

ASSESSMENT OF RECORDS UTILIZATION AND ORGANIZATION FOR PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN STUDENTS REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEES AT THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION, AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA

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Abstract

This study investigated records management practices for transparency and accountability in affairs of Students Representative committees in Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. In order to achieve this, three research questions were raised and answered to include: what types of records are generated for transparency and accountability in affairs of students representative committees in faculty of education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria? for what purpose are the records used for transparency and accountability in affairs of students representative committees in faculty of education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.? in what ways are records organized for transparency and accountability in affairs of students representative committees in faculty of education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.? Quantitative research method was used in this study. The population of this study comprised the entire executive members of students' representative committees in Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, and totaling forty (40) in number. The researcher used self-developed questionnaire for collecting data. Findings revealed that major types of records generated for transparency and accountability in affairs of Students Representative Committees were students' records, financial records, registration records and leadership position records. Purposes of records generated were mainly for ensuring transparency and accountability in their operations for transactional purposes. Records organized for transparency and accountability were mainly numeric and alphabetical order. It was concluded that the records management practices of the Students Representative Committees in the Faculty of Education can be considered generally good. The study recommended among others, the committee should develop a comprehensive record-keeping policy that mandates the documentation of all significant activities, including detailed meeting minutes, event records, and audit trails. The committee should establish a centralized digital record management system that allows easy access and retrieval of records for analysis.

Keywords: Accountability, Records, Records management, Students Representative Committee, Transparency

Introduction

Records management serves as the backbone of institutional governance and administrative efficiency, particularly in academic environments where the need for transparency and accountability is paramount. Within Nigerian universities, effective records management supports the continuity of operations, accurate decision-making, and responsible leadership, especially in student-led organizations such as the Students Representative Committees (SRCs) (Aina, 2018; Oluwatoyin, 2018). In the Faculty of Education at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, SRCs are actively involved in planning and executing various activities which generate significant records that must be systematically managed.

Studies have shown that a variety of records are typically generated by SRCs, including financial records, student records, registration records, event records, internal and external records, audit reports, leadership records, income and expenditure statements, rules and regulations, and minutes of meetings (Agada & Abdulrahim, 2022). These records are essential not only for documenting activities but also for promoting transparency and accountability in decision-making and governance.

The utilization of these records spans a broad spectrum of purposes, including conducting official transactions, ensuring transparency, making references, reconciling financial reports, evaluating leadership performance, tracking resource usage, identifying areas of mismanagement, and holding individuals accountable (Ahmed & Yusuf, 2020; Zayyana et al., 2021). When properly maintained, such records can significantly contribute to the effectiveness of student governance and strengthen institutional trust.

However, the value of these records depends heavily on how well they are organized. Standard methods such as alphabetical, numerical, alphanumeric, chronological, and subject-based arrangements are often recommended for efficient storage and retrieval (ISO 15489-1, 2016). Poor record organization can hinder access to vital information, reduce administrative efficiency, and compromise accountability efforts (Okonedo, Olatokun & Opesade, 2020; Makhura, 2020).

Despite these best practices, SRCs often face challenges in managing records effectively due to inadequate infrastructure, lack of technical skills, poor retrieval tools, and absence of standardized guidelines (Yakubu et al., 2021; Nwankwo & Okeke, 2021). As highlighted by Agada and Abdulrahim (2022), even when finding aids are used, inconsistencies in their application affect the ease of information retrieval in the Faculty of Education.

Therefore, it becomes essential to explore the types of records generated by the SRC, the purposes they serve, and how they are organized within the Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Understanding these dimensions will provide insights into the current practices, highlight gaps, and inform recommendations for enhancing transparency and accountability through improved records management.

Statement of the Problem

Effective records management is fundamental to fostering transparency and accountability, particularly within student governance structures. Properly generated, organized, and utilized records serve as essential tools for decision-making, monitoring leadership performance, managing finances, and ensuring responsible administration (ISO 15489-1, 2016; Oluwatoyin, 2018). According to Aina (2018) and Ahmed and Yusuf (2020), student representative committees can enhance trust and legitimacy by maintaining detailed records such as financial reports, meeting minutes, and event documentation. These records provide a historical trail that helps in resolving disputes, justifying expenditures, and improving leadership continuity. When records are systematically arranged whether alphabetically, numerically, or chronologically they contribute significantly to information retrieval and institutional accountability (Zayyana et al., 2021).

Despite these expectations, existing empirical studies show that student committees, especially within Nigerian universities, often fall short in adopting comprehensive records management practices. Research by Okonedo et al. (2020) reveals that poor infrastructure, lack of training, and disorganized filing systems are common limitations facing student-led bodies. Agada and Abdulrahim (2022) further noted inconsistencies in the arrangement and utilization of finding aids in the Faculty of Education at Ahmadu Bello University, which impairs efficient information retrieval. Moreover, most existing studies have focused on administrative or institutional records, with limited attention paid to records generated and used specifically by student representative committees (Makhura, 2020; Nwankwo & Okeke, 2021; Yakubu et al., 2021). This study, therefore, addresses this gap by examining the types of records generated, their purposes, and organizational methods employed by student representatives in the Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, to enhance transparency and accountability in student governance.

1.2 Research Questions

The following are the research questions raised for this study.

1. What types of Records are generated for Transparency and Accountability in Affairs of Students Representative Committees in Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria?
2. For what purpose are the Records used for Transparency and Accountability in Affairs of Students Representative Committees in Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria?
3. In what ways are Records organized for Transparency and Accountability in Affairs of Students Representative Committees in Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria?

Literature Review

Types of Records Generation for Transparency and Accountability

Students' representative committees create records to support the activities that they carry out. However, if these records are not properly managed, they will not provide the necessary support and information needed which might cause problems for the institution. To provide an efficient and effective administration that ensures that the business runs as smoothly as possible, there should be proper records management.

Student Representative Committees (SRCs) generate various types of records to maintain transparency and accountability in student governance. Financial records encompass all documents related to financial transactions, such as budgets, expense reports, and financial statements, which are crucial for managing funds. Students records include personal and academic information essential for administrative purposes and decision-making. Studies have shown that well-maintained student records contribute significantly to improved educational outcomes and institutional credibility (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). Registration records, which document student enrollment in various programs and activities, are vital for managing student participation and ensuring organized enrollment processes

Other essential records generated by SRCs include event records, internal records, and external records. Event records, which document the planning and attendance of SRC-organized events, are useful for organizing future activities and maintaining a history of student engagement (; Afolabi, 2021). Internal records, generated for internal use such as operational documents and internal communications, ensure smooth operations and communication within the SRC (Nakpodia, 2011; Barde et al., 2019). External records, documenting interactions with external bodies and organizations, facilitate collaborations and partnerships (Mabera, 2020).

Audit records and position leaders records are also critical for the SRC's operations. Audit records, which include documents related to financial audits, are crucial for financial transparency and accountability, although they often receive less emphasis (Nakpodia, 2011). Position leaders records document the roles and responsibilities of student leaders, helping to maintain a structured hierarchy within the SRC. Records of income and expenditure records detail the sources of income and expenditures of the SRC, essential for tracking and managing funds received and spent (Smith & Brown, 2018; Johnson & Christensen, 2017).

Finally, rule and regulations records and minutes of meetings are vital for maintaining order and documenting decisions within the SRC. Rule and regulations records outline the guidelines governing the SRC, ensuring compliance with established norms (Afolabi, 2021). Minutes of meetings, which record discussions and decisions made during SRC meetings, provide a detailed account for reference and accountability (Mabera, 2020). Effective record-keeping practices are essential for the comprehensive documentation and smooth functioning of SRCs, as supported by recent literature. Improved training and better management practices are necessary to address challenges in maintaining these records efficiently.

Purpose of Utilization of Record for Transparency and Accountability

Records are vital tools for promoting transparency and accountability in any organization, including student representative committees in universities. The purpose of utilizing records goes beyond simple documentation; they serve as evidence of transactions, decision-making, and administrative activities that support governance integrity. According to ISO 15489-1 (2016), records must be created and maintained to provide reliable information that can be retrieved to demonstrate compliance, support operational decisions, and enable auditability. In the context of student governance, these records ensure that financial dealings, leadership decisions, and resource allocations are traceable and verifiable.

One key purpose of record utilization is to facilitate transparency in the use of committee resources. Oluwatoyin (2018) emphasizes that when records such as financial statements, minutes of meetings, and audit reports are accessible, stakeholders—including students and faculty—can track how funds and resources are spent. This openness discourages mismanagement and builds trust in student leadership. Similarly, Ahmed and Yusuf (2020) assert that proper use of records enables committees to judge leadership performance and evaluate policy outcomes, thereby reinforcing accountability mechanisms.

Records also play a critical role in resolving disputes and supporting retrospective reviews of decisions made by student leaders. Aina (2018) notes that well-documented records are essential for referencing past actions, which helps in making informed decisions and planning future activities. Furthermore, the ability to identify discrepancies or instances of mismanagement through careful analysis of records allows stakeholders to hold responsible parties accountable (Okonedo, Olatokun & Opesade, 2020). This proactive use of records enhances institutional memory and ensures continuity in leadership practices. As Agada and Abdulrahim (2022) observed in their study of the Faculty of Education at Ahmadu Bello University, record utilization is not merely a clerical task—it is a strategic activity that ensures transparency, promotes accountability, and sustains the credibility of student governance systems.

Records Organization for Transparency and Accountability

It is generally believed that the ability of an organization or institution in managing its records could be a prerequisite to effective administration. ARMA (2022) held the view that proper records could help institutions to manage their information efficiently, fulfill their mandate, protect them from litigation, preserve their corporate memory and foster accountability and good governance.

Records organization is the storage and retrieval mechanism of information that aids an organization in making decisions. Records are essentially the basic principles for the development of any institution. The manufacturing of computers and the advent of Internet connectivity have revolutionized work activities and have created new avenues for work and work practices. Thus, the role of records and records management personnel has changed significantly in terms of information retrieval, creating, storing and dissemination of information.

Efficient records management provides the basis for accountability, transparency, protection of rights and entitlements, anti-corruption strategies, poverty reduction and effective management of resources. The keeping of records in an institution have in the past few years become critical not only for historical purposes but also and more importantly for current and future managerial and policy development. In summary, Records can be used as tools and instruments to understand organizations and to use them as basis for improvement, comparison with other agencies and secure resources.

Methodology

The study employed a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional survey design. The population comprised undergraduate student representatives from the Faculty of Education at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Specifically, the target population included the executive members of the Student Representative Committees (SRC) across the eight departments within the faculty. Each department had an SRC consisting of five executive members, Chairman, Secretary, Financial Secretary, Public Relations Officer, and Treasurer bringing the total to 40 respondents. The researcher with one research assistant used two weeks to distribute the copies of questionnaire. All 40 questionnaires administered were duly completed and returned, resulting in a 100% response rate. Data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and simple percentages. For interpretation, a benchmark of 50% and above was considered a positive and accepted response, while responses below 50% were categorized as negative.

Result and discussions

Types of Records generated for Transparency and Accountability in Affairs of Students Representative Committees in Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

To identify the types of Records Generated for Transparency and Accountability in Affairs of the Students' Representative Committees in the Faculty of Education, where respondents were asked to choose or indicate from the questions provided on the types of records generated. The responses were itemized in Table 1 in which frequency and percentage is used.

Table 1 Types of Records Generated by Students' Representatives for Transparency and Accountability in Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

S/N	Types of Records Generated by Student Representative Committee for Transparency and Accountability	Frequency	Percentage
1	Financial records	30	75.0
2	Students' records	35	87.5
3	Registration records	29	72.5
4	Event records	8	20.0
5	Internal records	4	10.0
6	External records	2	5.0
7	Audit records	6	15.0
8	Students leadership's records	20	50.0
9	Records of income	10	25.0

10	Expenditure records	8	20.0
11	Rule and regulations records	10	25.0
12	Minutes of meetings	11	27.5

Source: Field survey, 2024

Table 1 revealed that students' records topped most of the records generated by students' representative committees in the Faculty of Education. These types of records were acknowledged by 87.5% of the respondents involved in the study. Next to students' records in order of magnitude were financial records, which 75.0% of the respondents agreed were generated for transparency and accountability in the management of the students' affairs within the faculty. The third ranking records generated by the students' representatives were those relating to registrations. In the table, 72.5% of the respondents agreed that these types of records were generated for transparency and accountability in the management of the students' affairs. Another type of record acknowledged by 50.0% of the respondents that was generated is students' leadership records. These four types of records were the major ones generated by the students' representatives and were acknowledged in the study.

Others did not receive acknowledgment from most of the respondents with less than 50% response rate. These included minutes of meetings (27.5%), records of income (25.0%), rule and regulation records (25.0%), event records (20.0%), expenditure records (20.0%), audit records (15.0%), internal records (10.0%), and external records (5.0%).

The findings from Table 1 highlight a significant emphasis on generating records that directly impact students' academic and administrative experiences, such as student records, financial records, and registration records. This prioritization aligns with the need for transparency and accountability in managing student affairs, ensuring that critical aspects of student life are well-documented and easily accessible. However, the relatively lower acknowledgment of other records, such as minutes of meetings and audit records, suggests a potential gap in comprehensive documentation practices within the Faculty of Education.

The emphasis on certain types of records over others has several implications. Firstly, it indicates a clear focus on areas that directly affect students' day-to-day activities and academic progress. This focus can enhance trust and satisfaction among students regarding the management of their affairs. However, the lack of emphasis on other records could lead to inefficiencies and potential issues in areas such as financial auditing, regulatory compliance, and institutional transparency. To address this, the Faculty of Education may need to implement more robust record-keeping practices across all areas to ensure a holistic approach to documentation and accountability.

The findings of this study corroborate previous research that underscores the importance of maintaining detailed student and financial records in educational institutions. Prior studies have shown that effective record management in these areas is crucial for transparency, accountability, and the overall efficiency of administrative processes. For example, research by Johnson and Christensen (2017) found that well-maintained student records contribute significantly to improved educational outcomes and institutional credibility. Similarly, studies on financial

management in education, such as those by Bandy (2023), emphasize the role of financial records in ensuring accountability and proper resource allocation. The lower emphasis on records like minutes of meetings and audit records also aligns with findings from other studies, which suggest that administrative documentation often receives less attention compared to more immediately impactful records.

Purpose of Records Used for Transparency and Accountability in Affairs Students Representative Committees in Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

To find out the use of Records created for Transparency and Accountability in Affairs of Students Representative Committees in the Faculty, the opinions of the respondents on the purposes for record generations are tabulated in Frequencies and percentages as follows.

Table 2: Purposes for which Records are generated by Students’ Representatives Committees for Transparency and Accountability in Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

S/N	Purpose for which Records are Generated	Frequency	Percentage
1	To carryout transaction	24	60.0
2	To ensure transparency	27	67.5
3	To make reference purpose	20	50.0
4	To establish balance between income and expenditure	11	27.5
5	To judge the quality of leadership of position holders	12	30.0
6	To identify how resources are spent in running the affairs of the committee	11	27.5
7	To identify area of mismanagement and resource of the committee	10	25.0
8	To bring to book the position holder who mismanage the resource of the committee	15	37.5

Source: Field survey, 2024

The study revealed that the primary purposes of record generation by the Students’ Representative Committees in the Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, were to ensure transparency and accountability (67.5%), to carry out transactions of students’ affairs (60.0%), and for reference purposes (50.0%). These responses, each with 50% or more agreement from participants, demonstrate the core areas where records are valued and actively utilized in student governance.

In contrast, several other purposes of records usage were rated below 50%. Only 25.0% of respondents agreed that records are used to identify how resources are spent in the running of committee affairs. Just 27.5% indicated records were used to establish a balance between income and expenditure, while 37.5% acknowledged their use in holding position holders accountable for

mismanagement. Furthermore, 97.5% disagreed that records were created for any other unspecified purposes, highlighting a limited scope of application beyond the most direct uses.

The findings of the study show that records are primarily generated and used by student representative committees to promote transparency and accountability in their operations, and to support transactional activities. This aligns with Agada and Abdulrahim (2022), who emphasized that structured records management enhances the credibility and transparency of student-led organizations in academic institutions. Similarly, Makhura (2020) noted that effective recordkeeping is critical in ensuring that student organizations operate in a transparent and accountable manner, especially when managing public or collective resources.

However, the relatively low emphasis placed on using records for financial oversight, such as identifying mismanagement or balancing income and expenditure, suggests a narrow approach to records utilization. This could imply that student representatives may lack awareness or training in the broader benefits of comprehensive records management. The implications are significant—without utilizing records to monitor financial health or evaluate leadership accountability, there is a risk of oversight lapses that can lead to inefficiencies, mismanagement, or a lack of trust in student governance structures. Strengthening the capacity of student leaders to understand and implement holistic recordkeeping practices can promote better governance, support institutional goals, and safeguard the interests of the student body.

Ways in which Records are Organized for Transparency and Accountability in Affairs Students Representative Committees in Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

To identify the ways Records are organized for Transparency and Accountability by the students representative Committees, their opinions on the processes of records organization were rated in Table 3 The expressed percentages are as follows.

Table 3: Ways in which Records are Organized for Transparency and Accountability in Students Representatives Committees in Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

S/N	Ways in which records are organized	Frequency	Percentage
1	Alphabetic order	13	32.5
2	Numeric order	16	40.0
3	Alpha numeric order	5	12.5
4	Chronological order	2	5.0
5	Subject order	4	10.0

Source: Field survey, 2024

The findings revealed that the most preferred method for organizing records among the Students' Representatives Committees in the Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, is numeric order, as indicated by 40.0% of the respondents. This was followed by alphabetic order, with 32.5% preference. These two methods were clearly favored, collectively accounting for 72.5% of respondents' choices. They were identified as the primary systems adopted for ensuring effective and transparent record management within the committees. In contrast, other

organizational methods were far less favored. Alpha-numeric order was preferred by only 12.5% of the respondents, while subject order accounted for 10.0%. Chronological order was the least preferred, with just 5.0% selecting it. These figures suggest that although various methods are available, the majority of student representatives rely on more familiar and structured systems to manage and retrieve their records effectively.

The preference for numeric and alphabetic record arrangement reflects a practical approach by student leaders to ensure clarity and ease of access in record management, aligning with Agada and Abdulrahim (2022), who highlighted the role of these systems in simplifying information retrieval. These methods not only support day-to-day administrative efficiency but also enhance transparency and accountability by making records more accessible and easier to manage. This is consistent with Read and Ginn's (2010) view that structured organization facilitates effective information handling.

The low adoption of other record arrangement methods such as subject and chronological order suggests a limited exposure or training in alternative systems that might better serve particular types of records. As Matangira, Katjiveri-Tjuoro, and Lukileni (2013) observed, the lack of consistency in records organization often leads to inefficiencies. Therefore, while the use of numeric and alphabetic methods is commendable, expanding knowledge and practice to include other effective systems could further enhance the committees' recordkeeping capabilities. Training in diverse records management practices would not only improve operational efficiency but also strengthen institutional accountability within student governance.

Summary of findings

The major findings from the analysis of the data and test of the study's hypotheses are summarized below:

1. The types of records generated for transparency and accountability in affairs of student representative committees in the Faculty of Education, were students' records. Financial records, Registration records and students Leadership's records.
2. The purpose of records generated by Students Representative Committees in the Faculty were mainly for ensuring transparency, for carrying out transactions of students' affairs and for reference purpose.
3. The major ways in which records were organized for transparency and accountability were mainly numeric and alphabetical orders.

Conclusion

It was concluded that the records management practices of the Students Representative Committees in the Faculty of Education can be considered generally good, as the types of records generated such as students' records, financial records, registration records, and leadership records are essential for promoting transparency and accountability. The primary purposes for which these records are used, including ensuring transparency, facilitating transactions, and serving as reference materials, indicate a clear understanding of the role of records in effective governance. Furthermore, the use of structured organization methods like numeric and alphabetical orders

supports easy retrieval and proper documentation. However, while these practices reflect a positive approach to records management, there is still room for improvement in diversifying record types and adopting more advanced organizational systems to further strengthen accountability.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made in line with the findings of the study:

1. To improve the scope of records generated, the committee should create a clear and comprehensive record-keeping policy that mandates the documentation of all significant activities, including detailed minutes of meetings, event records, and audit trails. Committee members should be trained on the importance of thorough record generation, and provided with standardized templates and practical guidelines to ensure records are consistently accurate, complete, and properly maintained.
2. To strengthen the use of records in strategic planning and decision-making, the committee should implement a centralized digital records management system that enables easy storage, retrieval, and analysis of documents. Regular reviews of these records should be conducted to guide policy revisions and strategic actions, while awareness should be raised among members about the long-term value of maintaining reliable and accessible records.
3. To achieve uniformity in organizing records, the committee should design and distribute a standardized filing system manual detailing numeric and alphabetical procedures. This should be accompanied by hands-on training to build members' proficiency in applying the system, and regular audits should be carried out to ensure consistent compliance and identify areas for improvement in record organization practices.

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