

Record Keeping Practices of Primary School Teachers in Ondo State: Implications for Successful Implementation of the Universal Basic Education Programme in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the record keeping practices of primary school teachers in selected local government areas in Ondo state of Nigeria. Data were collected with a questionnaire titled "Questionnaire on Record Keeping Practices of Primary School Teachers" and data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings showed that although the teachers were familiar with some principles of record keeping they were not proficient in most of the operational procedures and did not demonstrate the knowledge of using record keeping to further the development of teaching and learning activities. Equipments that could be used for safe keeping of records were not available. Recognizing the importance of record keeping towards the successful implementation of the country's Universal Basic Education programme, the researchers recommend that teachers should be given regular in-service training in record keeping and retrieval. Development of record keeping skills should also be included in teacher preparation programmes.

In 1999, the Universal Basic Education scheme was launched by the Nigerian Government in Sokoto, a programme which grew out of the *World Conference on Education for All* held in Jomtien, Thailand, for the purpose of forging a global consensus and commitment to provide basic education for all (Dike, 2000 in Unagha, 2008). Although, according to Yoloye (2004) in Adepoju and Fabiyi (Undated) the concept of Basic Education is not a completely new term to the Nigerian society, this programme is aimed at providing all-inclusive and a wholesome education for all children and adults alike. The programme embodied a free, compulsory and uninterrupted nine-year school programme and was comprised of primary and junior secondary education. Consequently, the erstwhile Common Entrance Examination to Junior Secondary School (JSS) was abolished in 2006. Similarly the Primary school leaving certificate examination was also abolished such that there is now 100% transition from primary to Junior Secondary School. In its place there now exists the Universal Basic Certificate Examination at the end of the UBE programme in Junior Secondary School (Ogbuagu, 2006).

Meanwhile the National Policy on Education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2004) had earlier recommended that the educational assessment of the Nigerian child should be liberalized by basing them in whole or in part on continuous assessment of the progress of the individual. Hence, a sizeable proportion of the pupils' scores leading to the award of the UBCE are expected to be constituted by continuous assessment scores across the primary and junior secondary schools.

Record Keeping and Continuous Assessment

Records are the documented information generated, collected or received in the initiation, conduct or completion of an activity and that comprises sufficient content, context and structure to provide proof or evidence of the activity. Specifically, Hrach (2006) defined school record as a unified, comprehensive collection of documentation concerning all services provided to a student which may include intake information, evaluation(s), assessment(s), release of information forms, individual learning plan, all written notes regarding the student, all collateral information regarding the student, etc. Chifwepa (2001) observed that a record is a documented proof of transaction and that information is what a record contains, stores and transmits.

Hence, records do not only enable school administrators to have a clear picture of what is available and what is required, they provide justification for certain needs and seem to extend the memory by which persons and/or organizations can pass on their culture and achievement to the future generation. In fact, the content and quality of school record (such as lesson plans, report cards, etc.) can serve as a direct reflection of the amount of work that has been expended on the school enterprise. Also, records help school administrators and parents to keep a concise and accurate timeline of events in the life of the pupils. Individuals may think they will be able to recollect past events, but it is easier to use a written record.

Considering the need for accumulation of data and the period of time over which records have to be kept, large files containing large quantities of data and information relating to an organization's employees, accounts, achievement records, inventory, health records, etc., tend to accumulate over the years such that it often becomes difficult and time consuming to look for a specific item of information in the files. The most common and modern arrangement that emerges in record keeping in recent times is computerization. This has made information and its management easy and efficient in terms of generation, organization, storage, utilization, retrieval and even destruction (when necessary). Although as good as this approach appears to be, the limiting problems of cost and erratic power supplies appear to delimit the ability of the educational sector (particularly in developing countries) to make effective use of this approach.

Generally, continuous assessment is conceived as an educational mechanism where the final grading of a student in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of behavior takes a systematic account of all performances during a period of schooling (Ojerinde & Falayajo, 1984). The mechanism is comprehensive in scope, as it is expected to make use of different approaches and evaluation tools (such as tests, questionnaire, rating scales, observation and anecdotal records) to obtain information on learners; it is systematic in that it requires an operational plan, it is cumulative in that any decision taken about a learner is based on earlier decisions and it is guidance oriented in that any data gathered on the learners will serve as the basis for further academic growth and development (Ojerinde &

Falayajo,1984; Okpala, 1985; Okpala & Utoh, 2005). In Nigeria, continuous assessment scores contribute 60% of every terminal assessment at the primary school level (Kayode, 2003) and Junior Secondary School (Osunde, 2003 in Afolabi, 1999) and 40% of the final examination at the Senior Secondary School level.

The frequency of collection of the evidence of student learning is another important aspect of continuous assessment as according to Afolabi (1999) students who have more observed scores for continuous assessment are likely to obtain final scores which are closer to the mean scores of the group (smaller variances) than those who have fewer observed scores. Ojerinde (1985) in Afolabi (1999) suggested at least two times per term of continuous assessment in a school year of three terms for curricular areas, once a term for the determination of interest, attitudes, physical health and outdoor activities and twice a year for cultural and co-curricular activities. Also, non-scholastic aspects of the students' characteristics like personal and social qualities are recommended to take place once a term.

Alausa (2003) identified record keeping as a cardinal problem of continuous assessment implementation as records have to be accurately and meticulously kept over a long period of time in a form that will enhance easy retrieval, if the assessment technique is to be effective. He also posited that continuous assessment is generally known to be accompanied by the use of many more instruments of evaluation and hence implied more marking, grading and recording. Now that the basic education is to last three more years than the former primary education, it is compulsory and all inclusive, record keeping may constitute a stronger challenge to teacher performance and educational management in Nigeria and other countries where similar programmes are executed.

Furthermore, Adebowale and Alao (2008) further analyzed record-related problems in the UBE programmes. First, the nine-year UBE programme provides that children receives the first six years of the nine years at a primary school different from the Junior Secondary School where they are expected to complete the remaining three years (Oduolowu, 2007). Also, with the UBE scheme two types of record keeping regimes are involved. In the primary school, a single teacher takes care of a class, and its pupil constituents such that their assessment (cognitive, affective and psychomotor) and the record arising therefrom can be collected and kept by the same person and later pass it on to another single person in the next class. In the Junior Secondary School, however, where team teaching is practiced, different teachers handle different subjects and hence records are gathered and kept by many teachers and carried on to the next class to be taught, examined and recorded by yet many teachers that may all be different from those of the previous class(es). Ultimately, both regimes together are expected to constitute a sizeable percent of the outcome of the UBCE.

From the foregoing, the assessment of learning of an average basic school pupil will require collecting assessment data using different tools (e.g. tests, projects, observation, rating scale, etc.) taken so many times, in all subjects, every term of every year and over the nine-year span of the UBE program. The

collected data has to be carefully kept, weighted and properly combined to give the correct picture of the learner at the end of the programme, if the programme is to achieve its goal. Therefore, in order to ensure accurate generation, processing and utilization of data included in records, as well as, proper record management, the record keeping practices of the school teachers should be given a preliminary examination with the view of addressing inherent challenges and by so doing, strengthen the UBE programme in the country and other countries where such programme is being executed. This is the basic focus of this paper but targeted at the very foundation of the UBE scheme, the primary school.

Purpose of Study

Aluede (2006) and Denga (2000) attributed the failure of the earlier introduced educational development programme (the Universal Primary Education, UPE) to the dearth of complete and accurate recorded data on childbirth and mortality, enrollment, number of available and needed teachers, availability of infrastructures and amenities in our schools, etc. Hence, in order to nip in the bud the problems that record keeping in primary schools may constitute to the implementation of UBE in Nigeria, this study was designed to evaluate the teachers' views on the importance of record keeping to primary education, examine the record keeping practices they adopt particularly in the light of adoption of modern record keeping approaches.

In order to achieve the objectives stated above, the following research questions were posed:

1. What are the teachers' views on the importance of record keeping to primary education?
2. What are the record keeping practices adopted by the schools under study?
3. How do parents and teachers relate in terms of adequately generating and managing pupil and school records?
4. What are teachers' preferences in record origination and management?
5. What is the level of adoption of modern record keeping approach by the teachers in the schools under study?

Methodology

One hundred (100) primary school teachers drawn from all the schools in two selected Local Government Educational Authorities in Ondo state (Akoko North West and Akoko South West) participated in the study. The teachers were drawn by simple random sampling in each of all the schools in the two LGEAs which were accidentally selected from all the LGEAs in Ondo State. An instrument titled "Questionnaire on the record keeping prowess of primary school teachers" consisting of 18 items were purposely developed by the researchers and moderated by experts in educational tests and measurements". This questionnaire was administered by the teachers to collect data used for the study. An alpha coefficient (reliability) of 0.63 was obtained during trial-testing signifying a moderately reliable instrument. Simple percentages were employed during data analysis of the collected data.

Four independent variables were employed in the research: sex of the respondents; duty post; years of teaching experience; and, educational background. The response rate to the questionnaire was 73%

among which included 22 (30.4%) males, 46 (63%) females and (5) 6.8% of those who did not indicate their sex. It also consisted of 10 (13.7%) head teachers, 7 (9.6%) assistant head teachers , 40 (54.8%) class teachers, 1 (1.4%) computer instructor and 15 (20.5%) others who did not indicate their duty posts. In terms of teaching experience, 20 (27.4%) teachers have been teaching for less than ten years, seven (9.6%) have served for more than 10 years and up to 15 years, while 17 (23%) have served for more than 20 years to 30 years, and seven (9.6%) have served for more than 30 years. 14 (19.2%) teachers did not indicate for how long they have been teaching. For educational qualification, only 2 (2.7%) teachers possess the Grd. II teacher certificate, 16 (21.9%) possess NCE certificate, while 37 (50.7%) possess a combination of Grd. II and NCE while 8 (11%) possess NCE with a degree certificate. 10 (13.7%) teachers however did not indicate their educational qualification.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents Across the Independent Variables

Variable		f	%
Sex	Male	22	30.4
	Female	46	63
	No Response	5	6.8
Duty Post	Head teacher	10	13.7
	Asst. Head teacher	7	9.6
	Class teacher	40	54.8
	Others	1	1.4
	No Response	15	20.5
Teaching Experience	Less than ten years	20	27.4
	10 years to less than 15 yrs	7	9.6
	15 to 20 Yrs		
	20 to 30 yrs	17	23
	More than 30 yrs	7	9.6
	No response	14	19.2
Highest Educational Qualification	Grd. II Teachers Cert.	2	2.7
	National Certificate of Education (NCE)	16	21.9
	NCE + GRD II	37	50.7
	Degree in Education	8	11
	No response	10	13.7

Results

Research Question 1: What are the teachers' views on the importance of record keeping to primary education?

In order to address this research, questions 1, 2 and 8 were posed and analyzed. The results were as stated below.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of Teachers Views on Importance of Record Keeping

Que.	Record issues	Levels of response	F	%
1.	Importance of record keeping to primary education	Not important	1	1.4
		Very important	70	95.9
		No response	2	2.7
		Total	73	100
2	Reason why record is important	Monitoring pupils' learning progress	7	9.6
		Noting past school events	46	63
		For assessing educational programmes	2	2.7
		As Proof of transactions	3	4.1
		For day-to-day school management	1	1.4
		No response	14	19.2
		Total	73	100
8	Starting a child's record freshly to avoid premature labeling	Yes	25	34.2
		No	45	61.7
		No response	3	4.1
		Total	73	100

Table 2 above shows that most of the respondents (95.9%) considered record keeping to be very important to primary education particularly for noting past events in the school (63%), only 9.6% posited that record can be useful for monitoring pupils' achievement and for other teaching and learning purposes while 2.7% believes it helps in assessing educational programmes and 4.1% says it can serve as proof of transactions in the school. In fact, no head teacher or assistant stated this as an important reason for keeping record. About two-thirds (61.7%) of the respondents disagree with the view that a child's record should start in primary school on a clean slate and that they will prefer to obtain previous information about the child even at the risk of the dangers of premature labeling.

Research Question 2: What are the record keeping practices adopted by the teachers under study?

On the questionnaire, questions 4, 5, 7,10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 were used to elicit information from the

teachers on the practices adopted by their respective schools. The table below presents the descriptive analysis.

Table 3: Record Keeping Practices Adopted by the Teachers Under Study

Que.	Record issues	Levels of response	F	%
4.	How respondents keep pupil records in schools.	One ledger for all students	21	28.8
		One ledger for each class	31	42.5
		Two ledgers per class - Male/Female	2	2.7
		Separately for each pupil	15	20.5
		No response	4	5.5
		Total	73	100
5	What happens to the record when the pupil leaves the primary school?	Burnt	1	1.4
		Taken away by the pupil	12	16.4
		Sent to the educational headquarter	18	24.7
		Kept in the school archives for 2 years	39	53.4
		No response	3	4.1
		Total	73	100
7	Information collected from parents during new enrollments	Health Information	4	5.5
		Record of previous performance	10	13.7
		Biodata	10	13.7
		All of them	48	65.8
		No response	1	1.4
		Total	73	100
10	Where in your school do you keep pupils' records?	In the headmaster's office	50	68.5
		In each class	1	1.4
		A room designated as record centre	19	26
		Archive	2	2.7
		No response	1	1.4
		Total	73	100
11	Where do you keep other school records?	In the headmaster's office	46	63
		In each class	4	5.5
		A room designated as record centre	16	21.9
		Archive	4	5.5
		Total	73	100
12	Who is assigned the responsibility for maintaining school records in your	The headteacher/headmaster	9	78.1
		The class teacher	2	2.7

	school?	The school clerk or store keeper	57	12.3
		No response	5	6.8
		Total	73	100
13	Who is assigned the responsibility of retrieving item of school records in your school?	The headteacher/headmaster	9	72.6
		The class teacher	6	8.2
		The school clerk or store keeper	53	12.3
		No response	5	6.8
		Total	73	100
14	How long do school records remain active in your school before committed to archive or destroyed?	Two years after the child leaves the school	1	1.4
		10 years after the child leaves the school	7	9.6
		Forever	61	83.6
		No response	4	5.5
		Total	7.3	100

From table 3 above, many of the teachers (42.5%) claimed that pupils' records in their respective schools are kept using one ledger for each class, 28.8 % said in their own respective schools, one ledger is used for all students regardless of their classes or gender while 2.7% claimed that two ledgers are used for each class one for male and the other for females. Only 20.5% claimed that pupils' records are kept separately for each pupil. All the head teacher and assistant head teacher respondents claimed they use either one ledger for all students or at best, one ledger for each class. Most of the teachers (53.4%) claimed that pupils' records are kept for at least two years in the school archive after the pupils must have left the school. 24.7% of the respondents stated that the records are taken to the LGEA headquarters. 16.4% recalled that the records are taken away by the child and 1.4% claimed that the records are burnt as soon as the child leaves. Different types of records are usually sought from parents when they come to enroll their children and wards in the school. Only the pupils' health information was collected by 5.5% of the respondents, 13.7% of the respondents said that the record of the previous performance of the pupils perhaps in preprimary school is the only record they obtain from the parents, while 13.7% obtains only pupils' bio-data, but encouragingly 65.8% collected both including all other necessary information from parents. Different approaches are adopted in keeping records in their respective schools. A few (1.4%) of the respondents claimed that pupils' records are kept in the respective classes, 2.7% said they are kept in the archive while 26% claimed that the records are kept in a room designated as record center and mostly (68.5%) of the records are kept in the head teachers' office. This is also the trend of response to where other records are kept in the school. In terms of who is given the responsibility of maintaining and retrieving of the school records, most of the respondents claimed that those duties rest with the headteacher (78.1% and 72.6% respectively), although some place these duties with the class teachers (12.7% and 14.1% respectively). Only a few 12.3% said the duties are carried out by school clerk or store keeper. Also a great proportion (83.6%) of the respondents said they keep the records forever while 9.6% claimed that the records are only disposed off within 10 years after the child must have left the school. 1.6% claimed 2 years for the records life cycle.

Research Question 3: How do parents and teachers relate in terms of adequately generating and managing pupil and school records?

To analyze this, questions 6, and 9 on the questionnaire are employed and analyzed as shown below.

Table 4: Parents/Teachers Relationship Concerning Educational Records

Que.	Record issues	Levels of response	F	%
6.	Can parents challenge any unacceptable information in their ward's record?	Yes	53	72.6
		No	17	23.3
		No response	3	4.1
		Total	73	100
9	Which of the school records should be made accessible to parents of your pupils?	Report of disciplinary measures	49	67.1
		Pupils' attendance records	19	26
		Pupils' cumulative records	4	5.5
		No response	1	1.4
		Total	73	100

Table 4 shows that most of the respondents (72.6%) claimed that parents can challenge any unacceptable information in their wards' record while 23.3% said it would not be allowed. Many teachers (67.1%) also posited that only the report of disciplinary measures against the child is the only pupil record that should be accessible to parents and guardians while some (26%) said only the attendance records were the ones that should be shown to them. Only 5.5% wanted the parents to see the pupil's cumulative records.

Research Question 4: What are teachers' preferences in record origination and management?

Teachers' preferences in terms of record keeping are examined through items 3, 8, 17, 18 and are presented in the table below.

Table 5: Teachers Preferences in Record Origination and Management

Que.	Record issues	Levels of response	F	%
3.	Which format will you prefer for keeping primary school record?	Free Response	16	21.9
		Checklist	48	65.8
		No response	9	12.3
		Total	73	100
8	Starting a child's record freshly to avoid premature labeling	Yes	25	34.2
		No	45	61.7
		No response	3	4.1
		Total	73	100

17	Types of school records known to respondents	Cannot list any school record	4	5.5
		Able to list one or two school records	3	4.1
		Able to list three or four	8	11
		Able to list five or six	20	27.4
		Able to list seven or eight	24	32.9
		Able to list nine or more	14	19.2
		Total	73	100
18	Types of pupil records known to respondents	Cannot list any pupil record	13	17.8
		Able to mention one pupil record	18	24.7
		Able to list two pupil records	21	28.8
		Able to list three pupil records	17	23.3
		Able to list four pupil records	2	2.7
		Able to list five pupil records	2	2.7
		Total	73	100

In terms of preference in records origination, most of the teachers (65.8%) prefer to originate records using checklist while others (21.9%) prefer free response records origination procedures. Also, most of the teachers (61.7%) rejected the idea of starting the child's records on a clean slate at enrollment in primary school, even at the risk of premature labeling, 34.2% agreed to start the pupil records freshly. Encouragingly, a sizeable percentage of the teachers (32.9%) could list seven to eight school records and a total of 79.5% could successfully list more than four school records but only 5.5 % of the respondents were not able to list any of the school records: their ability to recollect pupils' records took a similar trend but a sizeable percentage (17.8%) could not mention any pupil record.

Research Question 5: What is the level of adoption of modern record keeping approach by the teachers in the schools under study.

Items 15 and 16 were posed to address this research question and the result of their descriptive analysis is presented in the table below.

Table 6: Teachers' Adoption of Modern Record Keeping Approach

Que.	Record issues	Levels of response	F	%
15.	Ability to use computer for keeping records	Yes	18	24.7
		No	50	68.5

		No response	5	6.8
		Total	73	100
16	Ability to identify some forms through which record keeping can be carried out using the computer	Cannot list any form/ not literate	53	72.6
		Able to mention only one	6	8.2
		Able to mention two forms	11	15.1
		Able to mention three or more forms	3	4.1
		Total	73	100

A great percentage of the respondents (68.5%) decline having any appreciable knowledge of operation or use of the computer for originating, maintaining and keeping of accurate records. The researchers also seek to know if the respondents are aware theoretically of forms, programs or devices on the computer which could be useful for keeping records. Most of respondents (72.6%) still confirm their complete ignorance.

Discussion

It is evident from the study that teachers are familiar with some principles of record keeping but are not proficient in most of the operational procedures of keeping accurate records which is very essential to good practice of continuous assessment on which the National Policy on Education recommended that the progress of the Nigerian child should be based. For instance, most of the teachers considered record keeping to be very important to primary education but in terms of noting past events or for future reference. The importance of record keeping in terms of utilizing its interface with continuous assessment for monitoring pupils' achievement, as well as, other teaching and learning purposes like assessing teaching methods, educational programs, instructional materials, etc., which are some of the cardinal duties of the school were not found to be popular among the respondents. It is even expected that at least head teachers should be able to emphasize the importance of records as proof of transaction in the school.

It was also found that teachers do not keep separate records for each pupil: in fact, in many of the schools, records of all their pupils are kept in one single ledger, although this can be attributed to the economic state of the schools. Consequently, when parents are allowed to have access to pupil records, it is the whole ledger that would be given to them, from which they are perhaps given the opportunity to challenge any unacceptable information, as most of the respondents claimed.

Teachers in most of the schools adopted a centralized record keeping centre, usually located in the head teachers' offices. They are also responsible for maintaining and retrieving items of records when needed, which adds to his duty in terms of the day-to-day running of the school and supervision of instruction. In fact, knowledge of record keeping via computerization was found to be very scanty. It is the view of the authors that centralized record centres like the ones the respondents claim to be operating in basic

education schools can only be effective where such centres are properly and periodically maintained and as such, are free from dangers of fire, extremes of weather conditions, insect infestation, etc. In fact, Chifwepa (2001) described record maintenance and retrieval as a serious task and recommended that an official (store keeper or clerk) should be solely designated to carry out these duties while Hrach (2006) asserted that records must be kept in a locked file, withdrawn only by those staff privileged to the information therein, and returned to the locked file at the end of each working day.

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