



Original Research Article

Challenges of records management in higher education in Ghana: The case of University for Development Studies

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The study seeks to create and enhance awareness and also sensitize the staff of University for Development Studies (UDS) of the fundamental role played by effective records management in fulfilling the Institution's mandate. The primary aim is to explore and find out whether records management as a valuable resource of the institution receives the desired attention. The research design approach was adopted for this study. The primary data was collected through the use of questionnaires while the secondary data was gathered from books, publications, public records and Archives Administration Act 1997 (Act 535). The researchers used the University for Development Studies, Tamale Campus especially staff of the Central Administration, School of Graduate Studies, School of Medicine and Health Sciences, School of Allied Health Sciences and the Faculty of Education as a case study to be able to do an in-depth investigation. Two sampling methods were used, to select the respondents one probability and the other non-probability namely, simple random sampling and quota sampling respectively. The simple random sampling is the purest and the most straightforward probability sampling strategy. The logic behind simple random sampling is that it removes bias from the selection procedure and should result in representative samples. The quota sample is a non-probability sampling approach in which units are selected into the sample on the basis of pre-specified characteristics, so that the total sample will have the same distribution of characteristics assumed to exist in the population being studied. The unit of analysis was the selected respondents at the various Departments/Sections/Units at Tamale Campus as records management is a cross-departmental collective responsibility. To ensure fair representativeness, respondents were selected from different categories, that is, junior staff, senior staff and senior members who serve as administrative staff. The data was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Scientists (SPSS) 17.0 and Microsoft Excel Office 2007 Packages. The study revealed that records management is decentralized and are managed manually through filing of hard copies in folders and kept in metal cabinets based on individual ability and knowledge at the various departments/sections/units and the faculties and schools. It was further affirmed that only the Academic Affairs Section and the Finance Department that have well developed soft ware's to store and retrieve information. It is therefore recommended records management function should be incorporated into the University-wide strategic planning initiative to ensure that there is a standard approach to storing and retrieving information.

Key words: Records management, storage, retrieval, disposal, University strategic planning

INTRODUCTION

Record keeping and management in higher educational institutions is very important and cannot be overemphasized. This is because continuity of the institution depends largely on the availability of useful

records of past activities and programmes.

In a complex organization like that of the university, it is not possible to keep every information in the brain because the volume of information is so heavy and therefore

records must be kept.

Record keeping and management predated the existence of man. As stated in the Bible in Genesis 1 and 2, God kept a chronological record of all his creations of the world from day one when he created the heaven and earth to the seventh day when he rested from all his works which he had made.

Records therefore play a significant role in higher education management commencing from its establishment to the stages of development, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and renewal of its programmes and these are essential information for the continues survival of the institution. Records management is based on the premise that records require managing, in the same sense that other higher education resources need managing. Records should be regarded as fully important as other administrative functions since records are at the heart of institutions of higher learning.

In essence, sound records management is the foundation any higher educational institution needs to provide services, to fulfill its obligation of accountability towards immediate community, students and staff and to protect their rights (Ngoepe, 2004). No institution can survive without keeping records of its activities and also no office could operate successfully if it had to rely on memory alone to keep track of every transaction. Managing and maintaining student and staff records address the range of issues as the students make a lot of mistakes in completing their personal details as well as staff in their records. For instance student records enable the university or colleges to be able to recall what was done by the students throughout the whole year, for example by preserving students exam scripts, assignment, together with their academic records.

In the Ghanaian Educational system, it is mandatory by law that all educational institutions keep certain records such as log book, admission register, visitors' book, inventory book, account book etc. The keeping and management of record is often organized around a life cycle that all records should follow i.e. creation, storage, retrieval (for use as needed), retention and disposition which includes protecting all vital documents (records).

Record keeping and management occupies a strategic position in the efficient and effective management of the university system. In fact, it is central in the administration of institutions of learning because it documents the planning and implementation of appropriate course of services and programmes allowing monitoring of work. In the conventional paper based organization such as the universities, paper continues to be viewed as the materials for records in administrative documentations (Igwoku, 2008). The approach is for records created in the course of day-to-day business of the university to be stored and kept in hard copies as evidence of an action, decision or process. However, the process of record keeping and management provides a framework for keeping, maintaining and providing for the disposition of records and what is contained in them. They are therefore intended to benefit

all members of staff by facilitating continuity and evaluation of services and preserving privacy. This framework is provided for by guidelines designed to educate people on decisions regarding professional record keeping. For instance, American Psychological Association (APA, 2007) contains the ethical principles of psychologist and code of conduct generally required for the maintenance of appropriate records of psychological services.

In Ghana, just as it pertains in America, the nature and extent of the records management may vary depending on the purpose, setting and context of the services. However, whatever the record may be, it is important that the staff get familiar with the legal and ethical requirement for record keeping and management in their specific professional context and jurisdiction. Generally, record keeping must be guided by some level of confidentiality, proper maintenance security, preservation of the content and context etc (Uwaifo, 2004; Akporhonor and Iwhiwhu, 2007). Unfortunately, the Ghanaian higher education situation in the business of record keeping and management especially in the university system has not been too successful because of lack of management components.

Writing in support of the above assertion, Ibiam (2004) noted that "many years of neglect had done great damage to the education sector and record keeping is not an exemption. In his view, Iginodala, (1998) believes that personnel (secretaries and filing clerks) who maintain the registry system with filing cabinets containing the paper evidence of university business are inadequate and in fact ignorant of their responsibilities. This calls to question the reliability and authenticity of records kept in such a system. Giving credence to this Afolabi (1999) asserted that record management practice in Ghana has a number of problems which may include insufficient skilled and experienced record management personnel and possibly, low priority of record management in the scheme of things. Awe (2000) viewed the problem in record keeping from the perspective of these bodies "government, university management, the staff and the students. He accused these bodies of being responsible for unavailable, inaccurate/incomplete and dishonest records. According to Ututlu (2001) these adversely affect planning for and provision of structures and facilities, adequate finding, proper formulation and review of policies. Other associated problems of record keeping identified generally, in the educational system in Ghana include lack of record manual and filing guidelines which lead to loss of vital information (Egwunyenga, 2005) and inadequate computer terminals Oketunji, (2002) others are difficulty in record retrieval and lack of appreciation by management and staff of the need for well controlled records (Egunleti, 2000). The result of the forgoing is high profile failure in accountability.

Benefits of Records Management

Records should be well managed in order to ensure they are protected for both administrative purposes and to serve

as evidence of the institution's work. The process of caring for records is known as records management. The records management function should therefore impact across the whole institution and not be confined to one central department. Due to its far reaching nature integrating the records management function into institution's business systems, processes and culture often requires a significant amount of resources. Most higher education institutions will commonly expect to derive benefits from resources invested; benefits can be described as the expected returns or improvements gained by the institution from such an investment.

Within the context of this review benefits can be usefully classified as either being tangible or intangible in nature.

Tangible benefits are those that can be quantified and are generally articulated in terms of measurable improvements or cost savings. An example of a tangible benefit would be a reduction in space required to store physical paper copies. As a general rule tangible benefits are expressed in monetary terms for inclusion in business cases, the above example could be expressed as the costs saved from no longer requiring the storage space, they can also however be quantified in other ways for example: achieving a 20% reduction in carbon emissions from reduced electronic storage.

Intangible benefits are non-quantifiable improvements to an institution. Examples of intangible benefits might include improved standards of corporate governance or ensuring legal compliance. One could argue that by meeting statutory obligations one is avoiding legal costs but this can be problematic to quantify. If a benefit is to be quantified the metric needs to be robust, realistic and meaningful.

The benefits synonymous with records management are well understood and often repeated. These commonly include: institutions that manage their records well reap immediate benefits in terms of being able to utilize all available information resources for competitive advantage. Kemoni and Wamukoya (2000:125) state that effective records management systems provide information required for the proper functioning of organizations, including universities. On the other hand, poor records management can be risky to organizations. Djorka and Conneen (1984:22) summarize the consequences of poor records management as follows:

'In an institution where paperwork is poorly managed, the flow of records through the life cycle is retarded, chaotic, or non-existent. Records and the information they contain are difficult to retrieve, and costly duplication of paperwork is a frequent occurrence. The net effect of poor management is a decrease in the efficiency of the institution and an inflation of its operating costs.'

Decision making in the university system is an administrative function and invariably requires information in the form of records. Administration is ordinarily discussed as the art of forgetting things done." Emphasis is placed upon processes and methods for insuring incisive action. Principles are set forth for securing

concerted action from groups of people. Decisions are made at different levels in the university. However, it is fairly obvious that the lower one goes down the organization the lower the level of decision that must be made and in reverse, the higher one goes the higher the level of decision; irrespective of the level, information will be required one way or another. In all spheres of activity decisions are being made about the allocation of budgetary resources, the prioritization of programmes, the granting of social benefits, the commissioning of new projects, the closure of unproductive ventures, and information to release to the public or the level of classification that certain information requires. Records and archives provide the information that is required by those who make the decisions. The question only is whether these records are available to these decision makers and whether the decision makers are aware of their existence and thus make use of them when making decisions.

Records management is important for many other reasons. Records and information are the lifeblood of any institution. They are the basis on which decisions are made, services provided and policies developed and communicated. Effective management of records and other information brings the following additional benefits: supports an institution's business and discharge of its functions, promotes business efficiency and underpins service delivery by ensuring that authoritative information about past activities can be retrieved, used and relied upon in current business; supports compliance with other policies which requires records and information to be kept, employment legislation and health and safety policy; improves accountability, enabling compliance with policies and other rules and requirements to be demonstrated to those with a right to audit or otherwise investigate the institution and its actions; enables protection of the rights and interests of the institution, its staff and its stakeholders; increases efficiency and cost-effectiveness by ensuring that records are disposed of when no longer needed. This enables more effective use of resources, for example space within buildings and information systems, and saves staff time searching for information that may not be there; and provides institutional memory.

On the other hand, poor records and information management create risks for the institution, such as: poor decisions based on inaccurate or incomplete information; inconsistent or poor levels of service; financial or legal loss if information required as evidence is not available or cannot be relied upon; non-compliance with statutory or other regulatory requirements, or with standards that apply to the section to which it belongs; failure to handle confidential information with an appropriate level of security and the possibility of unauthorised access or disposal taking place; failure to protect information that is vital to the continued functioning of the institution, leading to inadequate business continuity planning; Unnecessary costs caused by storing records and other information for longer than they are needed; staff time wasted searching for records; staff time wasted considering issues that have

previously been addressed and resolved; and loss of reputation as a result of all of the above, with damaging effects on public trust.

Problem statement

It has been observed that information or records are not regarded as an important resource that may influence the effectiveness of the University for Development Studies (UDS). This is as a result of the absence of a legislative instrument (records management policy) to regulate the management of records, ignorance has engulfed staff who are involved in record keeping and management to the extent that records are moved from one office to the other without due cognizance to

the maintenance and confidentiality culture which could have adverse effects on the performance and reputation of the University and ultimately on service delivery. There is, therefore, a need to improve the management of records at UDS.

This observation has triggered the interest of the researchers to undertake this study, which seeks to create and enhance awareness and sensitize UDS staff of the fundamental role played by effective records management in fulfilling UDS's mandate. The primary question explored in this research was whether the management of records, as one of the valuable resources, receives the attention it deserves at UDS. To answer the primary question, further sub-questions have to be explored which are delineated below:

- Does UDS have a policy framework for the management of records?
- Is records management included in the strategic objectives of UDS?
- Do the current records management practices at UDS comply with the prescripts regulating the management of public records?
- To what extent is sound records management impacting on effective administration in UDS?
- What recommendations can be made to ensure effective and efficient management of records?

Literature review

Conceptual Framework of Records Management

According to the International Standards Organization (ISO) (2001), records are 'information created, received, and maintained as evidence and information by an organization or person, in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business.' The Organization goes on to define records management as 'the field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records, including the processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records'. It states that records management includes activities such as:

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 systems and processes. From the view point of Mbiti (1978) higher education records comprise all the books and files or other documents containing information relating to what goes on in that institution, who is in the institution as well as what type of property the institution owns. On one other hand, the Funk and Wagnalls Standard Desk Dictionary (2000), defines a record as an account in writing or other permanent form serving as a memorial or authentic evidence of facts or events. It is regarded as information handed down or preserved.

Records management is the practice of maintaining the records of an institution from the time they are created up to their eventual disposal; this may include classifying, storing, securing and destruction (or in some cases, archival preservation) of records. Record management is primarily concerned with the evidence of institutions activities and is usually applied according to the value of the records rather than their physical format. In the past, record management was sometimes referred to only 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 basement of offsite. More modern usage tends to refer to the entire life cycle of records from the point of creation right through until their disposal.

Records Management is the efficient and systematic control of records (both paper and electronic) throughout their life-cycle from their creation or receipt until the time of their disposal. Records can be in any format (paper documents, electronic files, e-mails, databases or scanned images) and broadly speaking are those which have a corporate governance, academic, business, legal, financial or historical value to the University. Important records to be retained include those which: provide evidence of key decision-making processes and responsibilities (e.g. Governing Council, Academic Board Standing Committees records, programme and course accreditation); are created as a result of a key business transaction (e.g. Student records, contracts and related records, building projects); are required for legislative or other statutory requirements; have long-term research value (e.g. research projects); and have historical value (e.g. major events and initiatives).

Records management is a key responsibility of the University and all records created in the course of business belong to the University and not the individual. It is the responsibility of all those working on behalf of the University to carry out their records management duties in accordance with these standards, records management policy and all other related policies and procedures. Where possible, record keeping responsibilities should be agreed and defined in job descriptions. Training requirements relating to records management should be identified by administrators and staff and training provided for records

management staff, where necessary.

According to Dearstyne (1985), records are essential to the administration of High Academic Institutions. Records contain the information that keeps institutional programmes functioning and they give management of higher education a basis for making decisions, administering programmes and providing administrative continuity with past operations. Records also show the legal responsibilities of the institution and they protect the legal rights of citizens (<http://www.eric.ed.gov/>). Records increase the accountability of the institution and its officials. In summary, to support continuing service delivery and provide the necessary accountability, higher education institutions should create and maintain authentic, reliable and usable records.

The University of Melbourne (2001) defines records management as the capturing and maintaining of accurate, complete, reliable and useable documentation of activities of an organization in order to meet legal, evidential, accountability and social/cultural requirements. Records pass through several phases in their life cycle. The primary purpose of a records management programme is to monitor records, regardless of type or format, to ensure that they pass efficiently, and at a minimum cost, through the creation, use, inactive storage and disposal or permanent retention phases (Djorka and Conneen 1984:22). Universities might find themselves in an embarrassing position if requested records are not found as a result of poor records systems where, as Taylor(2000:240) notes, litigation by aggrieved parties cannot be ruled out.

Odlyzko (2000) and Rebore (2005) see records management as the management science of controlling the quantity, qualities and costs of records and it encompasses the procedural system operations, space, equipment and staff required to administer the records. In the same vein, Chris (2006) posits that proper records management goes a long way in enhancing effective administration of a university. Nonetheless, despite the indispensable value of records and the gargantuan amount of money spent on its creation and maintenance, proper management of records that will lead to economy and efficiency in their creation used and maintenance as well as disposition is seldom considered the top priority of the university system (Popoola, 2003). Week (1986) identified the following component as major component of records maintenance: filing system, retention and disposal and preservation. Accordingly, this study seeks to provide empirical data on how records are managed in Government and the Administration of University for Development Studies.

Records Management in the University

Higher Educational institutions are general centers for data generation and by extension records keeping (Nwankwo, 2001). University programmes have become extremely complex over the years. It has become a recurrent issue for

records to be irretrievable when required specially in Ghanaian tertiary institutions. The complexity of this problem is better appreciated by those who bear the brunt especially university lecturers, students, parents and administrators who require students records to facilitate accurate, timely decisions (Nwankwo 2001). Decision making is the backbone of administrative actions and administrators execute plans through actions (Igwe, 2002). The growth in both public and private tertiary institutions in Ghana has been on the increase since the desire and need for formal education became prominent. This is buttressed by the fact that more tertiary institutions of private ownership spring up daily by virtue of the liberalization of education in Ghana. With the forgoing, it is convincing that there is a regular data generation in Ghanaian Universities. Nwankwo (2001) observed that Nigerian tertiary institutions have an information generation capacity of 76 % and a utilization capacity of 3 %. The gap in generation of information and utilization naturally raises queries as to what happens to the generated information. Lundu and Mberve (2004) decried the inability of most educational institutions to put up sound information management policies to guide the generation, processing, storage and retrieval of stored data.

Recently, the Council on Higher Education (2000) pointed out that higher education information systems in South Africa were inadequate. Proper records management could help universities to manage their information efficiently, fulfill their mandate, protect them from litigation, preserve their corporate memory, and foster accountability and good governance. The information contained in university records needs to be managed according to a methodical approach in order to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the universities in carrying out their mission. As universities carry out their mission they create various records.

The core business of universities is learning, teaching, research and community development. The University for Development Studies, in articulating its mission, states that it seeks to promoting equitable and socio-economic transformation of communities through practically oriented, community based, problem solving, gender sensitive and interactive research, teaching, learning and outreach activities; providing higher education to persons suitably qualified for and capable of benefiting from it; positioning itself as a national asset in the facilitation of lifelong learning; and developing its information and communication technology infrastructure as the driving force for the education of more people, more rapidly and the improvement of efficiency and academic quality in order to advance community and national development (www.uds.edu.gh). In carrying out these activities, records need to be produced to serve as evidence that the University is carrying out its statutory functions. If such records are not properly managed or misplaced, then valuable evidence would be lost forever. However, proper management means establishing systematic controls at every stage of the record's life cycle, in accordance with established principles

Table 1: Four Actions of Records Care

Process	Records management actions	Archives management Actions
1 identification and acquisition	creation of receipt	selection or acquisition
2 intellectual control	classification within a logical system	arrangement and description
3 access	maintenance and use	reference and use
4 physical control	disposal by destruction or transfer as archives	Preservation

and accepted models of records management.

A personal experience and general observation reveals that access to students records are difficult in the University for Development Studies. Records which are difficult to access include: students progress transcripts and final year students academic transcripts. Such delayed access to vital records and documents creates lags in candidates' further progress either for postgraduate studies or employment purposes. Nwankwo (2001) explains that the growing complexity of the university systems enhances information generations through distant learning, admission processes to university, matriculation, etc. The volume of information generated is heavy and hence require adequate management. Given the doubtless significant of educational records.

Asogwa (2004) noted that data which arise from the execution of legitimate functions of universities should be properly managed and secured. Unfortunately, this has not been the case in most institutions as Omeyi (2002) observed. According to Afolabi (2004) and Egwuyenga (2009), records management in Nigeria is plagued by such factors as inadequate skilled and experienced management personnel, lack of sufficient funds and the placement of records management in a low priority pedestal in relation to other things. These problems have eaten deep into records management practice in Nigerian universities. In addition, archaic record-keeping methods and technology plus poor data storage facilities are part of the problems militating against record management.

In this light, the proper management of university records in the University Development Studies has to be given some prominence due to their importance. Universities might find themselves in an embarrassing position if requested records are not found as a result of poor records systems. Taylor (2000) notes, litigation by aggrieved parties cannot be ruled out. Recently, a former graduate student of UDS threatened in the mass media to take legal action against the University for his inability to graduate as a result of poor record keeping. Organizations and institutions that manage their records well reap immediate benefits in terms of being able to utilize all available information resources for competitive advantage.

Kemoni and Wamukoya (2000) state that effective records management systems provide information required for the proper functioning of organizations, including universities. On the other hand, poor records management can be risky to organizations. Djorka and Conneen (1984) summarized the consequences of poor records

management as follows: "an institution where paperwork is poorly managed, the flow of records through the life cycle is retarded, chaotic, or non-existent. Records and the information they contain are difficult to retrieve, and costly duplication of paperwork is a frequent occurrence. The net effect of poor management is a decrease in the efficiency of the institution and an inflation of its operating costs".

Theoretical framework of the study

Managing records in higher education institutions and the inherent challenges have become one of the notable areas of empirical study in recent times. Research into technology platforms for educational service delivery and other related functions generally apply to all manner of human institutions which fits squarely into qualitative and quantitative paradigms of investigation.

This study is built on the concept of continuum model. In addition to this records management theory, there is the less popular records entity life history theory (Shepherd and Yeo 2003:8). The limited information on this theory hinders its further discussion in this article. The discussion of the records continuum model follows.

Records Continuum Model

The life-cycle principle recognizes that records are created, used, maintained then disposed of, either by destruction as obsolete or by preservation as archives for their ongoing value. The continuum concept is a consistent and coherent process of records management throughout the life of records, from the development of record-keeping systems through the creation and preservation of records, to their retention and use as archives. The continuum concept suggests that four actions continue or recur throughout the life of a record: identification of records; intellectual control of them; provision of access to them; and physical control of them. The Standards Association of Australia (1996) defines records continuum as:

'a consistent and coherent regime of management processes from the time of the creation of records (and before creation, in the design of records keeping systems), through to the preservation and use of records as archives'.

According to the continuum concept, the distinction between records management and archives management need not be rigidly maintained. These four actions are outlined in Table 1.

The continuum model of records management process is

regarded as a continuous activity that focuses on the operations that produce records (Bantin 2002:69). Specifically, the records continuum model was developed in the 1980s and 1990s (Shepherd and Yeo 2003:9). Based on the continuum model, archivists and records managers need to be involved together with information systems designers in the creation of records keeping systems. Flynn (2001) refers to this design stage as the pre-natal phase. Records managers and archivists appraise records and decide on what records would support the functions of an organization during the records keeping system design. Scholars such as Kennedy and Schauder (1999), Myburgh (2005) and Shepherd and Yeo (2003) emphasize the need for collaboration between records professionals and information systems experts during systems design.

The main emphasis in the records continuum model is the participatory nature of the design phase whereby archivists or records managers and systems designers participate in the designing of the system and the involvement of both the archivists and records managers in the continuum of records keeping. The model is also based on the realization that records continue to live after the non-current phase of the records life-cycle. In support of the participatory approach, one could also argue that without the participation of archivists and records managers in the system design stage, records may disappear in the subsystems due to a lack of records management and archival knowledge on the part of corporate information systems designers. Furthermore, if records management professionals are not involved in the design phase, some records might not be captured in the system. Important as it is, the records continuum theory must be used with caution. According to Upward (2000:116), 'for other practitioners and educators, however, its relevance is not immediately perceived.

Furthermore, Upward (2000) concedes that the records continuum framework is culturally oriented. In his own words: 'We fit our detailed knowledge into ways that are agreeable to our communities of practice. There is certainly a cultural component to the use of the word continuum' (Upward 2000:127). In that light, the continuum model should not be perceived as a paradigm shift in the management of records in the sense used by Kuhn (1962). Rather, it should be regarded as a cultural shift in the management of records driven by postmodernism. However, the model is important because it underscores the fact that records management activities are usually conducted in a certain cultural context to the extent that one size does not fit all. In that regard, records management cultures should strive to meet the needs of the environment in which records are generated and used.

As the records life-cycle, the continuum theory is concerned with managing records from creation to disposal from current systems either by destruction or long-term preservation in some form of archive. However, the major difference between the two theories is that the latter deconstructs the custodial mentality (in the postmodernist sense), which is perceived to be unattainable in the digital

world, and further advocates the involvement of both records managers and archivists in the continuum of managing records.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There are mainly two types of methodologies used by social researchers, i.e. the qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative research methodology was more relevant for the study as it enabled the researchers to obtain relevant information from the sample group through a questionnaire with closed and open-ended questions.

This study was empirical in nature as it sought to address a real life problem and both the primary and secondary data were used. Therefore a research design approach was adopted. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), a research design is a plan or structured framework of how you intend conducting the research process in order to solve the research problem. The primary data was collected through questionnaires. Books, publications, Public Records and Archives Administration Act 1997 (Act 535) were consulted for secondary data. The researchers used the University for Development Studies, Tamale Campus especially staff of the Central Administration, School of Graduate Studies, School of Medicine and Health Sciences, School of Allied Health Sciences and the Faculty of Education as a case study to be able to do an in-depth investigation.

In terms of data collection techniques used, the research requires a literature survey as the secondary data source to identify scientific literature and imperial research done on records management. Secondly, legislative framework regulating the management of public records in Ghana, as well as examined the current records management practices are in compliance. Other documents such as journals, books and relevant theses were also examined. The primary data was collected using a questionnaire with mostly closed-ended and a few open ended structured questions was designed and distributed to selected respondents within the Central Administration of the University. The selection of respondents was based on strategic positions, knowledge and experience regarding records management.

Two sampling methods were used, to select the respondents one probability and the other non-probability namely, simple random sampling and quota sampling respectively. According to Gravetter and Forzano (2011), the simple random sampling is the purest and the most straightforward probability sampling strategy. It is also the most popular method for choosing a sample among population for a wide range of purposes. They contend that "the logic behind simple random sampling is that it removes bias from the selection procedure and should result in representative samples". On the other hand Babbie and Mouton (2001) describe quota sample as a type of non-probability sample in which units are selected into the sample on the basis of pre-specified characteristics, so that

Table 2: Knowledge on Records Management

#	Items	# of Yes	% of Yes	# of No	% of No
1	Records management policy in place	6	18.8%	26	81.2%
2	Availability of archives office	9	28.1%	23	71.9%
3	Hire professional records managers	4	12.5%	28	87.5%
4	Organize training workshops on records management	12	37.5%	20	62.5%
5	Records management as part of strategic objectives	6	18.8%	26	81.2%
6	Is records management given the deserved attention	6	18.8%	26	81.2%
7	Compliance with records management regulations	4	12.5%	28	87.5%

Source: Field Study 2016

the total sample will have the same distribution of characteristics assumed to exist in the population being studied. The unit of analysis was the selected respondents at the Central Administration and the population was staff from all Departments/Sections/Units at the Central Administration as records management is a cross-departmental collective responsibility. To ensure fair representativeness, respondents were selected from different categories, that is, junior staff, senior staff and senior members who serve as administrative staff. The reason for choosing these categories of employees is their insight and understanding of the research topic, as these employees deal with correspondence daily in the execution of their duties. It was also ensured that a certain number of respondents are selected from each department within the Central Administration, to ensure representativeness of all departments.

The data was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Scientists (SPSS) 17.0 and Microsoft Excel Office 2007 Packages. Tables and qualitative findings were generated using the two soft wares.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The rationale of the study was to establish the current status of records management in the University for Development studies. Establishing records management awareness amongst staff was one way of meeting this objective. The interviews were therefore designed to establish the records management awareness amongst staff from their understanding of whether there is a records management policy; whether the current records management practices in UDS comply with the prescripts regulating the management of public records.

From Table 2 above, the data indicates most respondents comprising 81.2% have never sighted any policy framework document on records management of the University. However, the Records Management Policy Framework of the University of Education, Winneba (2000) points out that there are a number of institutional benefits that can be accrued from any University when proper records are kept. These benefits as stated in the Framework 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. It is also evident that every Department/Section/Unit have cabinets were in the offices where documents are filed but the University has no Archives Section where documents that are over aged are stored. In the same vein, professional records managers are not employed in the University to manage the records as expected. However, Kanzi (2010) pointed out that for a sound records management practices to take place, heads of institutions should designate or appoint a staff member (Record Manager) at senior management level to whom they can delegate the responsibility of ensuring that sound records management practices are implemented and maintained. He added that records managers should develop and implement records management policies, which are endorsed by the heads of the institutions and their top management teams. Adherence to these should be continuously monitored and be reviewed on an annual basis.

Furthermore, he stated that there should be records management procedures to serve as a guide to employees, records classification system to facilitate efficient retrieval and disposal of records, and training of records managers and records office staff to equip them with the necessary skills to carry out their functions properly.

The researchers investigated training programmes for both new and old staff, with the intention of establishing if such training programmes cover records keeping. The researchers also investigated other records management training programmes available to the officers, both records keeping staff and other administrative staff. Responses to these inquiries revealed that lack of training was one of the factors leading to poor records keeping in the University for Development Studies as it is evident from Table 2. Commenting on the "poor shape" in which the University's records management is, most of the respondents cited lack of training on how to handle and manage records in the university which in most cases has led to loss of important documents is a common phenomenon in the University despite all efforts of retrieving them.

Utulu (2001) contends that if any information was to be lost or misplaced, it could cause a range of problems some of which might affect the future of students needing

essential information from their records. In accordance to Afolabi (1999), Utulu (2001), asserted that Records Management and Archives staff should be responsible for providing an appropriate record management training programme to ensure efficient and effective management of records. He added that records should not be taken from the University without the permission of the Records Manager/Archivist or an appropriate Office Manager.

The researchers further found out whether records management were part of strategic objectives of the University, records management was given the desired attention and whether records management staff comply with records management regulations. The responses are found in Table 2 above all showing negative responses. In contrast to these findings, Iwhiwhu (2005) opined that record keeping occupies a strategic position in the efficient and effective management of the university system. Igwoku (2008) claimed it was central in the administration of institutions of learning because it documents the planning and implementation of appropriate course of services allowing proper monitoring of work. In the conventional paper based organizations such as the universities, paper continues to be viewed as the material for records in administrative documentations. Generally, record keeping must be guided by some level of confidentiality, proper maintenance, security, preservation of the content and context, etc. Writing in support of the above finding, Ibiham (2004) noted that many years of neglect had done great damage to the education sector and record keeping is not an exemption. In his view, Iguodala (1998) believes that personnel (secretaries and filing clerks) who maintain the registry systems with filing cabinets containing the paper evidence of university business are inadequate and in fact ignorant of their responsibilities.

In furtherance of the findings above, (Nwankwo, 2001) identified poor infrastructure undefined policy gap and a poor awareness base as reasons for a poor management of records in tertiary institutions. There must be a conscious effort to plan records retrieval to eradicate the problem of document retrieval. (Longe, 2001) describes a plan as a series of actions that have future consequences. The same applies to the fact that we have educational planning. Majority of the activities carried out in universities are planned from the academic planning units making use of policies developed corporately. (Nwankwo, 2001), (Lundu and Mberve2004) agree that a good record retrieval system must be a component part of an effective records management system.

To summarize the responses as to whether the University complies with the prescribed regulations of public records management, these were some of the responses given:

- the University does not make reference to the public records management legal framework/instrument;
- there are no laid down procedures on how records should be kept;
- information created or received and maintained by the university are not properly controlled and sometimes

documents get missing;

- various units/sections/departments of the university do their filing discretionary;
- the university has no records management policy to guide and protect the use of records;
- though records management is practiced, it is not given the desired attention;
- records are still kept in only hard copies and managed by staff who have no adequate knowledge on proper records keeping which eventually leads to lost of most valuable information; and
- closed volumes of records are dumped at stores and this makes it extremely difficult to retrieve the information.

The study found out how records were managed in the University. The responses sought to assert that basically, records are managed manually by the university through filing of hard copies in folders and kept in metal cabinets; based on individual ability and knowledge; managed at the various departments/sections/units and the faculties and schools; and records management is decentralized and every department has its method of classification and filing. It was also evident from the responses that only a few departments such as the Academic Affairs Section and the Finance Department that have well developed soft wares to store and retrieve information. In contrast to these findings, some respondents are of the view that staff are not held responsible for missing records; there is a poor management system of records in the University since there is no uniform system of managing records at the various departments/sections/units and faculty and school levels. This according to them leads to difficulty in accessing and retrieving records. These challenges enumerated are in contention with Asogwa (2004) who asserted that data which arise from the execution of legitimate functions of schools should be properly managed and secured. Unfortunately, this has not been the case in most institutions as Omeyi (2002) observed. According to Afolabi (2004) and Egwuyenga (2009), records management is plagued by such factors as inadequate skilled and experienced management personnel, lack of sufficient funds and the placement of records management in a low priority pedestal in relation to other things. These problems have eaten deep into records management practice in Nigerian universities. In addition, archaic record-keeping methods and technology plus poor data storage facilities are part of the problems militating against record management as the study revealed.

As mentioned earlier, educational institutions are general centers for data generation and by extension records keeping (Nwankwo, 2001). The study also noted that University programmes have become extremely complex over the years. It has become a recurrent issue for records to be irretrievable when required specially in the University for Development Studies. Working to avert these recurrent challenges, the researchers also found out the benefits of records keeping in the university. Responses obtained included: records make work more easier and

Table 3: Principles of Records management

#	Variable	Mean Compliance
1	Accountability	1.45
2	Integrity	1.48
3	Protection	1.42
4	Compliance	1.58
5	Availability	1.61
6	Retention	1.39
7	Transparency	1.39
8	Dispose off	1.35

Source: Field Study 2016

Survey scale: < 1.99, non-compliant, 2.0 compliant, 2.1-2.99 very compliant

faster to promote the growth and development of the university; maintains and meets good international standards and easier to retrieve documents when properly kept; forestall lost of important documents in the university; reduce the search time for documents; promotes the university's image since record keeping is an integral part of the university administration; ensures compliance with legal regulations, reduce manpower strength, and reduced risk of misplacement of vital information; preserves the university's memory, reduce operational cost and risk and makes the university to meet deadlines thus timely and accurately; efficient use of time, saves resources, promotes efficiency at work, prevents lawsuits and preserves institutional knowledge; secures vital information; improve the working environment and support better management decision making. These findings concord the assertion made by Hebert (1998) that records support decision making, demonstrate compliance, documents the history of the University and perhaps most importantly enables the institution to do their jobs.

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. It is in this vein that the researchers wanted to know whether employees of the university followed laid down principles of records management.

Table 3 provides a clear tabular picture of gross inefficient manner of handing records in the university. A likert scale of three ranges was set up to assess the mean compliance level of records management and administrative staff of the university at the Central Administration, School of Graduate Studies, School of Medicine and Health Sciences, School of Allied Health Sciences and the Faculty of Education as a case study to

be able to do an in-depth investigation.

The data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel 2007 Package and the results from Table 3 indicates that among the eight principles listed, none of these principles has been given adherence according to principles governing the management of records in the public sector. With respect these findings, Shepherd (2010) has a condescending view. He pointed out that 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. He concludes that records enable institutions to meet legal, regulatory, and financial requirements, and to protect their assets and rights when the right principles are adopted.

Conclusion

The rationale for undertaking this study, was to find out how records were managed in the University with the absence of a legislation instrument (records management policy) to regulate the management of records, and to what extent records were moved from one office to the other without due cognizance to the maintenance and confidentiality culture which could have adverse effects on the performance and reputation of the University and ultimately on service delivery. The study intends to use the findings as a basis to sensitize staff on the fundamental role played of effective records management in fulfilling UDS's mandate and the need to improve the management of records

The study found that records management was part of strategic objectives of the University and if records management were given the desired attention with staff complying with records management regulations it would ensure confidentiality, proper maintenance, security, and preservation of the content and context of the University.

The study established that there was training programme for staff that covered records keeping. The study also identified the "poor shape" in which the University's records are managed and this was attributed lack of

training on how to handle, manage and retrieve records in the university which in most cases has led to loss of important documents.

The research revealed that efficient and effective records management is not a choice but compulsory because 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.

The university lack professional and qualified records management staff, resulting in the poor management of records.

Recommendations

Records management function should be incorporated into the University-wide strategic planning initiatives. Most importantly, senior management should embrace the records management function to ensure its effectiveness and should be incorporated into their performance management targets. The recommendations of the study are as follows:

- The study reveals the importance of a records manager and it is unfortunate that the University has no records manager in any of its Campuses. The institution needs to appoint records managers whose responsibilities will be compilation, implementation, maintenance and utilization of approved filing systems and the records filed according to these systems. It significantly revealed that the university lacks professional and qualified records management staff, resulting in the poor management of records.

- Records Managers should be given adequate training to ensure that this official is able to undertake the full responsibilities of the post. The position of the Records Manager is crucial as this official is entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing the welfare of the university's records. Also, to ensure improvement of Institution's records management practices, the Records Manager should be dedicated only to the records management function. University Management should appoint separate Assistant Records Managers for the Budget, Treasury Office and Human Resources. They should be charged with the responsibility of ensuring sound records management within their respective divisions. Such Records Managers should remain accountable to the Records Manager of the whole University.

- Again, records management is a field that needs to be run by experienced professionals who will know what has to be done. It is therefore necessary for the University to train their records management staff to have a

qualification in records management. Workshops and seminars should be organized by the University to train staff on records management.

- Thought the issue of retention and disposal of records has been articulated to some extent in this study, a broad investigation might be conducted to unveil the effectiveness and challenges on the implementation of existing retention and disposition schedule in the University and this should conform to the public sector records management policies.

- In this study, the implementation of records management legislative framework has proven to be a failure whereby the stipulated requirements are not adhered in practicing records management. A policy document or legislative instrument should therefore be carved out to regulate Records Managers and records management staff on the functional roles of managing records effectively and efficiently. Further studies on records management might also focus on the essence of legislative framework in records management and reasons why there was the need for one.

- As a matter of priority, the University should ensure that part of its strategic planning process includes records management.

- Society is dynamic and as Information Communication is making the world a global village, the University should prepare itself to embrace electronic records management to reduce the large volumes of paper and store space for records. This easily done by introducing appropriate software that can manage records at a reduced cost and train staff on how to effectively manage them. This will help maintain a sustainable records management programme. In view of the importance of electronic records management, the Finance and Academics offices staff should be encouraged to update and upgrade their software from time to time. It is also worth extending these soft wares to all other offices.

- Management should enforce the principle of accountability, protection, integrity and making staff responsible for any lapses in terms of records protection on their part

Authorities should note that if they fail to comply with the Code, they may also fail to comply with legislation relating to the creation, management, disposal, use and re-use of records and information, for example the Public Records Act 1958, the Data Protection Act 1998, and the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2005, and they may consequently be in breach of their statutory obligations.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests

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