follows:

> *One of the challenges face by the office is that there is no stand by generator to back up the regular power supply. Some of us using computers become handicap whenever the power goes off. Therefore there is the need for a generator. There was an instance where I was*

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doing entry on promotion of teachers data, at the middle of the work
there was power cut off, in fact it was hell to me that, I totally lost all
the information. And there was no way of retrieving them.

Another respondent, RES 11 was of the view that inadequate personnel to manage records was a challenge for us. He articulated this view as follows:

This office is serving all the GES workers in both Western and Western
North Regions. And information on them is kept here. But looking at
the number of personnel working their records, one could see that they
are inadequate. More hands are therefore needed. Searching for a
particular file can take you hours, meanwhile a lot would be on your
table that needs to be cleared. It makes the work sometimes very hectic

Yet, another respondent (RES 10),

though a sole voice, mentioned the practice of not disposing off old
files as a worry. He lamented: "I don't understand why we don't
dispose of any record at this office. Does it mean that all this files and
papers around us are good? I don't believe so. But my question is,
can't we do something about it?

Records disposal is the process whereby an organization or institution, through its records manager destroys or erases ephemeral lone records or transfers archival valued records to an archival institution for permanent safe keeping" (Adelaide University Records and Archives Management, 2004, p. 30). The purpose of disposal or destruction is to permanently remove records from active use, with no possibility of reconstructing the information (Dhabi, 2009; Nye, 2010). According to Atuloma (2011), information can be maintained in a manner that effectively serves the need of the organization and

any information that are no longer necessary can be efficiently disposed of. This means that the absence of records retention and disposition schedule is a serious weakness. Once records are no longer needed by their creating agencies, archivists must make a final decision about the disposition of records.

The International Records Management Trust (2008a) pointed out that among other challenges identified in most African countries were no records retention and disposition policies. This was evident in a study by Balasu (2009) that there was no public sector organization in Ghana that applied records retention and disposition schedule as they are not in existence.

Strategies to Improve Records Management

Strategies for coping with challenges, such as the aforementioned ones identified by the participants are crucial for ensuring efficient records management. To explore the views of respondents on the strategies needed to strengthen records management practices at the Western regional office of the GES, therefore, the following question was posed:

 What do administrators propose as strategy for improving records management at the office?

In response, each of all the sixteen respondents mentioned at least one strategy they perceived could improve their records management practices at the office. . **RES 1** for example had this to say;

> *Every officer posted to the office to assume administrative duty,*
>
> *must be taken through some form of training or orientation.*
>
> *And there should be periodic in–service training for all the*

administrative staff. This in a way will equip us all to increase

and improve staff efficiency to deliver effectively

His view suggested that carrying out seminars and workshops to sensitize staff on records management practices and its importance to service delivery cannot be overemphasised.

RES 2 on his part outlined three strategies which were increasing storage space, segregation and categorising of records. Below is what he said;

I suggest the amount of available space must be increased to accommodate the records available. Again, I believe that the key idea is to understand what portion of the papers, for that matter records in our offices really need to be managed. Segregating records into categories, for example; administrative records, working files, and reference materials may be of good help. There should be proper classification of records that is by arranging records and files perfectly into groups according to subject. I mean all the records managers must ensure that records are arranged in a logical order

RES 3 was of the view that the records must be checked periodically. This is what he suggested.

There should be periodic check on the available records to ensure that they are in good condition, since they are prone to wear and tear. Some records in files may be loose and could fall out easily. These should be securely attached and reattached, which I believe can be of good help

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RES 5 proposed that every record leaving one office to the other must be tracked. Below is the suggestion;

> *When records or files are lent to users or officers, a system must be worked out that tracks where and when certain files or records were lent to a user. Small cards can be designed to enable efficient control over the flow of files. This will prompt the officers involved to handle every record under their care with caution*

RES 6 outlined the use of File Plan.

> *I read a certain book some time ago which talked about File Plan, which is the classification scheme describing different types of files maintained in an office, how they are identified, where they should be stored, how they should be indexed for retrieval, and a reference to the approved disposition for each file. I think is an essential component of a record keeping system. I believe it can be adopted and used by this office*

File Plan according to Jane Doe (2013), is a comprehensive outline that includes the records series, file organization, active file locations, file transfer instructions, file retention and disposition instructions, and other specific instructions that provide guidance for effective management of records, including vital records. File plans specify how records are to be organized once they have been created or received, provide a "roadmap" to the records created and maintained by an organizational unit, and facilitate disposition of the records. **RES 8** talked about records schedules. Records schedule according to business dictionary, is a table that describes(1) length of time

each document or record will be retained as an active record, (2) reason(legal, fiscal, historical)for its retention, and (3)final disposition (archival or destruction) of the record. It is also called record control schedule, record disposition schedule, records schedule, or retention schedule. It identifies records as either temporary or permanent. A records schedule provides mandatory instructions for the disposition of the records (including the transfer of permanent records and disposal of temporary records) when they are no longer needed by an institution. The two respondents outlined their view as follows;

> *Records schedule must be used by this office. This is because most officers keep more records longer than they need to therefore there should be regular cleanup days to encourage staff to retire older records to the EMIS or recycle them as the schedule specifies. The schedule on the other hand will serve as a guide*

RES 10 was of the view that one of the strategies that would help the records managers is to file records by types and by disposition. Below is what he suggested.

> *Record managers should file records by type and by disposition rather than filing everything together. For example, final reports which have a long retention and active life can be filed separately from drafts which have a short retention. Again, controlled correspondence like leaves and promotions can also be separated from general correspondence like validation reports and so on*

Another respondent (RES 2) was of the opinion that top management support to management of records must be increased since the office had only one. Again he suggested that the office should employ adequate qualified personnel to manage records.

This was the suggestion of **RES 14;**

> *Stakeholders should develop and implement records management policy to guide all records managers*

In general, all the sixteen respondents saw the need of adopting strategies to strengthen the records management at the research site.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a summary of the study and, particularly summary of the findings. It also presents major conclusions that emerged from the study and recommendations for enhancing the capacity in managing records effectively.

Summary

The importance of good records to individuals and organisations cannot be over emphasised. The human memory is fallible and hence tends to easily forget the facts about events. It is therefore crucial that whatever significant happenings, decisions made, events, activities or actions taken should be documented not only to serve as history but to protect rights of personnel particularly in case there are problems. To be able to accomplish this, effective records management is essential. Records are a strategic organizational asset that must be managed. To manage them appropriately, staff must recognize that information has a lifecycle and that not all records and information must be retained. The study therefore sought to find out the records management practices of administrative staff at the Western Regional office of the Ghana Education Service. The main instrument through which data were gathered was interviews which was supported by observation. Five main questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are administrators' views on the importance of record keeping to administrative work?

2. How do administrators view administrative practices that characterized record keeping at the Western Regional Office of the GES?

3. How do administrators perceive records storing facilities available at the office under study?

4. What challenges are associated with records keeping at the Western Regional office of the GES?

5. In what ways can Records Management be improved?

The interviews were transcribed, and main issues emerging from the responses categorised within the context of the research questions. Data obtained from the observation checklist were analysed and organised into frequency distribution tables.

Summary of Findings

The major findings of the study were as follows:

On the importance of records management, all the sixteen respondents were able to give not less than two importance of records. The following were some of their responses;

1. Records keeping help to keep a good track on staff and their performance.

2. It helps in management and control of important records. It helps to protect necessary records with care and disposes useless records.

3. Records highlight quickly areas where problems could arise and enable remedies to be put in place.

4. It increases the chances of the management operating and achieving success.

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5. It helps in evaluating progress of the institution. It helps in preservation of history of the past and shows direction to the future.

6. It helps in finding out the weakness and strength of organization. Record management gives the account of progress and direction in which organization is going on.

7. Records provide valuable information and details for decision making and also for future use.

8. Assists in planning quickly and accurately.

9. Assists in providing information required by stakeholders.

10. Records help management to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the personnel under them.

11. It gives the information management need smooth running of the office.

12. Saves a lot of time and effort in retrieving information

13. It enables management to responds promptly to every invitation.

14. Record management helps to evaluate business progress and performance. It helps in comparison between one period of time and another or between same times of business"

15. Records act as evidence in the time of dispute. It is important for the settlement of dispute. It can be shown as proof in court

16. Record management helps to provide required information with speed and accuracy. It helps to make office work efficiently and effectively. It helps to increase efficiency of the office.

17. Records are the memory of business. It is useful for future decisions making process. The study of past records shows

direction for future. It supplies information to organization whenever it is needed. Therefore, it helps in taking decisions.

Regarding administrative practices characterizing the record management, most of the administrative staff manages manual records. Information on both teaching and non-teaching staff in the pre tertiary institutions within the whole western and western north regions are been managed by this office. In all there are fifty–two public senior high schools, two technical/vocational institutions and sixteen private senior high schools within the two regions. Most of the records on all these schools plus the teaching and the non-teaching staff are managed manually at the research site. This calls for bigger space of storage which from the researcher's observation, the office do not have.

Unfortunately, the records are not well secured. Most of the cabinets are not in good shape even though the respondents consider security as well as confidentiality as a reason in records keeping. It is therefore difficult in arranging records and files perfectly into groups according to subject and in a logical order. The logical arrangement of files is central because it guarantees that files have their specific places and can be retrieved without snag and significant loss.

Respondents were aware of the importance of checking files periodically to ensure that they are in good condition, since they are prone to wear and tear, and even some records in files may be loose and could fall out easily. Such file maintenance practice is not been done at the research site. Interestingly, respondents claimed of been successful in records management.

In response to challenges associated with the record management, it was found out that the office needs more personnel to provide management support in terms of record keeping. Other major challenge is the inadequate computers. There are only few computers at the office, and this has given room to more papers in the system.

Most of the respondents were of the view that improper security for records is a major challenge to the research site. Most of the drawers on the cabinet cannot be locked. Windows and doors are not properly secured even though some of the rooms have files on top of tables and in unlocked cupboards.

Lack of professionally trained record managers is one of the challenges. Almost all the respondents did not receive any form of training before assuming duty and have neither received any form of in-service training. Respondents complained that is really affecting their work. Another challenge is lack of records retention and disposition schedule as well as filing procedure manual. Majority of the respondents said this challenge has led to the choked cupboards. Both relevant and irrelevant records are been kept. The respondents also made mention of the acute space problem. The office has inadequate storage space. And this sometimes leads to missing of records. Lack of policy on records management was considered by respondents as one of their major challenge. In view of that there are no guidelines to their work. This, according to them, is not sure as to whether they are doing the right thing or not. Most of the respondents complain that most of the records come in the hard form and are kept as such. And is a challenge to them.

Regarding misfiling and missing of records, most of the respondents have experience that. They attributed that to the limited storage facility available to them. Even though, they do their best by classifying the records, keeping them safely becomes a problem to them. With the measures in place to protect records from hazards like fire, rainwater, rodents and thieves, the response from the respondents and from the researcher's observation is that all the rooms at the research site are under lock and key. In addition to that, there is a night watchman on duty every day.

Regarding level of adoption of modern record keeping approach, all the administrators, the secretaries and the clerk work with manual records. The secretaries claimed that they type and print out all the information that comes to them. The HRM personnel are those who work with and keep both manual and electronic records. And they are managing with the few computers available. Retrieving information sometimes delay, since they do not have other staff who assist in doing that.

All the sixteen respondents admitted that they need skills and extra training on records management. Some have decided to perceive private studies in administration to upgrade them. They also admitted that they lack managerial skills and would be glad to have on the job training.

On strategy for improving records management at the research site, respondents proposed that there should be a guide on records keeping to streamline their work. They were of the view that, records kept at the research site should be reviewed periodically to dispose of the irrelevant ones. Again, any administrative staff posted to the office should be given orientation before assumption of duty.

By a way of improving the available storage facilities, some respondents were of the view that all the stakeholders should come on board to complete the office building project to enable them have adequate space for storing records. All the respondents were able to give some pieces of advice to those who are about to take up administrative position on the importance of records keeping. Some of the advices among others were:

The Human Resource persons

1. Store files and vital records in lockable cabinets or secured places.

2. Destroy duplicates and working papers when no longer needed

3. Every record received must reach where it is supposed to without delay. Every record should be mindful of the fact that laziness is the greatest enemy to his or her work.

The Administrators

1. Every record manager should work with confidentiality.

2. It is appropriate to learn from each other.

3. Prompt response should be considered paramount to clear every table. Also every record received should be properly labelled for easy recognition. In addition, new administrators should learn from the old ones always.

The Secretaries

1. Every record received must be considered important and be handled as such.

2. Passwords must be used on computers to avoid the issue of adding and deleting of files on the computer.

3. All secretaries should make sure their tables are cleared promptly.

4. Each record should be given a title for easy retrieval

5. Name electronic documents consistently

The Clerk

1. Every record received must be entered in the Received book.

2. Every record should be considered important, whether manual or electronic until its purpose is achieved. Again every record should be kept safely for future use. Also secrecy and confidentiality should not be over emphasised in keeping of records.

Conclusions

From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that proper record keeping increases the chances of the management operating and achieving success and also helps in evaluating progress of the institution. If records are properly kept, vital documents of an organisation is preserved which in the long run will give the organisation its future. The strengths and weaknesses of the organisation are also highlighted since record management gives account of progress and direction of the organisation.

It can also be concluded that administrative practices are all-round. This is because most administrative staff manage manual records. All kinds of information regarding teaching and non-teaching staff are management properly. Another important feature of administrative practices is that records are kept secured. Confidentiality of the records is another important feature of administrative practices. Therefore, records must be protected and kept safe.

Another major conclusion emerging from the study was that poor records management practices have negative consequences on an organisation's performance. Records and information are the lifeblood of any

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organisation. Poor records management hinders good governance leading to poor management, corruption, fraud, bad decision-making, wastage of resources, among other challenges.

Good records management practices are therefore crucial in any organisation. There is dire need to have records management system approved by top management of an organisation and which must be implemented in accordance with best practice in the profession. Its elements such as policies, guidelines and procedures must be clearly stated and understood by all users of the records in the organisation and those managing those records. The system must be effective for both paper and electronic records management and must include disaster management plan that includes handling of vital records. The system or programme must clearly outline responsibilities of each records management staff, required skills and competencies for every records management position. The primary function of the programme must be to facilitate the free flow of information and to ensure that information is available where and when it is needed. Any weaknesses in record keeping have the effect of lowering of the general standard of service offered to clients and the public in general.

Recommendations

According to the findings, the study established the following recommendations/Strategies

1. GES should provide adequate training for any employee posted to assume any administrative duties. This will enable administrative staff perform their duties effectively.

2. GES should ensure employment of qualified, adequate staff to handle the management of records so as to enhance professionalism thus curb the issue of nonconformities.

3. GES should provide its offices with records management manuals as a guide to the record managers.

4. GES should ensure that the office is well equipped with logistics to enable the administrative staff work more effectively.

5. GES should introduction electronic records management system to enhance efficiency in terms of speed, accuracy, security of records and to also encourage a backup system.

6. Records management program and policy to guide the activity of the record managers must be developed by GES to improve the quality and to achieve goals and objectives set by the office on creation, maintenance, storage and disposal of records.

7. The Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA) of the University of Cape Coast should include records management as a course of study in its curriculum.

8. To prevent any unfortunate happenings, stakeholders should ensure that records are stored in places that are fireproof and well secured.

Administrators should be sensitized to appreciate proper records keeping as an integral part of their work

Suggestions for Further Studies

The management of records must be recognized as being one of the key and vital functions that contribute towards the realization of the organizational goals. The study assessed records management practices of

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administrative staff at the Western Regional office of the Ghana education service. The study identified several issues which could be a subject of further investigation by records management researchers

The study recommends the need to repeat the same study in different region of Ghana. That is a comparative study should be conducted to establish records management practices of administrative staff of the GES to make an informed assessment. The study makes this suggestion in the sense that the study was conducted in one regional office of the GES; hence, the findings from the study cannot be used to reflect the state of records management practices of administration staff in other regions. The effect of such a study is that the best practices in one sector may compel the other sector to forgo its bad practices and adopts the good practices.

In addition studies could be conducted to establish records management practices in the private sector, e.g. banking, insurance and non-governmental organizations, agricultural sector and health service sector. Such a study would provide useful comparative data on records management practices in the public and private sectors.

Furthermore, future research could possible cover the role of records management in improving accountability, the contribution of records management in fighting corruption and the importance of training in ensuring sound records management.

Finally, the study recommends the need to conduct a study to establish the role of an integrated electronic records keeping system in improving decision of the GES. The study makes this recommendation because western regional office of the GES which was used as a study area practices both

manual and electronic records keeping; hence, the findings from the study cannot be used to ascertain the effect of an integrated electronic records keeping system on improving decision making. If future researchers embark on such a study, the problems of errors, missing files, misfiling and damaged files associated with managing records manually will be eliminated. Also, the problem of long employers waiting time would be reduced; service delivery and decision making would be fast-tracked.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

(Tick against the corresponding box on the availability and the state of

records keeping facilities at the western regional office of the GES,

(Sekondi).

ITEM	AVAILABILITY		STATE		
	AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	V.GOOD	GOOD	POOR
PROPER SECURITY MEASURES ON RECORDS MANAGEMET Chain of custody I. Lock II. Unlock					
GOOD CONDITION OF STORAGE LOCATION					
ELECTRONIC RECORDS					

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MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (COMPUTERS)		132			
FILING CABINETS AND RACKS					
FILING SPACE					
CUPBOARDS					
RECRUITMENT FILES					
PROMOTION FILES					
MONITORING SUPERVISION FILE					
LEAVES FILE					
TEACHERS PERSONAL FILE					
WAEC REPORTS					
ANNUAL SCHOOL CENSUS					
FILE					

FOLDERS					
STAFF ATTENDANCE BOOK					
LOG BOOK					
SUBDIVISION GUIDES					

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APPENDIX B

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF ON RECORDS KEEPING AT THE WESTERN REGIONAL OFFICE OF THE GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE, SEKONDI

SECTION A

Background information

A. Ice breaking Activity

- . Introduce yourself to the interviewee and allow him/her to do same

- Explain the rationale behind the study to the interviewee and let him/ her know clearly what his/her role in the interview session will be.

- Explain how the interview will be recorded and seek his/ her consent before using the recording technique.

B. Background of the interviewee

- Please tell me how long have you been working in this office?

- Please may I know your highest educational qualification?

- What category of staff do you belong? (Senior member, Senior staff, Junior staff etc.)

- What is your schedule? (Probe)

- Did you receive any form of training prior to your assumption of duty? (Probe)

- What kind of training did you received?

- What was the duration of the training?

- Were you awarded certificate?

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- Do you periodically receive on the job training?

C. Main issues

  (1) Importance of records keeping

- Is record keeping part of your responsibility?

- Which administrative records do you manage?

- What are some of the records used at the office?

- What is the importance of the records that you manage?

- How would you describe the usage of records by the administrative staff?

- What in your opinion is the importance of records in general?

  (2) Administrative practices characterizing the record management

- What record management manual do you use?

- How do you store records? (Probe)

- How often do you file the office documents?

- Why do you store records?

- Is security a reason you would consider in records management?

- Would you consider confidentiality as a reason for managing records?

- What would you consider as the importance of records management? (Probe)

- Why do you say so?

- What is involved in managing your records? (Prompt)

- Does it involve unitizing or classifying the records you manage?

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- If, yes, how do you classify the records?

- How do you review stored records so as to dispose of those that have become useless?

- Who monitors and controls records management and retrieval?

- Would you say you have been successful in records keeping?

(3) Challenges associated with records keeping

- How many records management personnel do you have? (Probe)

- Is the number adequate to provide Management Support

    in terms of record keeping?

- Do you sometimes experience misfiling and missing of records?

- Do you consider inadequate resources to facilitate proper records management practices as a problem?

- Do you consider the lack of professionally trained records managers at this office as contributing to problems of records management?

- Can you describe the challenges in terms of;

    Acquisition

    Maintaining

    Usage

- What measures do you have in place to protect records from hazards like fire, rainwater, rodents and thieves?

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(4) Level of adoption of modern record keeping approach?

- In what form do you keep records?

  Manual (paper)

  Electronic (computerized)

  Both manual and electronic

- How fast do you search to retrieve your documents to save time and meet deadlines? (Probe)

- Do you have individual computers?

- Do you have other personnel who help in retrieving documents?

- What skills or extra training skills in your opinion will you need for records keeping?

(5) What do administrators propose as strategy for improving records management at the office?

- What strategy do you suggest the office should adopt to ensure effective record management?

- Is there a way to improve the available storage facilities?

- If yes, how?

- What advice would you give to someone who is about to take up administrative position on the importance of records keeping?

Thanks for your time

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE OF THE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

ADMINSTRATIVE STAFF A

A. Ice breaking Activity

Interviewer is represented by the short form **Int.r** and the interviewee which is the administrative staff is represented by the short form **Adm.**

Introduction

Pleasantries between interviewer (Int.r) and interviewee (Adm.A)

B. Background of Interviewee

Int.r – Please may I know your highest educational qualification?

Adm.A –'A' 3year Post Sec

Int.r. - What category of staff do you belong? (Senior member, Senior staff, Junior staff etc)

Adm.A – I am senior staff

Int.r – Please how long have you been working in this office?

Adm.A – 12years

Int.r – What is your schedule?

Adm.A – Secretary

Int.r – Is record keeping part of your responsibility?

Adm.A – Yes

Int.r – Why do you say so?

Adm.A – I am special secretary to the Director therefore I deal with confidential documents. Such documents are kept well by me.

Int r. – Is record keeping is part of your schedule, which administrative records do you keep?

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Adm.A – As I said, I keep confidential records like records on punitive issues,

dossier on special issues etc.

Int.r – Did you receive any form of training prior to your assumption of duty?

Adm.A – Yes

Int.r – what kind of training did you receive?

Adm.A – I attended Secretarial school. I did secretarial courses.

Int.r – what was the duration?

Adm.A – Three years

Int.r –What certificate were you awarded?

Adm.A - Government Secretarial Certificate

Int.r – What are some of the records you use?

Adm.A – Every record going to and from the Director comes to my table.

Int.r – What record manual do you use?

Adm.A – I don't use any manual

Int.r – How do you store records?

Adm.A – I some information on my computer and some in cabinet.

Int.r – are they secured?

Adm.A – Well as you can see, the cabinet is not in good condition but I am

        managing.

Int.r – What would you consider as the importance to records management?

Adm.A – Records are kept for future use so if they are not manage well it will

be difficult when it comes to   decision making.

Int.r – Why do you say so?

Adm.A – I mean, every record that comes here is for a purpose, therefore they are not manage or keep properly, it will be difficult to retrieve them. This will bring a big problem to management when it comes to decision making.

Int.r – What is involved in managing records?

Adm.A - Proper care and maintenance

Int.r – Do you classify the records you manage?

Adm.A – Yes

Int.r – how do you do the classification?

Adm.A – I classify them according to units. The work here is based on units, for example, personnel, accounts, monitoring, etc

Int.r – How do you review stored records so as to dispose of those that have become useless?

Adm.A – I delete the old files on the computer which have no use to create space on the memory.

Int.r – what about the manual records?

Adm.A – they are sent to the Education Management Information System (EMIS)

Int.r – How will you describe the usage of records by the administrative staff here?

Adm.A – In fact the administrative staff here are all competent. They handle every record with great care.

Int.r – That sounds great! So would you say that you have been successful is keeping records?

Adm.A – I can boldly say, yes!

Int.r – How many records management personnel do you have under you?

Adm.A – Three

Int.r – Is the number adequate to provide Management Support in term of records keeping?

Adm.A – Yes please

Int.r – What are some of the challenges you have?

Adm.A – There is no generator, so when there is power cut off and I need information from my PC, it becomes a hell. Sometimes common paper for printing is a problem. When the Toner for my printer gets finish, I do not get quick replacement.

Int.r – Do you sometimes experience misfiling and missing of records?

Adm.A – Not often

Int.r – In what form do you receive data?

Adm.A – Both manual and electronic

Int.r – How fast do you search to retrieve your documents to save time and meet deadlines?

Am.A – Fast, if there is no power shortage.

Int.r – Do you have individual computer?

Adm.A – Yes

Int.r – Do you have other personnel who help in retrieving documents?

Adm.A Yes, I have one.

Int.r – What skills or extra training skills in your opinion will you need on records keeping?

Adm.A – I think Refresher Course will do me good.

Int.r – Why do you say so?

Adm.A – I have not received any since I assumed this office.

Int.r – Does the office have adequate storage facilities for records keeping?

Adm.A – No

Int.r – What measures do you have in place to protect records from hazards like fire, rain water, rodents and thieves?

Adm.A – Nil

Int.r – Does the office have suitable storage location?

Adm.A – Not really

Int.r – What advice or lesson would you give to inspire someone who has no idea on the importance of records keeping?

Adm.A – Decision of every institution is based largely on the records that institution have. Therefore there is the need to keep records well. Again, as the records keep coming, prompt response must be given to clear the table. In records keeping, confidentiality is paramount.

Thanks so much for your time!

APPENDIX D

ADMINISTRATOR B

Int.r. - Please may I know your highest educational qualification?

Adm. B– Masters Degree in Education

Int.r. - What category of staff do you belong? (Senior member, Senior staff,

Junior staff etc)

Adm.B – Junior staff

Int.- Please can you tell me how long have you been working in this office?

Adm B – Six months

Int.- What is your schedule?

Adm B - Administrator

Int.- Is record keeping part of your responsibility?

Adm B - Yes

Int.- Why do you say so?

Adm B – Is because I receive the first hand information. Every

correspondence to this office is received by me

Int.- Which of the records do you keep?

Adm B – I keep general correspondence.

Int.- Did you receive any form of training prior to your assumption of duty?

Adm B – Not all

Int.- So what was your schedule before posted to this office?

Adm B – I was in the classroom

Int.- Really?

Adm B – I have neither training nor certificate in administration.

Int.- I see. So how are you coping with your work?

Adm B – In fact, the clerk I am working with is 'all knowing'. She is coaching me a lot.

Int.- What are some of records your office use?

Adm B – Upgrading, transfer, posting, I mean all correspondence

Int.- Do have or use any records management manual?

Adm B – No

Int.- How do you keep or store the records?

Adm B – They are kept in cabinet, on shelves, in cupboards and on top of tables.

Int.- Why do you store the records?

Adm B – They are stored for future use

Int.- Is security a reason you would consider in records keeping?

Adm B - Yes

Int.- Do you consider confidentiality as a reason for keeping records?

Adm B- Yes

Int.- What would you consider as the importance of records keeping?

Adm B – For future use

Int.- Why do you say so?

Adm B – Keeping the records helps the officer concern in decision making. For example, if an invitation to a meeting is received and not kept, the one to attend the meeting may turn to forget. Again records are kept to ensure confidentiality. This means that not all information should be put at the public domain.   Information about dead employee must be released to family members only when the need arises.

Int.- What does the records your manage involves?

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Adm B – It involves receiving, sending it to the Director for endorsement, receiving again, dispatching to the schedule officer, receiving back for filing or final dispatch.

Int.- does all you are saying involves classification?

Adm B - Yes

Int.- how do you do the classification?

Adm B – Is classification by units

Int.- What does that mean?

Adm B – We have records for schools, subjects, teachers, postings, transfers etc

Int.- Do your office sometime review the records and dispose the useless ones?

Adm B – No. All are kept in the archives.

Int.- How would you describe the usage of records by the administrative staff in this office?

Adm B – Well is okay

Int.- Would you say you have been successful in records keeping?

Adm B – Well, yes

Int.- How many records management personnel do you have under you?

Adm B - Five

Int.- Is the number adequate to provide management support in terms of record keeping?

Adm B - No

Int.- What are some of the challenges you face in records keeping?

Adm B – Lack of filing items, no cabinet – the one we have is chocked, no shelves. Some of the records are stored on the floor which is not good.

Int.- Do you sometimes experience misfiling and missing of records?

Adm B - Yes

Int.- will you describe the challenge in terms of acquisition, maintenance and usage of the records?

Adm B – Is maintaining and the usage of the records.

Int.- In what form do you keep records?

Adm B – In paper form - manual

Int.- How fast do you search to retrieve records to meet dead line?

Adm B – Sometimes is fast. All depends on how long the record has been with us.

Int.- Do you have individual computers

Adm B – Not at all

Int.- Do you have other personnel who help in retrieving records

Adm B – Yes, I have two

Int.- What skills or training do you think you will need for records keeping?

Adm B – Computer training, on the job training and refresher course.

Int.- Does the office have adequate storage facilities for keeping records?

Adm B - No

Int.- What measures do you have in place to protect the records from hazards like fire, rainwater, rodents and thieves?

Adm B – The only measure is that this door is locked after work. The other protective measures are in the hands of God.

Int.- Does the office have conducive storage facility?

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Adm B - No

Int.- What advice would you give to inspire someone who has no idea on the importance of record keeping?

Adm B – Every record should be considered very important and handle as such. Again records are the bed rock of every decision; therefore they must be kept well.

Thank you very much for your time!

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APPENDIXE

ADMINISTRATOR C

Int.r.- Please may I know your highest educational qualification?

Adm. C.- Diploma

Int.r.- What category of staff do you belong? (Senior member, Senior staff,

Junior staff etc)

Adm. C.- Senior staff please.

Int.r: Please can you tell me, how long have you been working in this office?

Adm.C: This is my sixth year please.

Int.r: What is your schedule?

Adm.C: I am Human Resource officer, in charge of personnel

Int.r: Did you receive any form of training prior to your assumption of duty?

Adm.C: No please. I was posted to this office and was given this schedule.

Int.r: Does that mean that you assumed duty without any knowledge in what

you are doing now?

Adm.C: Yes

Int.r: And is that not affecting you?

Adm.C: In fact it has not been easy; it was after two years that I was given on

the job training.

Int.r: Do you see that as enough training?

Adm.C: Well, that is all I have.

Int.r: As a personnel officer, what do you do?

Adm.C: Actually my office is in charge of Promotions, Upgrading and

Postings.

Int.r: Do you keep some records to that effect?

Adm.C: Yes please. I keep records on all that.

Int.r: Is that important?

Adm.C: You mean the records keeping?

Int.r: Yes

Adm.C: It is very important.

Int.r: Why do you say so?

Adm.C: Records as you know, provides useful information on the progress and development made within an institution. Keeping records on both teaching and non-teaching staff helps management to make meaningful decision.

Int.r: Can you give me some importance of records?

Adm.C: Records enable management to make meaningful decisions. It is also serves as guide for future activities, and many more.

Int.r: How would you describe the usage of records by the administrative staff?

Adm.C: I know they are all doing their best.

Int.r: Which Record manual do you use?

Adm.C: Record manual, no? You mean a guide?

Int.r: Yes please

Adm.C: No. To the best of my knowledge, there is nothing like that in this office. We all look up to the Head of Human Resource Management (HRM). Is like, we learn by imitation.

Int.r: Please tell me, how do you store the records you are managing?

Adm.C. As you can see around me, we file most of our records. That is the reason where the place is choked. We will transfer them to the EMIS. Some

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are stored on the computer. But the unfortunate thing is that two officers share this computer.

Int.r: Is that helping your work?

Adm.C: Is not the best but there is no other option

Int.r: Is security a reason you would consider in records keeping?

Adm.C: Yes

Int.r: Why do you say so?

Adm.C: If the records are not secured, it will lose the main reason for keeping them. And again they will be exposing to wear and tear.

Int.r: Would you consider confidentiality as reason for managing records?

Adm.C: It is one of the key elements in records management. Records must be protected and kept safe. The safe here means it must not be exposed to those who do not matter.

Int.r: What does it involved in managing the records you handling?

Adm.C: They are being classified.

Int.r: How do you classify them?

Adm.C: By grouping them per units. For examples, we have records on promotion, upgrading, recruitment, leaves etc.

Int.r: How do you review stored records so as to dispose of those that have become useless?

Adm.C: On the computer, we delete the old files that are no more needed to create space on the memory. For the records in the hard form, we have never reviewed them ever since I came here.

Int.r: Would you say we have been successful as far as records management is concerned?

Adm.C: Well I will say to some extend is yes.

Int.r: What are some of the challenges you encounter in records management?

Adm.C: One of our major challenges is the one computer shared by two officers. Sometimes it creates a lot of inconveniences. The supply of items like toner, A4 sheets does not even come. The storage space is inadequate.

Int.r Can you describe the challenges in terms of

      Acquisition

      Maintenance

      Usage

      of the records?

Adm.C: Most of the records   from both teaching and non-teaching are usually in the hard copy. And this is the reason for more papers in the system. This poses a lot of challenge maintaining them. On the other hand, records from the GES are received in soft copy. Unfortunately, because of inadequate computers, using such records are sometimes very difficult

Int.r. Do you sometimes experience misfiling and missing of records?

Adm.C: Yes

Int.r: How many records management personnel do you have?

Adm.C: In my unit, we are about sixteen

Int.r: Is the number adequate?

Adm.C: No

Int.r: How fast do you search to retrieve document to save time to meet deadlines?

Adm.C: Not very fast.

Int.r: What skills or extra training in your opinion would you need on records management?

Adm.C: I believe refresher course on general records keeping would do.

Int.r: What strategy do you suggest the office should adopt to ensure effective record management?

Adm.C: The office should come out with policy or guideline on records management. Again they should organise on the job training for all of us.

Int.r: Is there a way of improving the available storage facilities to you?

Adm.C: I think more cabinet must be provided as well as more shelves.

Int.r: What advice would you give to someone who is about to take up administrative position on the importance of records keeping?

Adm.C: It is very necessary to take key interest in records keeping if you want to succeed as an administrator.

Thank you for your time.

ADD UPS

1. Categories of records Pages 29 & 30

2. 23 & 24