

Original Research Article

Records Management Practices in the Assemblies of God Church, Nigeria: Implications for Administrative Effectiveness

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Abstract

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The study assessed records management practices in the Assemblies of God Church and its implications on administrative effectiveness. Total enumeration was used to elicit 1,395 respondents from the Church with the use of questionnaire. Data obtained were described with the use of questionnaire and analyzed with Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). Results showed that financial, minutes, annual report and other records were created and managed. However, financial records, board meeting records, church activities record(s) and income and expenditure records were adequately managed. Minutes records were the records of long-term value created and maintained, and most of the records were kept in the archives. It was established that relationship existed between records managed and administrative effectiveness in the Church. Thus, records managed properly are therefore crucial for administrative effectiveness.

Keywords: Assemblies of God Church, Effectiveness, Management, Records

INTRODUCTION

Records management is a systematic administration of records and documented information throughout its entire life cycle, from creation, classification, use, filing, retention, storage, to final disposition. Similarly, it is the systematic control of an organization's records, throughout their life cycle, in order to meet operational business needs, statutory and fiscal requirements, and community expectations. Effective management of corporate records allows fast, accurate and reliable access to information, ensuring the timely destruction of redundant information and the identification and protection of vital and historically important records (Kpundeh, 2000; Popoola, 2000). Good management of records and information is fundamental to a well-functioning organization since it supports business activity and provides a basis for effective service delivery.

Records management practice is the professional practice or discipline of controlling and governing what are considered to be the most important records of an organization throughout their life cycles, which includes

from the time such records are conceived through to their eventual disposal. This practice includes identifying, classifying, prioritizing, storing, securing, archiving, preserving, retrieving, tracking and destroying of records (Nwankwo, 1985). To comprehend records management and appreciate its importance to human society, it is imperative to understand that the concept of records keeping is not new. It could be said that records management is as old as history of humankind because the need for memory is an integral part of survival (Adam, 2010).

Records management enables an organization to create, maintain, use, store and dispose of its records efficiently and cost-effectively. It helps the organization conduct its business, deliver its services and meet regulatory and accountability requirements. It promotes the pooling and sharing of information and helps make good use of precedents and organizational experience. It also enables an organization to control the volume of records being created, received and stored. Records

management not only maintains records economically; it also promotes operational efficiency by improving access to information through the removal of unneeded records from current systems. It controls the retirement and disposal of records once their value for business purposes has ended (Roper, 1999).

Records control schedule is prepared by or under the authority of the records management officer listing the records created or received by an office or department, and specifying how long they are to be retained. To be most useful, the control schedule will also show where and in what manner records are to be maintained while they are active and while inactive, and how they are to be destroyed. The records control schedule is developed directly from the records inventory, which is the first step in developing an effective records management program. The inventory is a complete listing of the records holdings in an office or department. The inventory is done only once, then updated when there are additions or deletions in the records that are created and maintained (Texas State Library and Archives Commission, 2013).

All records are to be inventoried, regardless of the media in which they are maintained, but the inventory is not a document-by-document or folder-by-folder listing of the records in the file cabinets or shelves. Rather, an inventory describes the function, content, use, and format of each records series in the office and storage areas. A records series is a group of identical or related documents that are normally used or filed as a unit and have the same retention period. Records are created, used, kept for valid legal, fiscal or administrative reasons and more likely than not destroyed at the end of their lives, although some with enduring historical value will be maintained in archives. The creation or receipt of a record is the first phase of a record's life. For records that have an enduring historical value, their final disposition will be to reside in archives, where they will be preserved for future research and use (Steytler, 2007). There is need for the church administrators to be in regular communication with their regional staff and offices where applicable about arrangements for the long-term care of records (Wendland, 2005).

Preliminary investigation showed that Christian organizations have experienced wrong transfers and retirement, age falsification, doctoring of account, embezzlement, forgery of documents, poor recording of attendance, election and selection of incompetent leaders, outdated soul-winning systems and strategies, poor ministers and staff remuneration, indiscipline of ministers among others as a result of poor records management. This could have serious implication on the administrative activities, most especially, records management. These above mentioned ills are partly due to the absence of proper records management practices.

However, there seems to be no systematic study on the importance of proper records management practices on administrative effectiveness of churches, especially

the Assemblies of God Church, Nigeria. It is worthy of note that other factors may be responsible for the administrative ineffectiveness as noted above; however, the researcher's focus is strictly on records management and administrative effectiveness. It is in view of this fact that the present study investigated the relationship between records management practices and administrative effectiveness in the Assemblies of God Church, Nigeria with a view to knowing the relationship that exists between records management and administrative effectiveness within the study organization. Against this background, the study specifically ascertained the types of records created and managed in the Assemblies of God Church, Nigeria and found out whether the Assemblies of God Church, Nigeria has records of long-term value and where they are kept.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a survey research design method. Survey is a non-experimental, descriptive research method that can be useful when a researcher wants to collect data on phenomena that cannot be directly observed such as opinions on records management. This technique is therefore, appropriate for this study as it would disclose the present situation of records management and administrative effectiveness in the Assemblies of God Church, Nigeria. It equally indicated how administrators and policy makers utilize records in decision making for effectiveness in the Assemblies of God Church, Nigeria.

The population of the study comprised the Assemblies of God Church, Nigeria Board of Administration (BOA), the District Presbyters and their Secretaries. According to Evangel Briefs Current Statistics (2012) the General Council of the Assemblies of God Church, Nigeria for administrative convenience, grouped the entire constituency into four geographical zones (South-South, the North, South-East and South-West) with varied number of districts. In all, there are one hundred and one (101) districts and each district consists of seven (7) administrators and seven (7) secretaries while the board of administration is four (4) and four (4) secretaries. A total of seven hundred and eleven (711) administrators and seven hundred and eleven secretaries (711) in all the four zones under study constituted the population for the study. These administrators carry out administrative activities in their various districts and at the national level while the secretaries handle records. The study population is shown in Table 1.

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

In this study, total enumeration was used. In all, one thousand four hundred and twenty-two (1,422) respon-

Table 1. Target population in the Assemblies of God Church, Nigeria

| Geographical zone | Number of districts | Number of presbyters per district | Total number of administrators | Total number of Secretaries |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| South-South | 30 | 7 | 210 | 210 |
| North | 30 | 7 | 210 | 210 |
| South-East | 23 | 7 | 161 | 161 |
| South-West | 18 | 7 | 126 | 126 |
| Board of administration (National headquarters, Enugu) | | | 4 | 4 |
| Total Population | 101 | | 711 | 711 |

Source: The Evangel Briefs Current Statistics (2012); 19.

dents, comprising of seven hundred and eleven administrators and seven hundred and eleven secretaries. All the four members of Board of Administration and their secretaries were involved in the study. One hundred and one (101) enumerators were trained to cover the one hundred and one (101) districts while the researcher covered the four (4) members of the board of administration and their secretaries for the data collection. A total of 1,422 copies of questionnaire were administered, 1,395 copies of questionnaire were returned. However, only 1,352 copies were properly filled and analyzable; indicating a response rate of 95.1 percent. Data were collected through the use of structured questionnaire and the data obtained were analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentages, mean and charts while the inferential statistics used was Pearson's Product Moment Correlation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results in Table 2 showed that 574 of the respondents indicated that they created minutes records while only 408 managed the minutes records created. This shows that minutes record was a very important type of record kept by the Assemblies of God Church as an organization as it enables such organization to make decisions for smooth and proper running of its activities. This conforms to the study of Osueke (2010) identified minutes and other forms of records as long-term records that cannot be replaced easily and that they are vital to the survival of an organisation. It has also been showed that proper management of the organisation records would have positive effects on the administrative effectiveness of such organisation as reported by Akomolafe (2012); Alegbeleye (1997) assertion that proper records management is pivot to administrative effectiveness in any organisation. Popoola (2000) further argues that proper management of an organisational record reduces administrative cost. The findings also conform with that of the Episcopal (2008) that organisations keep the above

identified records as they are very crucial to the growth of such organisation.

Moreso, slightly above average (339) of the church administrators showed that the minutes records created were adequately managed. Similarly, 338 created notices as type of records, 256 managed while only (271) adequately managed notices. Further, financial records were created by 608 out of a total of 676 church administrators sampled, and 574 revealed that this type of records were managed with all of the (676) indicated that financial records were adequately managed. Also, 440 of the respondents indicated that they create certificate of incorporation as records, 460 managed while about 508 adequately managed the certificate of incorporation in the church. In addition, 608 out of a total of 676 sampled respondents created annual reports as records and a very high proportion (74.9%) of the church managed such records. However, only 68 of the administrators indicated that the records were poorly managed while majority 439 indicated that they were adequately managed in the church. Moreso, only 271 indicated that they create employment records with 169 revealed that the records were managed and only 102 indicated that they were adequately managed in the Assemblies of God church, Nigeria.

Further, only 236, 506, 520 and 441 out of a total of 676 sampled respondents showed that outreach campaign, council meetings, board meeting and departmental records were created while 236, 440 and 220 revealed that the records were managed in the Assemblies of God Church, Nigeria respectively. Further analysis revealed that only board meeting records 676 and outreach campaign records 440 were adequately managed. The findings revealed that financial records, annual reports, minutes, outreach records and board meeting records were adequately managed in the Assemblies of God Church, Nigeria. The adequate management of these records is very essential in the smooth running of the church activities as they are very crucial for continuity of any organisation. Results also revealed that safety records 169, insurance records 338, service delivery records 506, marriage records 608,

Table 2. Types of records created, managed and the adequacy of managing records by the Assemblies of God Church, Nigeria records staff

| Types of records | Records Creation (%) | Records Management (%) | Adequacy of records management | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| | | | Not adequate (%) | Adequate (%) | Very Adequate (%) |
| Minutes | 574 (84.9) | 408 (60.4) | - | 337 (49.9) | 339 (50.1) |
| Notices | 338 (50.0) | 256 (37.9) | 236 (34.9) | 169 (25.0) | 271 (40.1) |
| Financial records | 608 (89.9) | 574 (84.9) | - | - | 676 (100.0) |
| Certificate of incorporation | 440 (65.1) | 406 (60.1) | 168 (24.9) | - | 508 (75.10) |
| Annual reports | 608 (89.9) | 506 (74.9) | 68 (10.1) | 169 (25.0) | 439 (64.9) |
| Employment records | 271 (40.1) | 169 (25.0) | 405(59.0) | 169 (25.0) | 102 (15.1) |
| Outreach campaign | 236 (34.9) | 236 (34.9) | 236 (34.9) | - | 440 (65.1) |
| Council meeting records | 506 (74.9) | 440 (65.1) | 236 (34.9) | 169 (25.0) | 271 (40.1) |
| Board meetings | 520 (76.9) | 440 (65.1) | - | - | 676 (100.0) |
| Departmental records | 441 (65.2) | 220 (32.5) | 180 (26.6) | 496 (73.4) | - |
| Safety records | 169 (25.0) | 169 (25.0) | 507 (75.0) | 169 (25.0) | - |
| Insurance records | 338 (50.0) | 338 (50.0) | 338 (50.0) | 169 (25.0) | 169 (25.0) |
| Service delivery records | 506 (74.9) | 506 (74.9) | 170 (25.1) | 169 (25.0) | 337 (49.9) |
| Marriage records | 608 (89.9) | 574 (84.9) | 169 (25.0) | - | 507 (75.0) |
| Confirmation records | 506 (74.9) | 506 (74.9) | 170 (25.0) | 169 (25.0) | 337 (49.9) |
| Membership records | 440 (65.1) | 406 (60.1) | 168 (24.9) | 169 (25.0) | 339 (50.1) |
| Death records | 507 (75.0) | 405 (59.9) | 405 (59.9) | 169 (25.0) | 102 (15.1) |
| Baptism records | 574 (84.9) | 422 (62.4) | - | 169 (25.0) | 507 (75.0) |
| Church activities records | 463 (68.5) | 463 (68.5) | - | - | 676 (100.0) |
| Historical records | 507 (75.0) | 337 (49.9) | 169 (25.0) | 68 (10.1) | 439 (64.9) |
| Clergy and laity transfer | 169 (25.0) | 271 (40.1) | 405 (59.9) | - | 271 (40.1) |
| Discipline of ministers | 337 (49.9) | 237 (35.1) | 237 (35.1) | 168 (24.9) | 271 (40.1) |
| Selection/election of leaders | 608 (89.9) | 170 (25.1) | 68 (10.1) | 169 (25.0) | 439 (64.9) |
| Ordination of pastors | 566 (83.7) | 147 (21.7) | 68 (10.1) | 169 (25.0) | 439 (64.9) |
| Retirement of ministers | 446 (65.9) | 441 (65.2) | 75 (11.1) | 138 (20.4) | 463 (68.5) |
| Child dedication | 440 (65.1) | 406 (60.1) | 168 (24.9) | 168 (25.0) | 339 (50.1) |
| Income & Expenditure | 621 (91.9) | 509 (75.3) | - | - | 676 (100.0) |
| Maintenance of properties | 608 (89.9) | 574 (84.9) | - | 168 (24.9) | 508 (75.1) |
| Records of business ventures | 339 (50.1) | 169 (25.0) | 337 (49.9) | 169 (25.0) | 170 (25.1) |
| Sunday school attendance | 518 (76.6) | 508 (75.1) | - | 168 (24.9) | 508 (75.1) |
| Follow up & Visitation | 338 (50.0) | 236 (34.9) | 236 (34.9) | 271 (40.1) | 169 (25.0) |

Source: Field Survey, 2014. Figures in parentheses represent percentages.

confirmation records 506, membership records 440, death records 507, baptism records 574, church activities records 463, historical records 507, clergy and laity transfer records 169 and discipline of leaders 337 indicated that the above mentioned records were created. Moreso, about 169, 338, 506, 574, 506, 406, 405, 422, 463, 337, 271 and 237, respectively perceived that other records such as indicated that the records were managed in the church.

Evidence from the study also revealed that church activities records 676, baptism records 507, historical records 439 and membership records 339 were adequately managed while death records 405 and clergy and laity transfer 405 were poorly managed among the church records management staff. The findings implied that death and clergy transfer records were not usually given attention in the church. This could be due to the fact that transferring of ministers is no longer popular and

usually traumatizing as most churches consider families and work in transferring of ministers particularly when the transfer is not relatively promotional.

Similarly, 608 of the respondents indicated the creation of selection and election of leaders' records while only 170 managed this record. More so, 439 adequately managed the records in their offices. 566 indicated the creation of ordination of pastor's records with 439 revealed that it is adequately managed. Other records created were: retirement records 446, child dedication records 440, income and expenditure records 621, maintenance of properties records 608, records of business venture 339 and Sunday school records 518. Also, 441, 406, 509, 574, 169 and 508, respectively indicated that they manage each of the records created in their various districts. Analysis of the adequacy of managing the records revealed that 439, 508 and 676 of the respondents adequately managed selection and

Table 3. Records of long term values kept in the Assemblies of God church, Nigeria

| Long term records | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Minutes | 507 | 75.0 |
| Marriage certificate | 169 | 25.0 |
| Land document | 339 | 50.1 |
| Account records | 337 | 49.9 |
| Certificate of registration | 271 | 40.1 |
| Child dedication | 356 | 52.7 |
| Ordination of ministers | 439 | 64.9 |
| Ministers transfer | 405 | 59.9 |
| Membership records | 331 | 48.9 |
| Death records | 221 | 32.7 |
| Baptism records | 237 | 35.1 |
| Retirement records | 405 | 59.9 |
| Historical records | 439 | 64.9 |

Source: Field survey, 2014.

election of leadership records, maintenance of church properties records and income and expenditure records, respectively. Other records that were adequately managed were retirement of staff - 463, Sunday school - 508 and records of child dedication - 339.

This implied that all records are very necessary to be properly managed by qualified records managers in order not to neglect the use of vital records as the results showed for the purpose of enhancing administrative effectiveness in the Assemblies of God Church, Nigeria. The findings revealed that minutes of meetings, ordination of ministers records, historical records, retirement of ministers records and ministers transfer records were mostly seen as records of long-term values while marriage certificate records and death records were the least seen records of long-term among the church records management staff and that these records are mostly kept in the church archives. The findings corroborate Wendland's (2005) assertion that records of long-term values are usually kept in the final disposition called archives. However, the study contradicts Baker (2008) who stated that churches like the Catholic do not have records of historical origin.

Records of long term values

Results in Table 3 showed that 507 of the respondents indicated minutes as a record of long-term value, 439 revealed that ordination of ministers and historical records were the records of long-term values kept by the church. Also, 405 showed that ministers transfer and retirement records were kept as records of long-term values while child dedication - 356 and land document - 339 were the records of long-term value. In addition, account records - 337, membership records -331, certificate of registration - 271, baptism records - 237,

death records - 221 and marriage certificate were the other records of long-term value kept by the Assemblies of God Church, Nigeria. The findings revealed that minutes records, ordination of ministers records, historical records, retirement of ministers records and ministers transfer records were mostly seen as records of long-term value while marriage certificate records and death records were the least seen records of long-term among the church records management staff.

The finding is in conformity with the assertions of Osueke (2010) that minutes of meetings were one of the long-term records kept by organization. Effective record keeping has been documented to have administrative implication in terms of cost and efficiency (Popoola, 2000). Similarly, Yahaya (2007) supported that fact that records keeping are germane to effective management of an organization as it strengthens administrative effectiveness and enhances accountability.

Where records are kept

Further analysis of where long term records are kept revealed that 381 (56.4%) of the respondents showed that records of long term values were kept in the church archives, 111 (16.4%) indicated that they were kept in the church vestry, 86 (12.7%) revealed that they were kept in the various zones while about 98 (14.5%) showed that they were kept in the district. The findings revealed that majority 381 (56.4%) of the respondents showed that long-term value of records were kept in church archives as shown in Table 4. This implied that though the Assemblies of God Church, Nigeria keeps its records in archives, yet it lacks professional competence of records managers to adequately sort and store records as it should.

Table 4. Where records of long-term values are kept

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------|-----------|------------|
| Archives | 381 | 56.4 |
| Church vestry | 111 | 16.4 |
| Zone | 86 | 12.7 |
| District | 98 | 14.5 |

Source: Field survey, 2014.

Table 5. Results of Pearson's Correlation analysis showing the relationship between records management practices and administrative effectiveness in the Assemblies of God Church, Nigeria

| Variables | N | Df | Mean | Std. Dev. | r-value | p-value | Remark |
|------------------------------|-----|-----|--------|-----------|---------|---------|--------|
| Records management practices | 676 | 674 | 1.32E2 | 13.7 | 0.891** | 0.01 | Sig. |
| Administrative effectiveness | 676 | 674 | 1.39E2 | 11.2 | | | |

Source: Field survey, 2014.

**significance at 0.01.

Relationship between Records management practices and administrative effectiveness

Results in Table 5 showed that there was a significant relationship between records management practices ($r=0.891$) and administrative effectiveness of the Assemblies of God Church, Nigeria. This shows that records management practices in the church influenced the administrators' effectiveness. The implication of this finding is that the more they manage their records, the more effective the church would be in its administration. Thus, the act of keeping records affects the administrative capacity of any administrator in the church. This was so because the p-value was less than 0.01. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between records management practices and administrative effectiveness was rejected. This showed that records management practices in the church relates with administrative effectiveness. This conforms with Fasasi's (2012) report that records are meant to enhance the performance of administrators. Wiwcharuck (1988) asserted that when records are properly kept, it would boost the administration and enhance administrative effectiveness in any organisation. It will also make administration easy and cost effective. Proper records boost administrative effectiveness as it promotes continuity and gives room for easy accountability (Popoola, 2000).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it was revealed that the Assemblies of God Church, Nigeria created many records but not all the records created were adequately managed. The organization possessed quite a huge number of long-term records which were mainly kept in

archives. The study established that records management practices significantly influenced the Church administrative effectiveness at a very high at 0.01 level of significance based on the results of PPMC established above; indicating the relevance of records keeping to administrative effectiveness of the Church. It was therefore, concluded that up to date records keeping promotes administrative effectiveness in an organization. It was thus recommended that for an effective administration in the Assemblies of God Church, Nigeria, records management department should be created.

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