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## **Communication and records management in Federal Civil Service Commission, Nigeria**

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# **Communication and Records Management in Federal Civil Service Commission, Nigeria**

*by*

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**A Master's Dissertation submitted in partial  
fulfilment of the requirements for the award  
of the Master of Arts degree of the  
Loughborough University of Technology**

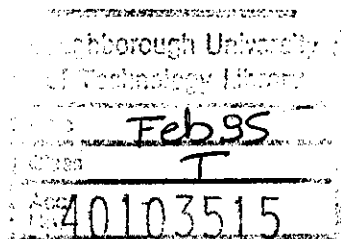
**September 1994**

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Department of Information and Library Studies**

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## ABSTRACT

Though the core of this study is to look at Communication and Records Management Systems in the Federal Civil Service Commission of Nigeria, the subject cannot be effectively delved into without tracing the history of the organisation and how it gradually grew and developed over the years. It was equally important to consider what changes it went through during the different regimes, from the civilian to the successive military regimes. The study examines the present organisation structure of the Federal Civil Service Commission, and how it affects the day to day administrative operations and communications, and also provides a general overview of communication in organisations, the concepts of records management, and the changes on the subject over time. The crux of the subject is to examine the communication process at the Federal Civil Service Commission, the channels used for disseminating information, which are records, and the system of managing the records. An evaluation of the existing system was made to determine its effectiveness. Consequently, some recommendations for improvement were proposed.



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## DEDICATION

*This work is dedicated to:*

*Sunday*

*Olufunke*

*Adebola*

*Aladeyemi*

*Anuoluwapo*

*For their love, moral support, prayers, patience  
and understanding.*

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 PURPOSE OF STUDY

The Federal Civil Service Commission, Nigeria, was established as a cornerstone of personnel management in the Federal Civil Service, to be responsible for the recruitment, promotion, transfer and secondment and discipline of staff in the civil service.

The objectives are to ensure that only high calibre of people are employed to man the different positions in the Ministries; to monitor the efficiency of those people on being employed; and to ensure a high sense of responsibility on the part of civil servants through discipline. For the Commission to perform its statutory functions, the major tool obviously is information. In its activities as a liaison office between the Federal Government and the civil servants and for day to day administrative operations, the Commission uses and disseminates vast quantities and varieties of information, and the great proportion of this information is derived from records. Most of these records are vital in planning, decision making, assessment of results, and the smooth running of the departments. What is being emphasized is that the information resources in form of records are not properly managed. Whereas the level of efficiency of any government machinery is determined by the effectiveness with which information is recorded, managed and retrieved.

There has been a disconcerting picture of how information and records were being managed, especially in government organisations in Nigeria, despite all efforts made by the concerned Nigerians and the colonial office to promote effective records management. Alegbeleye wrote that, "If we take due cognisance of the models of levels of implementing a records management programme provided by Rhoads, Roper and Dojka, it will not be difficult to conclude that no records management practices exist at the moment in Nigeria" (1). He maintained further, that the opportunity we had in Nigeria to establish the rudiments of records management

provided by the colonial office was frittered away. Despite Alegbeleye's conclusions, some organisations have been doing their best to bring about necessary improvements in record keeping. For example, the private organisations and the universities have employed some concept of records management in preserving their record. At the Federal Civil Service Commission, even though the term records management is not used, some elements of records management principles are in existence. There are registry units in the Commission where records are filed and stored, for identification and retrieval. But there is every need to effectively harness the information resources, in order to achieve better flow of information within these registries.

The purpose of this project therefore, is to create an awareness in the Commission about the importance and benefits of developing an efficient and effective records management programme. In doing this, attempts will be made:

1. To look into the communication process in the Commission, the channels of disseminating information, which are mainly paper records, and to bring out the relationship with records management.
2. To examine all the activities concerned with record keeping in the Commission in order to determine their compatibility or relevance to the records management system, as well as the effectiveness of such activities in facilitating the implementation of the objectives of the Commission.
3. Finally, to make some recommendations on possible directions the Federal Civil Service Commission ought to be considering to improve the existing system of managing its records, in view of the modern concepts and techniques of records management programme.

## **1.2 METHODOLOGY**

The approach adopted in this study is mainly descriptive. The paper essentially describes the theoretical aspects of communication and the concepts of records management and also what obtains in practice in the

Federal Civil Service Commission vis-a-vis the system of communication and record keeping activities.

The primary source of information was through direct observation, and discussions with colleagues.

As a staff of the Commission, the author has been able to observe the various operations carried out in the registries. This has given her first hand knowledge of the record keeping activities, the conditions of the records and files in terms of storage and maintenance facilities, the registry personnel, and the increasing accommodation problems.

Information was also collected through discussions and interviews - informal with some staff and colleagues in the Commission, to obtain information on background history of the Commission, and the various departments and sections, some documents, such as the Commission Annual reports, Civil Service Reform guidelines, and reorganisation, official gazettes, circulars, the Nigerian Constitutions and papers presented by seasoned administrators have been used.

The secondary source of information was library based. That is, information obtained from published works such as books, journals, magazines, official publications and reference works.

### **1.3 DEFINITION OF TERMS**

It is of paramount importance to begin by defining the key terms which form the subject of this dissertation.

#### **1.3.1 Information**

It has been suggested in today's world of commerce, industry and government that information is the most important resource available, because of an ever-increasing need for it in all sectors.

Most dictionaries define information as knowledge, intelligence, facts or data which can be used, transferred or communicated.

In respect of an organisation, information is regarded as meaningful data used to represent items of knowledge by the administration and management of the organisation to help them in their decision - making, planning and controlling activities (2). Information has a service function so it must be collected, processed and communicated in the most efficient manner, for the use of business, in order to achieve organisational goals.

### **1.3.2 Communication**

Communication is the imparting, conveying, or exchanging of ideas, information and knowledge, whether by speech, writing or signs. (3)

Communications are concerned with the creation, transmission, interpretation and use of information. It involves both the giving out of messages from one person and the receiving and understanding of those messages by another or the others. (4)

It is the life blood of an organisation because it pervades all activities, and represents an important work tool through which individuals understand their organisational role and integrates organisation sub-units. Communication provides a means of making and executing decisions, obtaining feedback and correcting organisational objectives and procedures. (5)

The media of communication are normally classified into visual and sound. Visual communication is the written word, and methods used are in form of records namely, letters, memoranda, reports, forms, information bulletins, pictures, etc. While the sound communication involves the spoken word (speech) in form of meetings, discussions, telephone conversations. There are also non-verbal communications, audio-visual, and sophisticated electronic devices.

Communication is therefore a linking process in information gathering and dissemination.

### **1.3.3 Record**

A record is any kind of recorded information regardless of medium, it could be anything from a clay tablet, paper to optical discs. Records as it is

known in management are any documents which are created and kept in the course of any organised business.

Records are the memory of an organisation, because they document the activities of the organisation that creates and receives them. They are needed in day to day operations for management decisions, for legal actions, for establishing government regulations, and for the supply of historical reference of transactions or events. (6)

Records in the context of this study, include personnel files, letters, correspondence, forms, reports, directives, minutes of meetings, policy statements, constitutions and by-laws, financial records of all kinds, contract papers and so on.

Given the contribution that records can make to the sound management of an organisation, it is therefore important to store them in an appropriate system, clearly identified and retrieved in an efficient manner when needed.

#### **1.3.4 Records Management**

Records management is an administrative system by which an organisation seeks to control the creation, distribution, filing, retrieval, storage and disposal of those records which are created or generated by organisation in the course of its business. In this "Information age", it is also the means by which the valuable information contained in those record is released in support of the organisation operations. (7)

It is concerned with the entire lifecycle of records as they progress through the various stages of the system.

A complete records management programme encompasses a multitude of disciplines including forms, reports, correspondence, directives, mail and files management; copying; retention scheduling; vital records protection; archival preservation; and ultimate disposal. Each discipline has its own particular principles, methods, practice and techniques for achieving the necessary end results.

With a viable records management programme in operation, an organisation can control both quality and quantity of the information that

it creates, it can maintain that information in a manner that effectively serves its needs, and it can efficiently dispose of the information when no longer needed, or stored, if they seem to be of longer term value. (8)

Records Management only deals with recorded information which is current and semi-current, as against the archives management which is concerned with records which have been appraised and identified as having a permanent and enduring value, and therefore will be retained permanently in the archives.

The dissertation is arranged in five chapters:

Chapter One contains the introduction of the project;

Chapter Two traces the history of the Federal Civil Service Commission, its functions and the organisation structure;

Chapter Three deals with the theory of communication in organisations and the records management programme using the life-cycle concept;

In Chapter Four, the process of communicating information in the Commission, the channels of communication, and the existing system of managing the information resources (records) are examined;

Conclusions of the study and recommendations for improvements on the system are given in Chapter Five.

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## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE HISTORY OF THE FEDERAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION, NIGERIA (THE COMMISSION)**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The Civil Service in Nigeria dates back to the colonial system of administration. Then, it emerged in a rudimentary form as fashioned to suit the British purposes of maintaining law and order amongst the natives.

The period 1942-45 however marked a significant change in the Public Service, as a result of the Walayn committee which recommended that Africans were fully qualified to be admitted to Administrative post in the service (1), the recommendation was accepted.

The Federal Public Service Commission was therefore created, to promote the cause of career officials in the service, and to handle both establishment and personnel matters of officers. Since its inception, the Federal Public Service Commission has witnessed changes over the years, as dictated by different administrations, from the colonial, the parliamentary, the military, the civilian-presidential system, and now to the present military government.

The name, Federal Public Service Commission, was later changed to Federal Civil Service Commission in 1979, at the advent of the Presidential System of government.

##### **2.1.1 The Federal Civil Service Commission (1954-1960)**

The Commission was established on 1st October 1954 by resolutions made by the Governor-General under Section 177 of the Nigerian Constitution of 1954 (2). The order provided that the Federal Public Service Commission shall advise the Governor-General on any matter relating to the

appointment of any person to an office in the Public Service of the Federation; on the dismissal or disciplinary control of officers in the service; or any other matter that in the opinion of the Governor-General affects the Public Service.

The first Chairman of the Commission was a British man, J.K. Buchanam. He was appointed in 1954 with five other members as Commissioners (3). They were granted five years of tenure. The staff (Secretariat) of the Commission consisted of one Secretary, four Assistant Secretaries and an executive officer as well as clerical officers.

Thus, at this time, the Federal Public Service Commission was only performing an advisory role to the Governor-General, and also advised the Commissioner of the Southern Cameroons or any officer having authority over a Federal Department to whom the Governor-General has delegated power relating to the Federal Public Service.

However, in 1956, the Federal Public Service Commission was given power for the first time (4):

- (a) To appoint (including appointment and promotion, transfer and secondment) to any post established or otherwise, an employee, the initial basic salary of which is less than £564 per annum.
- (b) To appoint, promote or transfer daily rated employees.
- (c) To confirm or terminate the probationary appointment of officer whose initial salary is below £564, and
- (d) To dismiss and exercise disciplinary control over all officers within the same basic salary.

The Commission also has the power to advise and be consulted with issues relating to senior officers.

Much of the Commission's business was dealt with by the circulation of briefs, and if there was general agreement on the matter under consideration in the brief, a recommendation was then submitted by the Chairman to the Governor-General. The standard of candidates appointed or promoted during this period was generally good. The policy

of the Federal Public Service Commission was to maintain an appropriate standard of academic, professional, or technical qualifications. Promotion of officers was strictly based on merit. Advertisement was the means of bringing vacancies in the Public Service to the notice of prospective candidates.

Then, both foreigners and Nigerians were employed, but there were more expatriates in the professional and technical fields, because of the shortage of trained Nigerian personnel.

The Public Service, therefore had officers in the generalist and professional class.

By 1957, there was an increase in the number of promotions to the senior grades by the Governor-General, as advised by the Federal Public Service Commission. It then brought to 17 the number of superscale Nigerian officials promoted as against 7 in 1954 (5).

With the Nigerianisation policy of the Public Service, there was no more recruitment of expatriate officers on pensionable terms, except on contract, and there was a vigorous attempt by the Commission to get the best people for the higher posts in the Federal Service. This, however, led to a tremendous rise in the number of Nigerian officers in the Service, and at the attainment of Independence in 1960, the Chairman and members of the Federal Public Service Commission were all Nigerians. Not only did this signify a forward march (between 1960-66) in the Federal Public Service Commission, but it also led to the growth of the Nigerian Public Service at large. The Federal Public Service Commission which is the corner stone of the personnel management in the Civil Service, had its origin from the British system of bureaucratic career public service, organised functionally and hierarchically.

### **2.1.2 Post Independence Era (1960-1966)**

At the attainment of Independence, the traditional function of maintenance of law and order had to give way to the provision of social services, the execution of development programmes and the general

progress of the community or development and result-oriented service. There was therefore, the need for dedicated Nigerians to run the affairs of the country. Thus, the introduction of parliamentary system of government which gave Nigeria a Prime Minister as head of government.

In 1960, the first Nigerian Chairman was appointed to head the Federal Public Service Commission: Alhaji Sule Katagun. He had four other Nigerians, as Commissioners (6). At Independence, there were 3 regional Public Services and a Federal Public Service each independent of the other. There was a delegation notice in 1962, in which Ministries and Extra Ministerial departments were given power to appoint and recruit staff up to a certain level (Scale C) of officers (7).

The Public Service Commission also assisted in recruiting staff for the Royal Nigerian Army; Lagos Executive Development Board; West African Institute for Oil Palm Research and West African Cocoa Research Institute.

The posts in which Nigerians could not be readily obtained were filled through the goodwill of overseas governments.

By 1964, appointment and promotion of Nigerians within the senior-scale had risen to 132 as against 17 in 1957. A significant number of senior officers from other regions had transferred to the Federal Public Service, and a few officers were also seconded in and out of the Federal Public Service (8). Procedure for appointment, promotion, transfer and secondment, discipline, were specified in the 'Notes for Guidance', 1-3 (9) and they are still being used in the Federal Civil Service today.

During this political era, the Federal Public Service Commission could not carry out its powers and responsibilities effectively. This was because the politicians interfered much with the appointments, promotions and discipline of Civil Servants, thereby rendering the Commissions ineffective.

Whereas, before Independence, the Federal Public Service Commission and all regional Public Service Commissions were seen as politically

neutral organisation, whose role was to dispense justice without fear or foe. Politicians had now meddled with the functions of the Public Service Commissions. The totality of the Politician's actions encouraged general disillusion of the mid 60s, with corruption, nepotism, and political patronage rendering the whole Public Service at large, inefficient.

Due to much political rivalry, ethnic difference and general unpleasant political atmosphere in the country generally, there was a coup d'état in 1966, in which the Military took over the government.

The coup brought a relief from tension, insecurity and instability to civil servants. The Military suspended the 1963 Republic Constitution and banned all political activities.

### **2.1.3 The Federal Public Service Commission under the Military Administration (1966-1979)**

The functions and structure of the Federal Public Service Commission remained the same under the Military, but there are some important developments.

The Regional Public Service Commissions were increased from four to twelve, due to the creation of 12 states of the federation.

The Military government set up review Commissions that made some modifications in the service. They were the Adebo and Udoji Salary Review Commissions of 1970 and 1974 respectively, who reviewed salaries and jobs to motivate workers, to give more incentives in order to attract people into the civil service, and to grade different cadres according to job disciplines.

This was necessary, because there was the problem of shortage of manpower in the Public Service as a result of the Nigerian Civil War from 1967-70, and later, the 1975 purge of the Civil Service in which many officers were dismissed and retired.

By 1976, another Chairman was appointed for the Commission, with eight other members of the Commission (Commissioners) to assist him, as against five members in the previous years. (10)

The Federal Public Service Commission by this period, had a well organised Secretariat, composed of five divisions namely, Appointments, Overseas - Recruitment, Promotions, Discipline and General Duties. The Secretariat was headed by a Secretary and assisted by a Principal Secretary. Each division was headed by a Deputy Secretary with a number of Administrative, executive and clerical officers below the ladder.

The General Duties Division (Administration) was charged with the primary responsibility for internal administration of the Commission. It also handled transfers, secondment and re-engagements of employees on contracts. The Appointments Division was mainly concerned with local recruitment at home, in Nigeria. While the Overseas Recruitment was created to enable the Commission to effectively co-ordinate the recruitment of expatriates and Nigerians abroad.

The Promotion Division also had an added responsibility of processing cases of transfer, promotion, conversion-on-promotion, and acting appointments.

Between 1975 and 1977 (11) the Commission had various personnel cases to deal with, and the workload was getting too much. Though the staff strength of the Commission had increased from 15 at Independence to 380 yet this was still inadequate to cope with the expectation and demand on the Federal Public Service.

The Commission was also faced with the problem of accommodation at this time, which militate against some of its registry services.

Since the Secretariat could not cope with the task before it, the Commission then decided that delegation of its powers could be a significant instrument to achieve efficiency in the Public Service. The Federal Public Service Commission, therefore, delegated some of its powers to Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Extra-Ministerial

Departments believing that, "such arrangement will enable the chief executives to exercise control over the largest groups of officers serving under them, minimize delays and promote efficiency". (12)

Under the delegation notice (13), the Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Extra-Ministerial Departments were allowed to appoint, confirm appointments, make transfers and secondment, promote and exercise disciplinary powers on officers in posts grade levels 01-07. They were also allowed to offer temporary appointments, confirm or terminate probationary appointments, and exercise all other disciplinary control except dismissal, on officers on grade levels 08-09. The appointment procedure must be subject to interviews conducted by the Departmental Selection Board, and the results sent to the Federal Public Service Commission, for approval.

Ministries and Departments were empowered to offer temporary appointments to suitable professional candidates on grade levels 10-11 pending interview by the Commission. They can also interdict. Minutes of Departmental Selection Board meeting and vacancy position had to be sent to the Commission who had the final say.

However, it was mandatory for the Ministries and Departments to make monthly returns of acting, confirmations and temporary appointments to the Commission.

In exercising the powers delegated to them in respect of appointment, promotion and discipline, the Ministries and Departments were expected to comply with the procedure laid down in the *Notes for Guidance* Nos. 1-5, issued by the Federal Civil Service Commission.

The Chief Executives of Ministries and Departments cannot exercise their delegated powers on the officers in the pool service i.e. Administrative, Executive and Professional Officers on Grade Level 14 and above. Any cases pertaining to them is referred to the Public Service Department of the Office of Head of Civil Service, although their appointments are made directly by the Federal Civil Service Commission.



This delegation of powers to Ministries however, reduced the workload of the Commission, and also helped in its operational efficiency.

The Military Administration made significant impact on the Federal Public Service Commission, and the Public Service at large.

Thus, before the new civilian administration took over in 1979, the Federal Public Service Commission had expanded its activities, it had assumed more roles, and was not just an organisation for advising the chief executives.

#### **2.1.4 The Federal Public Service Commission under the Civilian Administration (1979-1983)**

Nigeria adopted the presidential system of government at this time, and this gave rise to the new presidential constitution of 1979, which made some changes in the Public Service.

The Federal Public Service Commission was one of the Federal executive bodies established under the provisions of Section 140 of the 1979 Constitution. The name was also changed to Federal Civil Service Commission. (14)

In the presidential system of government, the terms Public and Civil do not make any difference, - 'Civil' only takes the reflection of 'Civilian' administration.

The Federal Civil Service Commission herein referred to as "The Commission" is a statutory body, and it is guided by the powers vested it by the Constitution, to carry out the following functions:-

- To appoint or recruit, including transfer on promotion, qualified candidates to work in the different Ministries and Departments of the Federal Civil Service;
- To discipline erring or offending officers through a laid-down disciplinary procedure;

- To make lateral transfer and secondment of officers within the Federal Civil Services to and from other Civil Services/Schedule Services, and to International Organisations;
- To reward merit by way of promotion for deserving officers, in grade levels 08-16 in the Federal Civil Service (15).

As at 1st January 1982, the Commission had another Chairman, with eight other members as Commissioners. (16)

The Federal Civil Service Commission's Secretariat now headed by a Permanent Secretary, assisted by Secretary for Finance and Administration, and Secretary for Recruitments.

There are six divisions in the Commission, namely, Administration; Local Appointment/Transfer and Secondment; Overseas Recruitment; Promotion/Discipline; Accounts and Internal Audit. These are headed by four Principal Secretaries, a Chief Accountant and a Principal Accountant, respectively.

The Administration Division is the Service division of the Commission, providing the necessary support facilities required, to enable the organisation perform its functions. These include three registries, the library, statistical unit, stores procurement and transport. As at 31st December 1982, the Staff Strength of the Commission was 487.

With the decision of the Federal government, that the Federal Civil Service Commission should move along with some other Ministries/Departments to the new Federal Capital, Abuja, a number of officers were posted to Abuja on 8th October, 1982. About 48 officers finally moved there permanently. The Federal Civil Service Commission, Abuja Office, is headed by a Deputy Secretary, who is also the Liaison Officer (16). The Commission holds regular meetings once a month at Abuja. The Federal Civil Service Commission normally hold meetings and Conferences annually, with the States Civil Service Commissions. This is to promote mutual understanding and cross-fertilization of ideas among all Civil Service Commissions in the Federation.

In the Presidential System of government, the Federal Civil Service Commission is a statutory body, and has a role to provide the government with a civil service that is non-political, impartial, efficient, loyal and incorruptible.

Also, in exercising its powers of appointments and promotions, the Commission should reflect 'Federal character' for the promotion of national unity, and not to be advocates of 'strict meritocracy' (17) i.e. the basis for appointments into the Service should be the Federal character, in addition to merit.

The Federal Civil Service Commission however, addressed itself positively to ensuring a more equitable representation of all sections of the country in the Federal Civil Service.

#### **2.1.5 Federal Civil Service Commission from 1st April, 1988 to Date**

Another landmark in the history of the Federal Civil Service Commission is the development of the new Civil Service Reform. This brought fundamental changes in the organisational arrangement of the Nigerian Civil Service.

The Civil Service (Reorganisation) Decree, No. 43 of 1988 was promulgated, and the operations of the various Ministries and the Federal Civil Service Commission in particular were based on the guidelines of the Reform (19). The objectives of the re-organisation of the Civil Service are:

1. To ensure efficiency in the implementation of government decisions, policies and programmes;
2. Speed of routine in day-to-day Civil Service operations, and removal of bureaucratic bottlenecks; and
3. Accountability as the hallmark of the system.

Under the new arrangement, the Commission has a Chairman, who is now the Minister, and Accounting Officer, working with nine other members who are Commissioners. The administrative head is now

named the Director General, while the departmental heads are Directors. The Commission's Secretariat is now structured into five departments and three divisions, manned by officers with functional titles. This will be discussed under the organisation structure.

The Civil Service Reform Decree which modified the provisions of the 1979 constitution, vested the Commission, with the responsibility to appoint, promote and discipline civil servants on salary grade levels 07-10, with a view to observing the principle of the Federal Character. The Ministries and Extra-Ministerial Departments are then given the powers to appoint and promote officers on salary grade levels 01-06 and grade levels 11-17, through their respective Personnel Management Board, which comprises the junior and senior staff committees. The returns of such activities are to be rendered appropriately to the Commission (20).

Also, with the new dispensation, posting (transfer) of officers from one Ministry to another will no longer be allowed. It is now a professionalised Civil Service. Each officer, whether generalist (Administrative officers) or Specialist (Professionals) will now make his career in the Ministry or department of his choice, and thereby acquire the necessary expertise and experience, through specialised training and uninterrupted involvement with the work of the Ministry.

## **2.2 THE OBJECTIVES OF THE FEDERAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION**

The Federal Government, in setting up the Federal Civil Service Commission, had set objectives, which are:-

- To ensure that personnel decisions are taken objectively, promptly and competently; and that they judiciously reflect the stated policies and interest of the government, that is, the decisions to appoint, promote, or exercise disciplinary control or dismiss personnel in the Civil Service should be done objectively.
- To recommend to the government personnel policies aimed at improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the Civil Service. The

Commission, being the corner stone of personnel management in the Civil Service, should be involved in the execution of personnel policies, and also advise, make suggestions and recommendations to the government about personnel matters.

- To be responsible for the recruitment of qualified candidates to man the different ministries and departments in the Civil Service.
- To provide the government with a Civil Service which is non-political, impartial, efficient, loyal and incorruptible, and to reflect the "Federal Character" of Nigeria, in terms of appointments, for the promotion of national unity.
- To establish departments within the Commission.

## **2.3 FUNCTIONS OF THE FEDERAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION**

The powers and responsibilities of the Federal Civil Service Commission are currently as follows:-

- (a) Recruitment and Advancement of staff into grade levels 07-10 in the Civil Service. With respect to recruitment, this is the point of entry for the new graduate employees coming into the Civil Service. It is the responsibility of the Commission to ensure that appropriate pre-entry qualification is applied, and the principle of Federal Character adhered to. For the advancement of staff on the same level 07-10 each Ministry will, through the Senior Staff Committee, make recommendations to the Commission for final approval.
- (b) Setting up general and uniform policy guidelines for appointment promotion and discipline of staff in the Federal Civil Service.
- (c) Monitor the activities of each Ministry/Extra Ministerial department on appointment, discipline and promotion in order to ensure that guidelines are strictly and uniformly adhered to.

This is being done by receiving the returns of all these activities carried on by the Ministries and Extra Ministerial departments accompanied by minutes of the meeting of the appropriate Boards or committees. It is also mandatory for the Ministries to ensure faithful compliance with the guidelines.

- (d) To serve as a review body for all petitions from Ministries or Extra-Ministerial departments in respect of appointments, promotion and discipline.

The Commission can receive appeals from aggrieved officers directly and through the officers' Ministry or Extra-Ministerial Department, who should forward such appeals/petitions together with the briefs and minutes of the relevant Committee and their comments. The decision of the Federal Civil Service Commission shall be binding on all appeal matters lodged with it.

- (e) Give guidance to Ministries or Extra-Ministerial Departments on the composition of their Personnel Management Board and its committee. The Civil Service Commission may delegate some of the powers conferred upon it to any of its members or to any officer in the Civil Service of the Federation (21).

Such was the history of the Commission from the Colonial era to date. To a certain extent, we can therefore say the successive administrations and their policies helped in developing and serving as a source of growth to the Federal Civil Service Commission, while at the same time broadening its structure.

## **2.4 ORGANISATION STRUCTURE OF THE FEDERAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION**

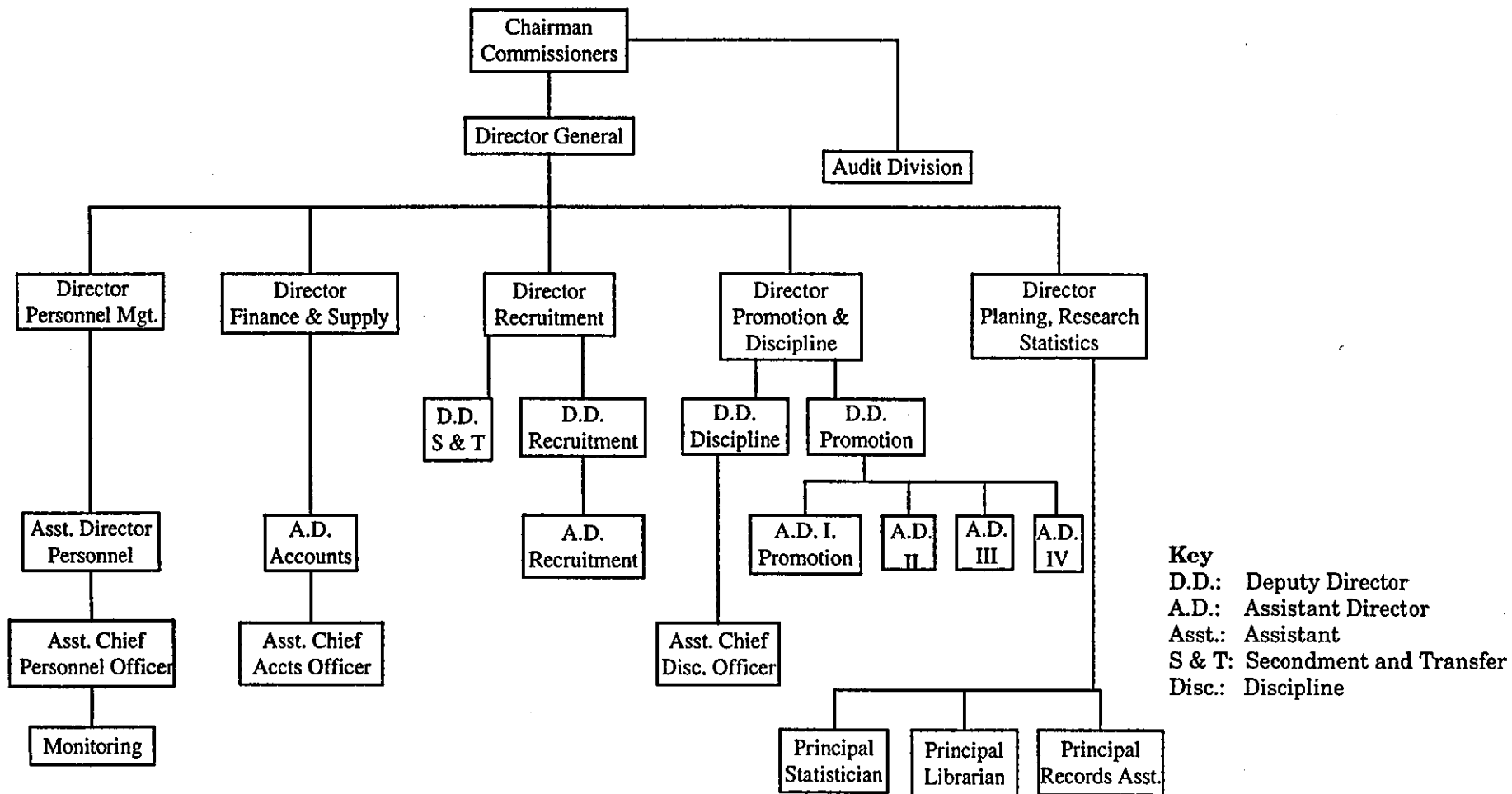
Structure simply means the formal arrangement of the functionaries in the organisation in an hierarchical order.

The Federal Civil Service Commission is organised with respect to the patterns of relationships and responsibilities among various departments and the individuals.

Being a government establishment, it has developed a formal hierarchical structure and a role culture, which is bureaucratic.

The work of Max Weber, a sociologist and organisation theorist (22), is of great relevance to the Federal Civil Service Commission with its bureaucratic features:

1. A defined hierarchy of authority and responsibility: a hierarchy of formal positions.
2. Division of labour based on specialisation - Work of individuals, broken down to routine and well defined tasks.
3. A high degree of formalisation, with rules, procedures and regulations to standardise and control the actions of organisation members.
4. Optimum span of control - This is used to obtain the required degree of cooperation, and also for supervising performance and assessing the success or failure of the organisation in achieving its goals.
5. Promotion based on merit or competence.



**Fig. 1. Organisation Chart of Federal Civil Service Commission**



Organisational experts believe that an ideal bureaucratic organisation should reflect the above attributes for efficient performance. However, for the purpose of efficiency, the Commission is structured into five departments and three divisions.

They are:-

1. Personnel Management
2. Finance and Supplies
3. Recruitment and Appointment
4. Promotion, Discipline, Appeals on Promotion and discipline.
5. Planning, Research and Statistics.

The Divisions are:-

1. The Accounts/Audit Division
2. Personnel Management Board
3. Monitoring Unit.

Some of the departments are also subdivided to reflect broad professional areas or specialised activities.

The Organogram (Organisation Chart) which gives the description of the structure of the Federal Civil Service Commission is shown in Figure 1.

The departments are arranged or organised into functions, that is, the posts or offices are based on the nature of work and skills required to perform. Each officer bears a functional title reflecting his profession or area of specialisation (23). For example, Director of *Personnel* or Assistant Director: *Accounts*.

The functional titles for officers in the Administrative and Professional cadres in each of the departments are as follows:

Director of X (-----X refers to Personnel)

Deputy director of X

Assistant director of X

Chief X Officer  
Assistant Chief X Officer  
Principal X Officer  
Senior X Officer  
X Officer I - II

In the case of officers in the executive and clerical cadres, their functional titles are:-

Chief X Assistant (that is, Chief Personnel Assistant)  
Principal X Assistant I - IV  
Senior X Assistant  
X Assistants

Officers in the Secretarial Cadre bear the functional titles thus:-

Chief Secretarial Assistant  
Principal Secretarial Assistants I - IV  
Senior Secretarial Assistant  
Secretarial Assistant.

The structure is therefore, based on three hierarchical professional categories namely, Director, Officer and Assistants. These classes are arranged with each office under the supervision of a higher one. In this way, the chain of command is defined. Every employee knows where he fits in, and to whom he is responsible.

The set of office holders at the top of the hierarchy hold strategic positions that give them key responsibilities for planning, making decisions and giving orders within the organisation. Those lower down the hierarchy are concerned with problem solving, and other tasks which relate to their own areas of authority and responsibility.

#### **2.4.1 Functional Duties**

*Chairman* - As indicated in the Organisation chart, the Chairman, who is at the top of the hierarchy, is the Chief Executive and Accounting Officer of the Commission. That means he is in full control and

responsible for human, materials and financial resources. In his capacity, he has direct link with the government especially on personnel matters, changes in salary structure and conditions of service.

All correspondence in form of letters, memorandums, circulars, reports, forms flowing into the Commission, (internal and external) are directed to the Chairman, and all outgoing correspondence must also be signed by him, or for him.

The Chairman works in conjunction with other nine Commissioners in exercising the power to appoint, promote and exercise disciplinary control over persons in the Civil Service.

The Chairman consults with the Director General and other Directors on the Management and Administrative operations of the Ministry. He delegates a substantial part of his administrative and financial functions and authority to the Director General.

*Director General* - The Director General is now a political appointee and a deputy to the Chairman of the Commission (24). He acts, whenever the Chairman is away from the office. He is fully involved in the key decision-making processes, and answerable to the Chairman. The Director General who is at the administrative helm of affairs, is also the Chairman of Senior Staff Committee of the Personnel Management Board, and he presides over different meetings in the Commission. He consults with the Directors on the policy issues affecting the Ministry, and delegates some of his powers and functions to them.

*Directors* - The Directors are the heads of departments. They now constitute the topmost career civil servants in the Civil Service.

They are responsible for controlling and directing the activities of their respective departments. Under the general direction of the Chairman, the directors coordinate the men, money and materials and other resources allocated to their departments in order to achieve objectives and targets.

They assist with the initiation, development and implementation of policy and other matters, in respect of functions assigned to their respective

departments. On the whole, the directors are responsible for the day-to-day management and administration of operations in the Commission, which include such tasks as staff management, budgets and financial matters and performance monitoring. They perform their duties in close consultation and cooperation with other directors of the different departments. They give orders and responsibilities to officers below them.

*Deputy Directors, Assistant Directors, Assistant Directors and Chief X Officers* - Some of the Deputy Directors, Assistant Directors and Chief X Officers (e.g. Chief Promotion Officer) are heads of divisions, branches and sections respectively.

They are answerable to the Directors and they have many Officers and Assistants as subordinates to whom they delegate functions and responsibilities in a descending hierarchical order.

Their duties differ with the office held. The work ranges from advising the Secretariat on decisions of appointments, transfers, promotions, discipline of personnel, planning, and budgeting, covering of meetings, writing briefs and reports, to supervising their subordinates.

The formal structured system of the Federal Civil Service Commission allows individuals to work together to achieve common goals through hierarchy of ranks and division of labour. It also gives stability to the communication process thereby facilitating the accomplishment of administrative and management tasks.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Today, we are all deeply involved in the information age. In fact it might be more accurate to say, as does Alvin Tofler in his book, *The Third Wave*, that we are in a communication revolution. (1) We are inundated with an explosion of information, caused by uncontrolled accumulation of paper work created by modern technology such as computers, typewriters and photocopying machines. Added to these is the fact that many organisations are getting larger and activities within them are more specialised, which creates the need for more communications.

A recent survey concluded that Chief Executives in organisations spend 78 per cent of their time in oral communications. While middle level managers devote 87 per cent of their time in all types of communication and supervisors spend an unbelievable 74 per cent of their time on the same activity (2). Communication occurs constantly in every organisation. In offices for example, we will see staff preparing letters, reports, memoranda, proposals and studies. Executives and managers are involved in meetings, interviews and presentations. Dozens of others are having telephone conversations. Also, the word processing machine is always working, the electronic mail is being dispatched and many other human and electronic communications are taking place. Communication of information is therefore an essential ingredient in the internal functioning of an organisation, as well as vital in the information exchanges with its environment. It forms the basis of decisions and stimulates actions.

However, the efficiency with which this information is *recorded, managed* and *retrieved* has a direct influence on the effectiveness of the operations of the organisation.

### 3.2 COMMUNICATION IN ORGANISATIONS

“Organisation structures, with their varying sizes, technological sophistication, and degrees of complexity and formalisation are designed to be, or evolve into information-handling systems.” (3)

In most organisations, communication of information is the core and essence of its operations and “the organisation input into the communication process comes from the structured communication channels and the positions people occupy.” (4)

Communication is a crucial ingredient for the attainment of organisation objectives. This is because managers who are required to attain the organisation’s mission must share information between each other and their staff at all levels of the organisation, whether in planning, organising, decision making, establishment of policies, recruitment, discipline, performance appraisal or coordination. Communication of information creates understanding and harmony amongst staff. Information on procedures allow employees to perform their functions effectively. Communication therefore, has a function. “It is the means by which organised activity is unified. It is also the means by which behaviour is modified, change is effected, information is made productive, and goals achieved.” (5)

“Organisations are information processing systems. Morgan (6) in one of his vivid images uses organisation as a **brain**. His idea is that organisations capture and filter information, process it in terms of what it has already learned, interpret it, change it, and finally act on it”.

### 3.3 IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

The Importance of Communication in Organisations cannot be over-emphasised.



Organisational analysts have ascribed varying degrees of importance to the communication process. Barnard (7) for example, states that: "In an exhaustive theory of organisation, communication would occupy a central place, because the structure, extensiveness, and scope of the organisation are almost entirely determined by communication techniques".

This approach essentially places communications at the heart of the organisation. Katz and Kahn (8) state: "Communications, - the exchange of information and the transmission of meaning - is the very essence of a social system or an organisation".

Other theorists, on the other hand, pay scant attention to the topic, declaring that communications is at the periphery of organisational analysis. A more reasonable view is that communication varies in importance according to where one is looking in an organisation and what kind of organisation is being studied.

Some writers about communication have pointed out that it is important and essential for creating understanding, meaning and harmony within the organisation, and that the accomplishment of work is dependent on communication between people in each organisation subsystem. Haroltz Koonz (10) emphasized that communication is essential for the internal functioning of an organisation, because it integrates the managerial functions. Especially, communication is needed to:

1. Establish and disseminate goals of an enterprise,
2. Develop plans for their achievements,
3. Organise human and other resources in the most effective and efficient way,
4. Select, develop and appraise members of the organisation,
5. Lead, direct, motivate, and create a climate in which people want to contribute, and
6. Control performance.

Communication also relates an enterprise to its *external* environment. It is through information exchange that managers become aware of the needs of customers, the availability of suppliers, the regulations of

governments, the activities of other organisations and the community. It is through communication that any organisation becomes an open system interacting with its environment.

Communication is therefore important in every sphere of the organisation because information is used at the lowest levels in the supervisory function to the highest level of the Chief Executive, who will be planning and controlling through the two-way communication of information. Obviously, the information requirements and what is communicated will vary for different departments and levels within the organisation.

Even in a highly mechanised system, communications underlie the development and use of machines. Workers are instructed on usage, orders are delivered, and so on.

Once the importance of communications was recognised, many organisations jumped on a communications band-wagon, believing that if sufficient communications were available to all members of the organisation, everyone would know and understand what was going on and most organisational problems would disappear. Unfortunately, problems do arise in the communication process.

Communications in organisations should provide accurate information with the appropriate overtones to all members who need the communications content. This not only enables staff to do their work properly, but helps them to feel part of a team.

While people at work often complain that too much paperwork is generated or there are too many meetings, they are just as frequently heard to say that 'No-one ever tells me anything' or 'I'm always the last to know'.

Therefore, it is always important to ensure that information is communicated to the right people at the right time, and that neither too much nor too little information is in the system.

In the sections that follow, the media, channels and main methods of communicating information in the organisations will be examined.

### **3.4 CHANNELS AND METHODS OF COMMUNICATION**

Many choices of methods are available for disseminating information in the organisation, according to the directional flow of communication which may be downward, upward, horizontal, and formal or informal channels. The choice of method will be affected by the degree of urgency, the type and nature of information transmitted, whether discussion or persuasion is required, the need for a permanent record, security aspects and the number of people involved.

The main methods of communication within organisations are as follows:-

#### **Communication Mediums**

#### **Communication Methods**

##### **Written**

Official Paperwork (Letters, Correspondence, Mails),  
Circulars, Manuals  
Memos, Briefs  
Files  
Reports (Employee)

##### **Speech (Spoken)**

Meetings (Organisational Meetings, Departmental Meetings, Board Meetings, Briefing Groups)  
Face to Face Exchanges  
Lectures  
Workshops  
Formal Presentations  
Telephone  
"Open door" Policy  
Grapevine

## Communication Mediums

## Communication Methods

Electronic

Electronic Mail  
CBT

Non-Verbal

Present during any communication via speech and  
some audio visual communications

### Different Methods of Communicating within Organisations

Source - Torrington, Derek and Laura Hall. *Personnel Management: A New Approach*, 1987

'Paper' correspondence such as letters, memoranda, reports, forms, circulars, etc. is probably the most common type of communication currently used by organisations. All these add to the sheer weight of paper information generated. The way the information (letters, reports and forms) is presented, designed and organised becomes all-important because it can promote efficiency in compilation, receipt and comprehension of communication. It is necessary that the communication method is effective so that staff can understand and accept what management proposes.

The types of organisational communication that are needed to get the work done each day namely, letters and memoranda, reports, forms, procedure manuals, meetings and electronic mail, are described as follows.

#### 1. Letters and Memoranda

The letter and memorandum both provide a vehicle to communicate information as text. The major difference between these two forms of written communication is their purpose. The memorandum is used for internal communication, whereas the letter is intended for people outside the organisation. Although letters are also used internally, for example,

a commendation or promotion letter could be written to an employee who performs well in his work.

Memoranda provide an extremely efficient means of communicating written information up, down and across the organisation. The information is sometimes written on a special 'memo' form often printed in pads. Some memos produce a copy of the information sent and a record of the reply on one sheet. Memoranda are used

- To transmit ideas and suggestions for consideration or approval.
- To keep people informed of developments.
- To confirm oral communication.
- To give or seek instructions or advice.

## **2. Reports**

Reports are normally written so that a record of the communication is provided but are sometimes presented orally.

Their main purpose is to keep management up-to-date with relevant developments within and outside the organisation. They enable people to make decisions based on accurate facts, expert advice and well considered opinions. Reports give information required for control, appraisal comparison or other purposes and present conclusions and recommendations.

There are different types of reports which could be classified under routine, and special, and there are annual reports, monthly or quarterly reports, budget reports which provide financial statements, showing the source and use of funds, statistical reports, technical reports. Reports could be published or unpublished, and they could be sent in different directions within the organisation.

## **3. Forms**

A form is a prescribed written means of shaping information for communicating ideas. (15) Many and varied forms provide the

organisations most important means of carrying routinised information, and these include bills, invoices, applications, appraisal forms, reminder notices, personnel forms, questionnaires, order forms (requisitions), financial forms from the Accounts Department and machine processed form - punched cards. Each of the forms have different functions. Personnel forms, for example request, collect, store and process information about persons in the organisations which form the employee records. Forms provide the foundation of all paper-based recording systems. It therefore has the objective of recording information in an orderly manner and communicating it in a way which is easily assimilated.

#### **4. Procedure Manuals**

All organisations have policies regarding procedures, job descriptions, hours of work, promotions, vacation periods, sick leave, educational benefits, and retirements. These, along with regulations, on job benefits, employment guidelines, transfers, job performance, financial matters, rules, and grievance procedure constitute a catalogue of information.

The manual provides an accurate definitive source of information for all employees.

It saves time. Employees do not need to crowd the personnel office with questions. To take the supervisor off the hook, save his or her time, and most importantly ensure that all employees receive the same answer to the same question. The procedure manual is a useful reference manual to all employees.

#### **5. Meetings**

Meetings are the most effective forms of communication. Meetings provide an excellent way of keeping people up-to-date with developments, contributes to decision-making, it affords employees and management opportunity to exchange ideas and opinions, to modify views or simply to import information. Meetings are oral forms of downward

communication and if planned properly, they save time by bringing several people together at once for face-to-face consultation.

There are various types of meetings ranging from the informal exchange of ideas between two or three people to the formal statutory meetings governed by rules and procedures.

Officially acknowledged meetings are convened by notice and agenda, usually conducted by chief executives or directors with formal documentation. The recorded minutes of the meeting are distributed to staff concerned. Minutes are a record of the proceedings of a meeting and are kept to preserve a brief, accurate and clear record of the business transacted.

## **6. Electronic Mail**

The concept of electronic mail is rapidly gaining acceptance in the business community and in public organisation as an efficient, cost effective communications alternative. According to Barry Goodman (16), "Electronic mail is an alternative to facsimile, with the advantage of producing quality print at the other end, travelling at incredible speed. Data can be transferred from a word-processor or similar terminal via the public telephone network to a compatible terminal at the other end."

Through the electronic mail, messages can be sent and received on computer screen without the time-consuming and expensive routine of hand-delivered pieces of paper throughout the organisation. Once a sender generates a message on the screen, he or she can send it to an individual electronic mailbox or to all electronic mailboxes in the organisation at the press of a key. It allows executives to publish their opinions to all members of staff.

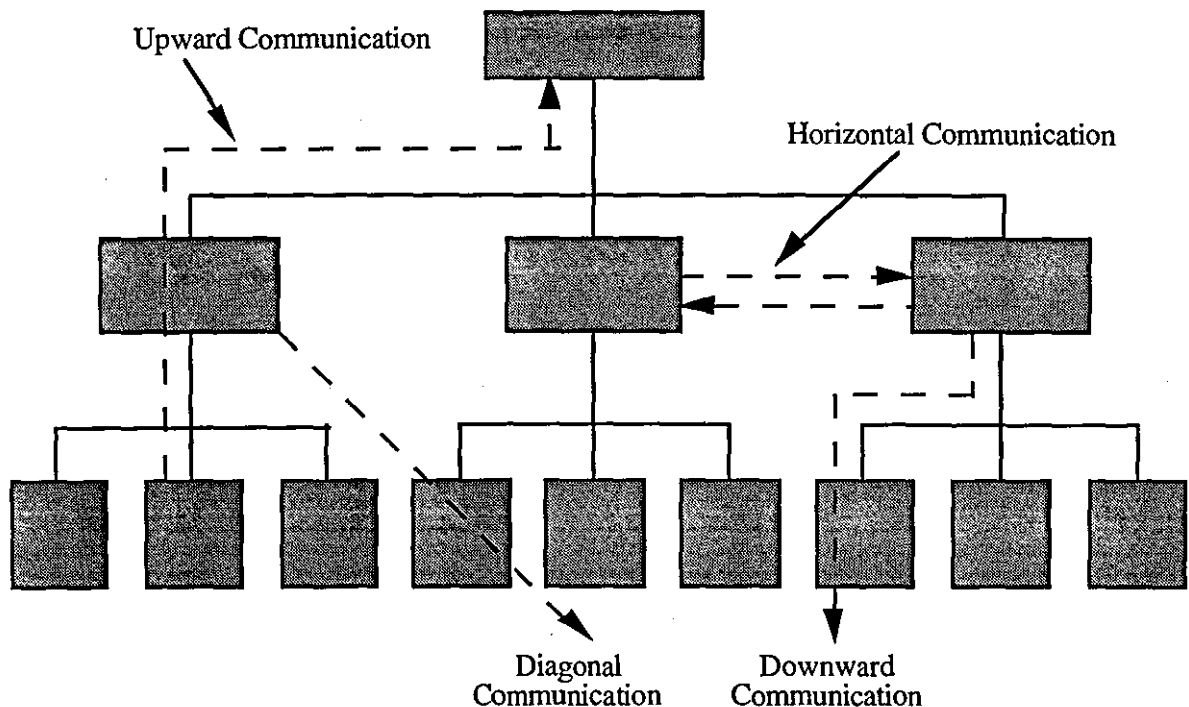
Electronic mail can be used in all directions of communication within the organisation, but it is mostly used among peers (horizontal). However more and more organisations are investigating electronic mail as a stepping stone to improve office productivity.

### 3.5 DIRECTION OF COMMUNICATION

Organisation structure, or the lines of authority, (hierarchy) formally shows the pathways through which messages have to flow. Communication occurs up and down the hierarchy, - Vertical Communication, but the same kinds of information are not communicated in each direction.

Thus, communication of information is a two-way process - sometimes it is on a person-to-person basis. For example, a boss tells a subordinate what to do, and he reports back. It may be on a departmental basis, where, information in form of instructions, commands and procedures can be passed **downwards**, while reactions, reports and comments flow **upwards**. This also provides feedback on operational performance.

Communication also flows **horizontally** that is, between people on the same or similar organisational levels, and **diagonally**, involving persons from different levels who are not in direct reporting relationships with one another.



**Fig. 2.** The Four Directions of Communication in Organizations



### 3.5.1 Downward Communication

In most organisations, the largest percentage of vertical communication flows downwards. Downward communication flows from people at higher levels to those at the lower levels in the organisation hierarchy. This kind of communication exists especially in organisations with an authoritarian atmosphere. It is the superior who decides who gets what kind of communication and when. It also enables decisions taken by management to result into action by the employees.

There are different elements and media of downward communication which employees frequently receive, and use in carrying out their day-to-day responsibilities. These are memoranda, reports, directives, orders, letters to employees, handbooks, orientation manuals and bulletin boards (including computer bulletin boards and message centres). If these are well planned and composed imaginatively, and management recognise the employees need to know, they will help increase productivity and improve morale.

The following information can be passed down to employees using the media for downward communications.

1. Job instruction. In which subordinate is told what to do through direct orders, training sessions, job descriptions, and letters.
2. Information regarding procedures and practices within the organisation such as hours of work, leave period, educational benefits, promotion, discipline, job performances and retirements. The information can be communicated through handbooks, orientation or procedure manuals and circulars.
3. Management can communicate organisation policies, programmes and new regulations on recruitment, income and expenditure, training, reorganisation, organisation structure, or government activities, to staff through policy manuals, circulars and directives, or memoranda.

4. The organisation annual report is used to pass information to employees about the activities, performance, achievements and output on the operations of the organisation during a particular year. This is very important in getting the staff to identify themselves closely with the organisation and its achievements. To understand and accept what management is doing, employees are informed of activities in departments other than their own, and also helps executives in decision making regarding their jobs.
5. Information on financial matters is normally communicated to staff on benefits programs, wage and salary structure - how they are established and revised, using circulars and letters, directives.
6. The pay check envelope is another communication device. The messages printed on a small sheet of paper known as pay slip sent to staff from the accounts department normally receive employees' attention.
7. Feedback to individuals regarding their performance is another form of downward communication. This is normally used to discuss employees' responsibilities, achievements and status in the organisation. If an employee performs his work satisfactorily, or does well in an interview, he is sent a letter of commendation or promotion from the management. Or, if he or she is found wanting in the job, or has other problems, he will receive letters, on the issue.
8. Other forms of oral downward communication are meetings and interviews.

Organisations usually conduct meetings such as general staff meetings, departmental meetings, meetings of senior staff and so on. Meetings provide information on current organisation policies, financial matters, staff issues - personnel. In meetings employees are allowed to air their views and give suggestions. This allows the management to obtain inputs from the generality of staff, before decisions are taken on issues. The minutes of meetings are distributed to staff and a copy kept in the appropriate file.

9. Interviews are used for sending and receiving information orally; for developing and changing attitudes and behaviour; and for motivating others to work for a common goal.

Appraisal interview which is normally between a boss and a subordinate is used for reviewing job performance, establish objectives and analyse future directions of the employee.

10. Bulletin boards - This is amongst the most effective method of communicating information to staff. They are used to announce matters of general and specific interest, such as social issues and government activities, approaching holidays and meetings. Matters of specific interest include information about training, changes in organisation policies and regulations, job advertisements and vacancies, advertisements of specific items for sale, and important events or situations.
11. Communication also takes place orally between superior officer and his subordinates, but it has to be formal. Management usually communicate to staff through speeches and addresses about organisation plans, directions and goals. This may give opportunity for discussions, and feedback.

Traditionally, downward communication was emphasised in organisations, but there is ample evidence that if communication flows only downwards problems will develop. Most communications may be orders, directives, circulars, circulars, policies, memoranda but unfortunately they are usually one-way communications based on the manager's assumption that whatever is sent down is always received and understood.

"Top management's issuance of policies and procedures does not ensure communication. In fact, many directives are not understood or even read." (18) Information is often lost or distorted as it comes down the chain of command, and downward flow of information through the different levels in the organisation is time consuming.

Sometimes the manager may ask for response from the employee, but here again we may encounter the difficulties of feedback. The employee often responds with what he or she believes the manager wishes to hear. In as much as a feedback system is essential for finding out whether information was perceived as intended by the sender, managers must monitor carefully the feedback received from downward communications.

### **3.5.2 Upward Communication**

Upward communication travels from subordinates to superiors and up the organisational hierarchy. Upward communication provides feedback on the effectiveness of downward communication and how it can be improved. It also provides information on operational performance.

1. In this direction of communication employees communicate comments, suggestions, complaints, recommendations and ideas or opinions upwards to management through such devices as suggestion systems forms, employee reports, appeal and grievance procedures, complaint systems, group meetings or Staff Union Meetings and the practice of open-door policy.
2. Written reports of a section or department could be sent up to management. This gives information about the performance and achievement of each department in the organisation, which helps the management in decision making.
3. Another method of communicating upward are forms. Forms can collect data through questionnaire; record data through personnel file; transmit data through statements; and instruct, through procedural guide. There are employment forms for new applicants and appraisal forms which give reports on employees' performance on the job.

The content of the messages of upward communication can range from the most personal gripe to the most high minded suggestion for the improvement of the organisation.

The most obvious problems in upward communication is again the fact of hierarchy. Whereas communication downward becomes more detailed and specific, those going up the hierarchy must become condensed and summarised. The flow of information is often hindered by managers in the communication chain, who filter and edit the messages and do not transmit all the information, especially unfavourable news, to the bosses. Only crucial pieces of information are supposed to reach the top. Yet objective transmission of information is essential for control purposes and correct information is necessary for managing the organisation.

Upper management needs to know specifically about production performance, financial data, what lower-level employees are thinking, and so on.

### **3.5.3 Crosswise Communication**

A great deal of communication does not follow a trail up or down the organisational hierarchy but cuts across the chain of command. Horizontal and Diagonal flows of communication are known as crosswise, and the two communication flows have some common characteristics.

Horizontal Communication is the sending and receiving of messages between employees at the same level or responsibility in the organisation for the cooperation and coordination of their activities.

Diagonal flow of information occurs amongst employees at different levels who have no direct reporting relationships, but many informal relationships may develop between employees within and between departments, which result from frequent contact in the performance of their work. For example, crosswise communication facilitates cooperation and collaboration between various groups and professionals. It also enhances cooperation among various departments. Communication cuts across organisational boundaries when, for example, functional or advisory authority interacts with line managers in different departments.

This direction of communication is important and necessary to the smooth running of an organisation, as it speeds up information flow, and alleviates the constrictions of a rigid 'line' structure. It helps to improve understanding and to coordinate efforts for the achievement of organisation objectives.

The channel of communication which peers use range from informal meetings during lunch breaks, face-to-face conversations, telephones, to the more formal conferences, meetings of heads of departments, committee and board meetings.

The written forms of communication include letters, memoranda, summaries and bulletin boards to keep people informed, and the Electronic mail, which executives use for sending messages to each other.

In an organisation, it is important for department heads to be aware of each other's activities. Intelligent supervisors appreciate knowing what is being achieved in related departments, and this knowledge can often result in suggestions, leading to more efficient performance, and more efficient use of manpower. Communication of information among peers contains much more than task-related information. This is because people have desires and problems which are bothering them. With the collaboration of intelligent colleagues, an employee may know what decisions to take. "The mutual understanding of colleagues is one reason for the power of the peer group. Experimental findings are clear and convincing about the importance of socio-emotional support among people in both organised and unorganised groups. Psychological forces always push people toward communication with peers: People in the same boat share the same problems." (19)

Employees at the same level in the organisation are more apt to share common characteristics, thereby, making horizontal communication important. However, the system for lateral and diagonal communication is necessary to keep concerned personnel apprised of organisation activities and to avoid expensive and needless duplication of effort.

Since information may not follow the chain of command, proper safeguard needs to be taken to prevent potential problems. Specifically, crosswise communication should be encouraged in an organisation, and subordinates should keep supervisors informed of important interdepartmental activities. Coordination of activities can only be achieved if there is an effective network of communication channels going across sections, and departments, as well as up and down within them.

### **3.5.4 Informal Communication**

In addition to the formal relationships which are recognised as part of the organisation structure, many informal relationships develop between employees within and between departments. This informal flow include telephone conversations, one-to-one exchanges, unscheduled meetings on the corridors, or during lunch break. The informal communication is common amongst peers, and it also results from frequent contact in the performance of their work.

The medium of informal communication which exists in every organisation is the grapevine. Unlike formal methods of communication which flows predictably in the organisation that is, up, down, laterally and always through proper channels, the grapevine follows no set pattern or direction. It just moves in and out of all communication networks. It is an important part of all communications in the organisation also known as the 'gate keeper'. This type of communication is sometimes used to see the reactions of staff to a proposed management initiative. This will enable the initiative to be modified before being made official to staff. The grape vine begins when there are changes in the organisation, such as dismissals, changes in the structure of the organisation (reorganisations) new salary increase, merging of departments, and so on. Employees always want to know what is happening and how the changes will affect them, and if the formal channel of communication is not working properly, people will turn to the grapevine.

"There is no vacuum in communication. If something is going on, it will be communicated. If the formal channel is closed or unreceptive, the message will be communicated on the informal channel". (20) Regardless

of what managers think about grapevine, one fact is certain: It is an integral part of the communication network of every organisation, and will always exist to fill an information vacuum.

Communication links enable the members of staff to process information and it is necessary to lend the two channels of both formal and informal together for effectiveness.

### **3.5.5 Communication Problems**

Communications in organisations are not perfect. Managers frequently cite communication breakdown as one of their most important problems. However, communication problems are often symptoms of more deeply rooted problems. For example, poor planning may be the cause of uncertainty about the direction of the firm; poorly designed organisation structure may not clearly communicate organisational relationships; barriers to communication can exist in the sender, in the transmission of the message, in the receiver, or in the feedback.

#### **1. Lack of Planning**

Too often, employees in organisations start talking, and writing without first thinking, planning, and stating the purpose of the message. Yet, giving the reasons for directive, selecting the most appropriate channel and choosing proper timing can greatly improve understanding and reduce resistance to change.

#### **2. Omission and Distortions**

Messages are transformed or altered as they pass through the system. Omission involves the deletion of aspects of messages, and it occurs because the recipients may not be able to grasp the entire content of the message and only receive or pass on what they are able to grasp. Omission is most evident in upward communications since most messages are generated by large numbers of people and units lower in the hierarchy. As communication is on the way up, the omissions occur.



Distortion refers to altered meanings of messages as they pass through the organisation. It is the transformation of the meaning of a message by changing its content. It occurs because people are selective about what they receive as messages depending on the objectives and values of the different organisational units. Selective omission and distortion are however crucial for organisations since accurate communications is the basis for decision making. One of the devices that is available to reduce distortions and other complications is **Redundancy**. This is the repeating of a message in different forms, over different channels, like the duplication of reports, for verification. The messages in the report are read and reread, so people can see the piece of information and respond to it. This is also a correction device.

### **3. Insufficient Period of Adjustment to Change**

The purpose of communication is to effect change that may seriously concern employees. Some communications point to the need for further training, career adjustment, or status arrangements. Changes affect people in different ways and it may take time to think through the full meaning of a message. For efficiency in operations it is important not to force change before people can adjust to its implications.

### **4. Information Overload**

One might think that unrestricted flow of information would help to overcome communication problems but it may result in too much information. Overload leads to omission and contributes to distortion.

People respond to information overload in various ways - A person getting too much mail may ignore letters that should be answered. With too much information, people make errors in processing it, by leaving out some important words. The processing of information may be delayed, either permanently, or with the intention of doing it in the future. Sometimes attention is given first to matters that are easy to handle, while more difficult but perhaps critical messages are ignored.

The solution to this is to reduce the input of information. Managers should insist that only the essential data be processed. Reducing the external demand for information is however difficult. An example is the government's demand for detailed documentation on government contracts, and organisations have to comply with the request.

There is no universal application to communication system rather, the information flow must be tailored to the information needed to support the operations of the organisation.

"More and more accurate communication do not lead inevitably to greater effectiveness for the organisation. The key to the communication process in organisation is to ensure that the correct people get the correct information (in amount and quantity) at the correct time". (21)

In today's enterprise, information flows faster than ever before. However, what is often needed is not more information, but relevant and pertinent information, which is needed to carry out management and administrative functions and activities as well as information needed for effective decision making. The need for the proper management of the information resources cannot therefore, be overemphasized. The speed with which decisions are made, the quality of the decisions made depends on the availability of relevant information.

The availability of information however is dependent on the way in which records have been organised and managed. The organisation of the records is achieved through the application of records management techniques. Records management is a field interested in promoting both the efficient and effective use of records, which is the method or channel for disseminating information (communication) in organisations. With a Records Management programme in operation, recorded information can be controlled or planned as they are being generated, properly organised, clearly identified, and made readily available for day to day organisation functions, while valuable information which is not used everyday is kept in Archives. The management of records therefore, is a key activity in the administration of office work in all organisations.

### **3.6 RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME**

#### **3.6.1 Principles of Records Management**

The Basic Glossary of Archival Terminology, links records management with other areas of organisation management saying that it is "that area of general administrative management concerned with achieving economy and efficiency in the creation, use and maintenance and the disposition of records". (22)

Katherine Aschner (23) stressed that records system has three basic objectives. First, it documents your organisation policies, operations and transactions. Secondly, it does this in such a way that you can find information quickly when you need it, and thirdly, it ensures that long-term information is preserved, so that you can draw on it as long as necessary. It is essential to understand that records management is concerned with the entire life cycle of records as they progress through the various stages. Records are first of all created or received, they are then used by the organisation and may be destroyed if they are ephemeral or stored if they seem to be of longer term value.

### **3.7 EVOLUTION OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

Records Management is a relatively new profession, whose beginnings can be traced to the early years of the 20th century. As a function it has existed for some 5000 years.

The first records of the Sumerian civilisation - clay tablets of Ancient Babylon, Egyptian murals, dried skin, papyrus scrolls and finally paper itself - all bare evidence of man's reliance on record-keeping.

Penn (24) traced the development of innovation on Records Management to the 15th century. At that time, the registry system was established. All incoming and outgoing documents were numbered and entered into logs and registers. Although the registry system was cumbersome and

archaic by today's standards, it is still in use in some places all over the world. Records Management started at the National Archives in the United States of America. Records keeping methods were in chaotic condition in many government departments and agencies. With the voluminous records created during the Second World War, without any organised plan for their disposition, a government Paper-Work Commission was set up to look into the problem. This resulted in the Federal Records Act of 1950. (25) With the act Records Management Division was formally established within the National Archives, and the 'life cycle' concept of records management was developed.

The development of the life-cycle concept changed Records Management from being a sporadic and unrelated effort to an organised, structured, and logically based approach to creating, maintaining and disposing of recorded information. Britain in 1954 appointed a committee, under the chairmanship of Lord Grigg, to deal with the exploding mass of records. The Grigg Committee's recommendation was incorporated into a new Public Records Act of 1958, which laid down the first clear guidelines to central government departments on the review and disposal of records or their transfer to the Public Records office. In Canada, the Public Records Act was passed by the government in 1966 which was a mandate for the Canadian Federal Records Management programme. (26)

In Nigeria, records keeping started as early as 1914 when the colonial office issued some guidelines on the management of records. Another effort is the records survey conducted by Dike between 1951-53, which was to determine the nation's non-current records or historical records and to prevent them from loss to posterity. The report of this survey led to the establishment of the National Archives of Nigeria in 1954, by an administrative order of the Governor-General. (27) In addition to the provision of storage facilities for the avalanche of records that were accumulated, as a result of his survey, Dike turned his attention to the task of establishing bibliographic control over the accumulated records. Attention was also paid to the elimination of insects and pests that were damaging the records. The Public Archives law of 1957 made provision for transferring government records to the National Archives periodically

and also placed emphasis on the preservation of records that are purely of historical interest.

### **3.8 BENEFITS OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

A number of incentives encourage organisations to manage their records effectively. Records can convey valuable information and as such they are a resource and an asset. Emmerson stresses that "records are first and foremost, products of the activities of which they form a part. They arise naturally from the functions, activities, processes and transactions of the creating organisation." (28) Organisations have a continuing need of these records in many areas. Records are required as evidence of the policies and activities of the organisation. They demonstrate and confirm management decisions. They are used to support litigation and to show compliance with government regulations. It is therefore important to provide facilities for the care of these records so that they may be clearly identified and readily available for office operations.

There are far reaching benefits to be gained from the establishment of records management programme in the organisation which could be translated into hard and soft savings.

#### **Hard Savings**

The hard savings come in the form of resources used in space, equipment and staff to manage the records created in the course of business. A major problem is the amount of space taken up in offices for the storage of records in filing cabinets. The cost of office space is very high and filing cabinets are very expensive. With an effective records management programme, a large volume of semi-active records will be moved to off site storage, and this will produce significant space savings, especially with the reorganisation of the office. Less annual budget will be spent on filing equipment.

The majority of staff in any organisation are employed in the creation, manipulation and management of information. However, staff can be

used more efficiently if the records system is better organised. A lot of space will be created for them, this will improve the work environment and thereby increase their productivity. Staff time spent on retrieving information will be less.

### **Soft Savings**

The effective management of records also brings in tangible benefits in form of soft savings. Records Management can improve the decision making process. There is improved control over major resources in the organisation, better access to necessary information, which leads to better decisions, by management. The decision making process can be speeded up, as the information related to the decision is made available much more quickly. The quality of information needed to deal with attacks from competitors, clients and creditors in legal actions is also greatly improved as the relevant records have been identified for retention. Benefits will be accrued if adequate protection is provided for vital records against disasters, and if any is destroyed, it will be as a result of clearly defined retention and destruction programmes. Good records management is beneficial to all organisations. Therefore, there should be a disciplined approach to managing the records from their creation, through maintenance and use, to the final disposition.

### **3.9 THE RECORD LIFE-CYCLE**

The concept of records life cycle which was established within the National Archives of the United States now occupies a central position in the theory and practice of records management.

Ira Penn (29) says that the record's life-cycle consists of the creation, maintenance and use and disposition. He suggested that to manage information efficiently, one must have an understanding of the record life cycle - If a record is not necessary, do not create it. He furthermore stresses the need for the maintenance and use of the records that are created. He says disposition is very vital because of accumulating a lot of information that is not needed.

Therefore, all the stages involved in the records life-cycle must be considered before any record is created. Ian Day (30) indicated that managing the life of a record from creation to final disposal, involves three functional phases - First, we have *active* records which are regularly used for the day-to-day business of an organisation and are usually maintained. Secondly, the *semi-active* records which are not frequently needed for the day to day activities and can be transferred to a separate store, known as the records centre. It is here that appraisal will be taken on the records, to know the decision of their *final disposition* and thirdly, the *archives*, which are records preserved by the organisation because of their permanent value.

Wallace gave a systematic approach to the life-cycle concept of a record, and that the systems are linked with subsystems or components to form a records management programme. (31)

The systems are:-

Records Creation	-	Creation
Records Distribution	}	Maintenance and Use
Records Utilization		
Records Storage - Active		
Records Transfer		
Records Storage - Inactive	}	Disposition
Records Disposition		

It is therefore essential to distinguish information as it moves through the three distinct phases of its life cycle.

### 3.9.1 Records Creation

There is every need for records creation because of its importance in administration. It is however, a fast growing activity leading to heaps of files in various offices.

Records are created as various governmental processes are carried out, as laws are made, budgets prepared, surveys conducted, reports made, instructions formulated and issued, letters received, responses given to inquiries statistics compiled, staff recruited, promoted, demoted and retired.

Records exist primarily because of the need to keep a record of all transactions and activities carried out by organisations and communications in organisations are based on the recorded information. The various ways in which a record is created is as follows: an individual writes a letter or a memorandum to a business associate; a form is sent to an applicant who must complete it and return it to the organisation for processing; an existing record is placed on a copying machine and in a matter of seconds one becomes two; and so on.

The information and records creation (generation) process is an organisation function which includes activities as reports-creation, correspondence management and forms design. In as much as information resources are important and required in organisation activities, at the same time it is necessary to have an effective control on the creation of these records. Before a record is created, some thoughts should be given to the necessity of its existence.

Organisations, whether large or small must control the creation of records such as correspondence, directives, reports and forms in order to be cost efficient. Efforts should be made to establish standards for **correspondence** creation, letter styles and formats, formats for printed memorandum forms to be used internally, and the use of paper. The general guideline for controlling the creation of correspondence is to use the least expensive form of communication. For example, it is better to use a telephone instead of composing and writing a letter, because telephone is less costly and less time consuming.

**Directives** are used to describe policy and procedure statements, therefore, they should be issued in a standardised distinctive format that makes them stand out to employees as important communication from management. Inventory of current directives should be done, to ensure



that duplicate or conflicting directives have not been issued, and they should be stored in loose-leaf binder, for ease of additions, deletions and revisions. Some organisations keep copies of directives in files.

It is necessary to manage and control *reports* in order to improve the quality and economy of reporting systems in an organisation. The production of unnecessary reports should be prevented. There should be limitation of report distribution by developing standards and instructions for reports design and preparation, and to have a continued evaluation of the need for current and proposed reports to ensure economy and efficiency. *Forms* are an effective information gathering tool, they are expensive to create and print. They should be properly designed to enhance the flow of work throughout the organisation. The records manager has a duty to exercise control over forms, to eliminate unnecessary forms, standardise forms, control the creation of new forms, design and monitor them so that they can be used effectively. The reproduction, stocking and distribution of forms should also be managed. Forms are subject to periodic review, to ensure that they are still necessary and adequate for the purpose they were created.

It is essential to provide directive or *manual* to those involved in the creation process of records. The manual should clearly outline the standard practice and procedures to be followed when creating records, which includes illustration of writing styles and data presentation; instructions on maintaining correspondence files, explanation on the use of form letters, guidelines on the creation of reports and forms. The procedure manual should designate authority for the centralised control of all recorded communication activities and should be incorporated in the records management programme. Everyone involved in the creation, processing, storing and disposing of records should be able to contribute ideas to the manual. It should be in a loose-leaf form, for regular updating.

Assuming that decisions have been made to create, arrangements for maintenance and use of records should also be developed at the creation stage, so that information can be stored and retrieved in an orderly and efficient manner.

### **3.9.2 Maintenance and Use**

This Maintenance and Use phase is when records are said to be active and current - they are used frequently or referred to regularly in the office. An example is current personnel files or service contracts. During this stage, there are elements such as mails, and files management and active record storage.

The active phase involves a variety of record management functions, which include aspects such as handling of mail, both incoming and outgoing, hardcopy and electronic; circulation of mail within the organisation and the recording of requests for action to individual members of staff; the design and processing of forms; circulation of internal memoranda; and the registration, production and dissemination of reports.

#### **File Management**

The management and maintenance of files is an important function in active stage of a record. Active file operations include layout, records classification, and establishing procedures for filing and indexing systems to enable staff retrieve current documents. As records are being generated internally within the organisation there must be a mechanism for handling them. They should be filed, so that related items and subjects are brought together. This makes it easy to deal with them, put them away after using, and retrieve again when required.

In devising a good filing system, the following principles should be followed. (32)

1. There should be accessibility of records so that they can be produced quickly when required.
2. The system should be simple and easy to use.
3. The filing scheme should be flexible and also be elastic so that it can expand and take an increasing number of records. An organisation has to tailor its filing system to its needs to ensure that the system is flexible enough to cope with changes

4. Suitable storage facilities (filing equipment and facilities) should be acquired and should fit into available space.
5. To organise and improve information retrieval by developing classification and indexing systems and standards. The records must be clearly classified into major areas and subgroupings and must be indexed with sufficient cross-referencing for documents.
6. There must be control to keep track of any record removed.
7. Above all, there should be adequate safety against such things as fire, flood and the deterioration of the records from dirt, dust and loss. Most especially, protection should be provided for the vital records of the organisation, because they are valuable.

As organisation's records contain a mixture of material, the major decision to be made is whether to store the records in central registry, to decentralise them into departments, or a combination of the two. Wherever records are kept in the organisation, it is necessary to store them systematically.

The approaches to be used for filing system include Alphabetical, Subject Numerical and Chronological.

In alphabetical filing, persons, organisations and things are filed by name in alphabetical order. Subject-based material is usually grouped into files with similar records. The files are then organised within a filing or classification system which brings together files on related topics. Whatever the filing system it usually requires a notation. Numerical notation system, where files are given consecutive numbering is the simplest to implement. It is faster and more accurate and can be used as subject numbering, for example 7 - Personnel; 7.1 - Absenteeism.

In chronological filing system, records or files accumulate naturally by date. Examples are invoices or orders which are usually filed by number or sometimes by date of issue. Chronological system is useful for tickler files and current information files.

## **Active Records Storage**

It is essential to provide storage equipment and facilities for the files, so that records can be accessed easily and quickly. The storage units should be appropriate to the format of records which they are to contain. Since records come in various media as well as size, special storage equipment may be required, which include vertical cabinets, lateral or open shelf filing cabinets, mobile or mechanised filing units, for paper-based files. Electronic based records are stored in computer disks, magnetic tape or optical disks, which are arranged in special folders with protective pockets.

The physical arrangement or layout of a registry or wherever files are kept should be properly made so as to accommodate the flow of documents; there should be enough space for employees to move around. The general environment should be clean and there should be security especially with important and valuable records. Vital records, which protect the rights and interests of the organisation, employers, customers and the public, should be protected against all disasters. Examples of the records are - personnel files, payroll, contract papers, and policy papers. Vital records are normally stored in fireproof cabinets or in special storage equipment such as safes and vaults. Access to the records are limited to authorised personnel. Security system should be installed in the office area where they are kept. A photocopy or microfilm of the original could be made and then transferred to a separate location in another building.

Disaster planning is an integral part of the records management programme, and it is essential that it covers both paper records and computer processes.

### **3.9.3 Records Disposition**

The disposition phase includes elements such as inactive records, retention scheduling, appraisal, storage in records centres, archives and ultimate disposal. Following the active phase of their life, records enter a semi-active or intermediate phase. During this time, they are no longer

referred to regularly, but accessed now and then. Inactive records are not necessarily dead records, they should still be made available when needed.

A records *Retention and Disposition Schedule* based on legal requirements and administration decisions indicates how long a record should be kept in both active and inactive storage and at what point it should be destroyed. The retention schedule defines major classes of records and provides details of their value, through the records survey or inventory. The *records survey* helps to know which records exist within the organisation. This involves a survey to identify the series or classes of records, and information about each record series including the title; the purpose of the record within the organisation; the originator; the history of the record; the status of the record - whether it is important to the organisation; the medium of the record-paper, microfilm or magnetic tape, storage medium; current retention period; whether the record is regarded as vital to the organisation. After gathering all the necessary information about the records, the next thing is to do an appraisal of the record series. An *appraisal* is the process of analysing the records surveyed and make decisions on how long each separate organisational group of records should be retained. The decision is based on a number of factors which includes:-

Legal requirements or regulatory requirements - the statutes under which the business runs;

Audit requirements;

Commercial or Operational requirements - These are records which provide information on key organisational activities; and

Archival requirements or records of evidential value - some records provide important evidence on the organisation history and development.

After making the decision for the retention period of the record series it is then recorded in a document. Robek defines it thus: "A records retention and disposition schedule, (RIDS) sometimes called a records information

schedule, is a document that authorises and provides for the transfer and disposition of all records of the organisation." (24) It is the document that determines the

1. Disposal of records whose retention period has expired.
2. Storage of inactive records separately from active ones, and
3. Preservation of records of archival value.

The schedule will be used for the future control of the process, and in order to work efficiently, it needs to be maintained and kept up to date.

In this intermediate or inactive stage, records are transferred into a local repository where it still remains under the care of the department staff, or it may be transferred to *off-site record centre* where they are passed into the charge of records centre staff or records manager. Transferring inactive records to a record centre frees valuable office floor space which can be used more effectively than by storing outdated records. It reduces record-keeping costs in monetary savings through economical use of both equipment and space. Record handling and retrieval by the staff will now be easy thereby reducing work load.

In setting up a records centre, factors to be considered include site location where the centre space costs less than office space; the centre must be designed and equipped for the maintenance and servicing of inactive records; there should be good security, safety and control measures. The final stage of a records life cycle concludes with either disposition or permanent storage. Records which are no longer required after the semi-active phase are *destroyed* by burning, shredding or pulping, microfilm-based records are disposed of by shredding or pulverising, and electronic based records are erased or pulverised. Records with long-term value or historical significance are transferred to an *archive* or record office permanently. A record can be disposed of at any point during its life cycle, and even those to be sent to the record office, should not be archived immediately, because they may lose the archival value after a given period. Thus, records management system controls records throughout the organisation and at all stages, including

1. Creation
2. Distribution
3. Use
4. Retention
5. Storage
6. Retrieval
7. Protection
8. Preservation
9. Final disposition.

Considering the importance of the life-cycle concepts, we shall see the extent to which records management in the Federal Civil Service Commission, Nigeria, have conformed to the records life-cycle approach.

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## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT IN THE FEDERAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION**

#### **4.1 COMMUNICATION IN THE COMMISSION**

The Federal Civil Service Commission was established in 1954. It was to be responsible for the recruitment of qualified candidates into the different Ministries and departments; discipline erring or offending officers; transfer and secondment; and reward merit by way of promotion for deserving officers in the Federal Civil Service. The objectives are -

- a. To ensure that personnel decisions are taken objectively, promptly and competently.
- b. To recommend to the government, personnel policies aimed at improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the Civil Service.
- c. To ensure that the interests and rights of the government are protected in all its dealings with its employees and vice versa.

Most of the activities of the Federal Civil Service Commission are basically information processing. The day to day management and administration of operations in progress includes such tasks as staff management, budgets and financial matters, performance monitoring, planning and research, decision making, establishment of policies, and dealing with other Ministries on the recruitment, promotion and discipline of staff. These tasks generally entail a lot of written and spoken communication with staff, individuals or groups and involve reference to recorded information.

Communication provides the means for the Director General and the directors for making and executing policies and decisions on matters concerning the organisation. The senior officers are always communicating on the telephone or discussing the coordination of the day's schedule. The Chief Recruitment Officer is processing the application forms of applicants based on the information which has been

entered in the applicants' record file. The heads of departments are able to know what is happening in the sections under them, through communication in the form of reports sent to them by their subordinate officers.

The personnel Assistants process incoming correspondence everyday, sort them out, put them in the appropriate files, and then circulate them to schedule officers who will act on the information.

Communication of information is made to the members of staff (employees) on their work roles and on procedures to allow them perform their functions effectively for the achievement of organisation objectives. Information sent from the Ministries will allow the Commission to monitor their activities, and will also help in making important decisions on recruitment, promotions and discipline of staff in the Service.

The importance of communication in the Commission cannot therefore be overemphasized; it is an important work tool.

## **4.2 CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION**

The medium of disseminating information in the Commission is through written and spoken communication and the methods used are mostly in the form of recorded information or records, namely correspondence, memoranda, reports, directives, forms, documents, and so on, which are generated internally. The importance of internally generated information to government policy-makers is demonstrated in Aiyepkuen's study (1) of the processes of information dissemination to, and its utilisation by, policy-makers in the Federal Civil Service of Nigeria in which he discovered in-house memoranda or internally generated information topping the list of sources used by civil servants surveyed. Government officials also utilise externally generated information in the form of data such as official statistics, reports of other Ministries, and texts such as reports, Research reports, and published documents, like Federal official gazettes, and Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The various channels of communication in the Commission which are either formal or informal are, as follows. The written communication includes:-

Correspondence	-	(letters, memoranda, briefs and minutes)
Directives	-	(manuals, circulars, rules and regulations)
Reports	-	(Commission reports, departmental reports, financial or budget reports, committee reports)
Forms	-	(application forms, performance appraisal forms, order forms, payment vouchers or slips)
Information Bulletin	-	noticeboard
Advertisement	-	newspapers

Communication through spoken medium include:

Meetings	-	general staff meetings, departmental meetings, board meetings, senior staff meetings.
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Face-to-face exchanges

Telephone conversations

Interviews and discussions

Speeches

Lectures, and workshops

Open door policy

The above methods are useful for the smooth running of the organisation and each method used depends on the direction of the communication and also on the specific nature of the message to be communicated.

### **4.3 DIRECTIONS OF COMMUNICATION**

The Commission is based on the hierarchical principle in which authority and responsibility flow in direct line from top to the bottom. Each person is accountable to his immediate superior up the decline, providing a vertical relationship. The pattern of information flow within the Commission is channelled according to the organisation structure

and the positions people occupy. This makes the communication very formal, and in largely vertical directions. Commands and instructions are passed down; reports and other information flow upwards. Communication also travels horizontally between departments and officers on the same level (peers). However, there is a communication network in the Commission which links people through a chain. Information is transmitted from person to person, and across sections and departments as well as up and down within them, until the last person that needs to know is reached.

#### **4.3.1 Downward Communication**

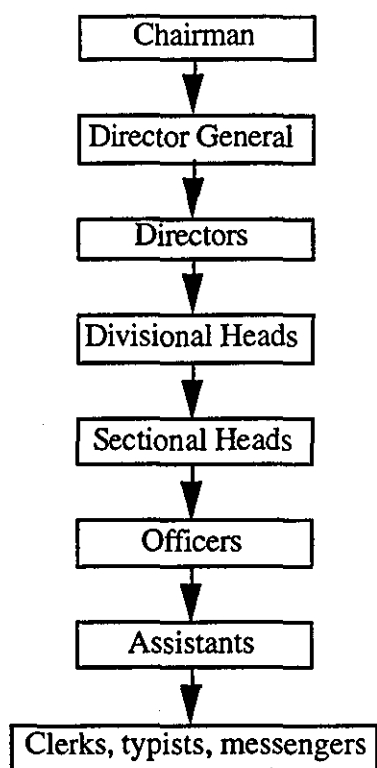
In the Federal Civil Service Commission, bureaucratic hierarchy has a powerful effect on the communication behaviour. There is always one individual in a position above in the hierarchy, so that every employee knows to whom they are supposed to turn for information and instructions; to whom they report when some unexpected events occur and the superior officer knows who gets what kind of information or instructions and when. Thus, when an executive issues an order to a subordinate, he expects it to be obeyed, and the purpose carried out - but vertical flows is time consuming.

However, downward communication flows are more frequent in the Commission, than upward flows, because they are mostly in the form of orders, instructions, guidelines and directives, and the communication is made with the intention of achieving certain results.

#### ***Types of Downward Communication***

1. Organisation policies, programmes and regulations normally originate from the Chairman or the Director General and the information will be transmitted to staff through their heads of departments. For example, information or instructions from the Chairman's office is sent to the Director General who in turn passes it down to the directors. The directors will then go through the information, sort it out, decide how much should be passed to the departments, and by which method, and in what form will they understand it best. The information is passed to the level immediately below them, the divisions, then down to the next level which is the

sections. The directors actually see to the execution of the policies by ensuring that the subordinates below them comply. The channel of communication is formal coming through circulars, letters, such as the Commission Policy Circulars or the Federal Establishment Circular. The Commission Circular is generated internally, while the Federal Establishment Circular is normally sent from the office of head of service.



**Fig. 3.** Diagram showing the Process of Downward Communication

2. Information is passed down to staff about the Commissions activities during the year, through the Federal Civil Service Commission Annual Report. The annual report is an important communication device in the Ministry because it enables the staff to understand and accept what the management is doing; to get them to identify themselves closely with the organisation and its achievements; employees are also informed of the activities of other departments; and this allows officers to obtain information which helps them in decision making regarding their jobs. For example, the statistical data and information in the report on appointments and the vacancy positions declared by the Ministries will enable the Recruitment Officer to take

necessary decisions on the recruitment of qualified personnel and which Ministry or Department they should be posted to . The report is normally in published form, sent to heads of departments, who pass it down to their subordinate officers - the heads of division, branches and sections.

3. Job descriptions or procedures and practices within the organisation are normally given to new employees by a superior officer. It could be in form of a document known as Schedule of duties or by direct orders from the boss. Instructions are also given to employees on new job design or job rotation through circulars or letters. Although the staff of Commission occupy positions on the basis of knowledge, skill and experience, they still need procedure manuals to guide them in carrying out their functions - which includes documents such as Notes for Guidance; Scheme of Service. Communication of information on matters such as length of service, hours of work, educational benefits, (training) leave benefits, promotions, transfers, reorganisation, discipline, resignations and retirements are passed to staff through circulars or handbooks, like the Federal Official gazettes; the Civil Service Handbook; Federal Civil Service Rules; and the Implementation Guidelines on the Civil Service Reforms. The Implementation guidelines is a document which contains information about government regulations on the new Civil Service Reform, and the reorganisation of all ministries. All the members of staff (employees) are supposed to know, and understand the new reform. Some of these documents which serve as guidelines on procedures and practices in the Commission are in published form. Examples are the Civil Service Handbook, The Federal Civil Service Rules and the Notes for Guidance, and the copies are normally kept in the Commission library.
4. Management also communicate information on financial matters to staff on new salary structure, staff benefits, such as the leave bonus. The information will be passed from the Accounts Department to the heads of departments or sections through letters, circulars or memoranda. There is also a published document which gives

employees all the rules and regulations on financial matters known as Financial Regulations. Another means of communication to staff is through the pay slip. The messages printed on this small sheet of paper sent to employees every month normally receive their attention.

5. Another form of downward communication in the Commission is performance feedback. Every employee receives feedback on their performance and behaviour in the office from the management. If an employee does his work satisfactorily, or does well in an interview, he is sent a letter of commendation or a promotion letter from the Director General, which will be passed to him/her through the sectional head. If a subordinate is found wanting in his or her job, or is continually late to the office, the boss will give an initial comment. If there are no changes, he/she would be given a letter of query to explain the reasons for his/her behaviour, and then he will receive a warning letter from his/her head of department through the immediate senior officer. This is a way of disciplining an employee and the correspondence will be recorded in this personal file.
6. In the Federal Civil Service Commission the noticeboard is a popular method of communication to staff. It normally contains information about matters of general interest, such as announcements about public holidays; lectures or training workshops (inservice training, job orientation); Civil Service Examination, or the Confirmation and Advancement test for junior workers; Dates for promotion interview; Advertisement for vacant posts; List of successful candidates offered appointments; Items for sale; Announcements of marriages or death of staff, the annual Christmas party; and meetings of staff union.
7. The Commission sometimes place advertisements in the local newspapers or journals for vacant posts (job openings). This is directed at informing employees of job opportunities, so that they can apply to the appropriate post on a higher level, but it is also a way of presenting the Commission's image to the outside world.



8. Occasionally, the Chairman, any of the Commissioners or the Director General give speeches, addresses or lectures to staff during workshop or seminars in the office. This may give opportunity for discussions and feedback.
9. Officially acknowledged meetings do take place in the Commission as a communication device. They include General Staff Meetings, Senior Staff Meetings, Departmental Meetings and so on. The meetings are held fortnightly or monthly, and the purpose among others is to provide information on the policies of the Commission Staff matters - personnel; budget proposals or financial matters; new government regulations; and the problems facing the Commission with a view to obtaining input from the generality of staff, before decisions are taken on issues. The Director General normally presides over the general staff meetings, and he allows employees to make contributions, by giving their views on issues and making suggestions. Meetings are beneficial to staff because they enhance cooperation, better communication and commitment to the goals of the Commission. Generally, minutes of meetings are sent down to staff and a copy kept in the appropriate file.

#### **4.3.2 Upward Communication**

In the Commission, upward communication are messages initiated at the lower levels and passed up to higher level officers. It could be in form of feedback, but communication is restricted to authority structure. The quantity of information passing upwards through the formal network is always less than information passing down.

1. Upward communication occurs in the Federal Civil Service Commission when an employee (subordinate) wants to clarify some issues about work; make complaints about other staff or some problems; give a report on operational performance. On these, employees communicate comments, complaints or appeals, requests and suggestions to the superior officer through such methods as written reports, letters, briefs, minutes, forms and union meetings.

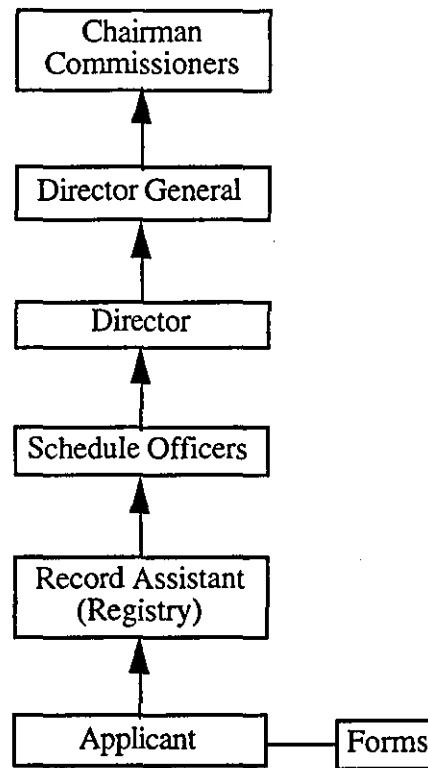
2. A chief personnel officer could send a written report on the activities of his section to the Director of personnel. The report can include suggestions or training proposals for the staff of the section. The director will in turn make comments or recommendations on the report and then send it to the Director General.
3. Written reports are used extensively in the Commission to send information upward to management. There are annual reports, monthly or quarterly reports; budget reports - these provide financial statements, showing the source and use of funds. The report also identifies the requirements and proposals for the following year. Each department is expected to send a report to management at the end of the year. This will give the account of activities or performance of the department for the year. It may contain statistical data, from the Statistics Sections for instance, or information about staff positions from the personnel department.
4. Reports are also used by some of the sections or divisions to justify budget. for example, the library annual report states the performance and achievements during the year to inform the policy makers about the services and also, to impress on them, especially for more financial resources.
5. Employees are also expected to write individual reports on their duties which will be passed up through their immediate boss. These reports contain some suggestions or recommendations to management about policies or procedures of work, or about new equipment required for the development of the department.

The reports provide information which help management in decision making. It is also a sort of feedback, to know how individuals or departments have been performing based on the instructions and guidelines passed down. All these reports or messages are put in each of the departments file before sending them up to management.

6. Communication upwards also takes place, when an employee wants to make a request for important things such as annual leave; study leave (training or further studies); or he wants the office to grant him substantial amount of loan. He or she will write a letter applying for

whatever he/she wants. The letter will be filed in the employee's personal file, and all matters will be dealt with in the file. This will then be passed to the immediate boss, who may comment on the letter, or initial it, before sending it to the next superior officer, or the director of the department. The director will then pass the request to the Director General for approval. In some cases, it is the chairman of the Commission who will give the final approval. Likewise, whenever a staff member has any complaints about his work, petitions for unfair discipline, or upgrading, he/she will write a letter through his/her immediate superior officer up the hierarchy, to management.

7. Another channel of upward communication is through forms. Application forms known as Form FC.2 are given out to applicants to fill, before they are considered for jobs. Application letters could also be written by an employee if there is a job vacancy in the Commission, in which he is interested. The completed forms are normally sent up the hierarchy to the Commissioners for action. For example, the Recruitment Department which is responsible for processing of forms for appointment will collect all relevant information about an individual which includes forms, letters, documents, and the brief which has been written by the Schedule Officer, and enclose them in the applicant's personal file which has already been created in the registry. The file will then be routed from the recruitment officer, through the Head of Department and sometimes, through the Director General and then to the Commissioner in charge who gives the final approval based on recommendations, qualifications and vacancy positions. If the applicant is successful, he will be given a letter of appointment, and will be posted to any of the ministries where there is a vacancy - position for him. The file of the applicant will then be sent to the Appointment Registry and put in the filing cabinet for future reference.



**Fig. 4. The Process of Upward Communication in respect of Application for Appointment**

8. The Annual Performance Evaluation Forms (Reports) is a staff appraisal system which is part of human resource planning. It gives information on the performance of each staff of the Commission, to the management.

Each employee will fill the evaluation form giving necessary information. It will then be passed to the immediate superior officer, who will appraise the employee and write a report on his/her performance on the job during the particular year. The form will be filed into the employee's confidential file, and sent up to the director or head of department who will check through the evaluation report and countersign, before sending it up to management. The employee could agree or disagree with the superior officer's report on him. However, meeting is encouraged between the superior officer and his subordinate. This gives opportunity for discussions and feedback, which helps to identify whether the employee's job should be redesigned, to identify areas of improvement and the training needs.

Performance appraisal is also used for reward system (promotion), to motivate the employee who performs his duties satisfactorily.

9. The staff unions communicate with management by sending up the minutes of their meetings. Sometimes they meet with representatives of management to discuss and present their requests, suggestions and recommendations on behalf of members of staff.

#### **4.3.3 Horizontal Communication**

Horizontal Communication in the Federal Civil Service Commission is the exchanging of information amongst members of staff who are of roughly equivalent rank or on the same level, either in the same section within a department or in different departments.

Horizontal communication flows in the Commission are more frequent than vertical flows. This is because employees communicate more openly and effectively with their equals than with their superiors. They are not restricted to any hierarchy and they share common characteristics, and understanding. This channel of communication is more informal than formal and it is generally more rapid. The formal channels of communication which peers use in the Commission are letters, memoranda, documents, files, minutes, face-to-face conversations, formal meetings. There are also informal meetings in offices, corridors or during breaks, and telephone exchanges.

Directors in the Commission hold discussions among themselves as the work proceeds, because one of them can anticipate every possible contingency in the Ministry. They hold head of departments meetings regularly to co-ordinate policy. The government, recognising the importance and benefit of communication among peers for the overall coordination of operations and for carrying out the functions effectively, states in the guidelines that "the Directors shall perform their duties in close consultation and cooperation with their Directors of departments in the Ministry". (2)

Horizontal communication in the Commission also takes the form of co-workers in the same department talking to each other. For example, the

Accountant and the budget officer communicate directly with each other in order to work effectively. They can advise each other on work problems and solutions to some financial matters could be worked out at their level. In the Commission, people at work always have a compelling need to find out. Sometimes they require a piece of information that will enable them carry out their jobs quickly, but if they cannot find out through the existing formal channel or, they are reluctant to ask their superior officer, they will search around in the department, until they find somebody who will give them the information.

Management expects inter-departmental coordination and cooperation to go on, so a Chief Promotion Officer and a Recruitment Officer from different departments can engage in work activities together, and can make decisions on some new course of action, but the information as to be transmitted to the superior officer.

Informal communication channels are frequently used by peers in the Commission. This allows senior officers to discuss freely and share views on organisation issues. The unscheduled meetings help them in making important decisions quickly, without passing through the hierarchy. The employees in the lower levels in the Commission engage in a lot of informal communications. They share knowledge amongst themselves - tips on how to do the job more easily, for example. Some are valuable background information about the organisation, and the officers working in it, so it will be easy for any new comer among them to understand what is happening. Amongst the discussions, jokes and teasing, going on either in the canteens or inside the staff bus, a good deal of factual information gets passed around.

The Informal communication is also a breeding place for rumours. A rumour is grapevine information which is communicated without evidence of truth, because the message given is frequently distorted. Information is passed to a group of three or four persons and it begins when there is a new salary structure; when an employee is dismissed from work, or any other social issues. The grapevine is not approved by the authority but some executives try to cultivate it. For example, they may pass some information down informally, to see employees reactions or sometimes a senior officer may discuss with a messenger or an

assistant in the office and ask about a rumour that is going on around. however, both formal and informal communication links enable the members of staff in the Commission to process information.

#### **4.3.4 External Communication**

While all the messages are being passed around inside the Commission through the different channels of Communication, it is also linked by communication channels to the outside world. All day long, messages are pouring into the Commission through telephone, face-to-face exchanges, correspondence is received inform of reports of activities, monthly returns, minutes, files and personnel records, from different Ministries and Extra-Ministerial departments. Documents, letters, directives are also received from government agencies. Likewise, messages are sent out from the Commission through letters, circulars, documents, telephone exchanges and so on.

We could see from the above, that the major means of communicating information in the Federal Civil Service Commission is through paper records. The Commission depend on these messages in form of records for the successful implementation of its operations.

### **4.4 RECORDS MANAGEMENT IN FEDERAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION**

The Federal Civil Service Commission recognising the importance of information resources for the effective performance of its functions, and for the achievement of its objectives has set up a records section, known as the Registry.

#### **4.4.1 The Registry**

The Registry is the nerve centre of the Commission, especially for the collection, storage, dissemination and speedy retrieval of relevant information for day-to-day activities for decision making.

The Federal Civil Service Commission has three registries, namely, - Records (Open) Registry; Appointment Registry; and the Confidential

(Secret) Registry. The three registries are a section under the Planning, Research and Statistics Department, which is also responsible for other information systems and services such as the library and statistics unit.

### ***1. Records (Open) Registry***

The Records Registry is the main registry in the Office, and it is also known as the Open Registry. The main registry at the centre of administration of the Commission, creates and keeps various categories of records for the purpose of achieving the objectives of the organisation.

The Records Registry has a record office, which is responsible for preparing Commission employee records from the time of their new appointment until they resign or retire. The office prepares succession plan for all staff (Seniority List), and also prepares the incremental dates of each officer, which is submitted to the Accounts section for incremental payments. All the records relating to matters about each employee in Commission are then enclosed in their personal files and kept in the Records Registry.

Other files, such as subject files, of different departments in the Commission, policy files, contract files, all records on financial matters, and general files are also kept in the main registry. The registry is also opened to general correspondence between the Commission and other Ministries or government departments. Thus, some of the records kept in the main registry emanate from such correspondence.

### ***2. Appointment Registry***

The Appointment Registry handles all records relating to new appointments of employees into the Civil Service, the transfer of service, and secondment to other organisations.

When people fill application forms for appointments, new files are created for them in this registry, with their personal names and serial number. The files are kept here, and all correspondence concerning an applicant will be dealt with in his/her personal file. All the records and files of employees from levels 07-10 who are in the Civil Service are also kept in the Appointment Registry.



### **3. *The Confidential (Secret) Registry***

The Confidential Registry is responsible for keeping all the records relating to promotion, discipline or other confidential matters concerning each of the staff of the Federal Civil Service Commission, both the junior and senior. Documents kept in the secret registry are highly classified, and sensitive records. Some subject or policy matters which are very confidential are stored here.

#### **4.4.2 Personnel**

The Registries are headed by Principal Record assistants (supervisors). They have basic qualifications with subsequent in-service training course on the rudiments of records management, at the Administrative Staff College (ASCON). They supervise the personnel assistants and record clerks working with them, they are also responsible for the classification of records, and direct all the activities of the registry.

The record clerks are in charge of the management of mails, registration opening of files, distribution of correspondence, to whom they are addressed and keeping files in the appropriate file cabinets.

The registries also have typists who type the index cards and other correspondence.

### **4.5 RECORDS LIFE CYCLE**

#### **4.5.1 Records Creation**

Records are created in the Commission during the daily communication process in the different departments. The various types of records that are created includes the following - letter, circulars, reports, forms, directives, guidelines on procedures, personnel files, briefs, minutes, policy documents, finance papers, invoices, contract papers, monthly returns received from other Ministries and so on.

- a. A lot of correspondence is being created during the course of business. For example, much of the functions in some departments

are done with the writing of briefs and minutes on employee cases such as promotion, transfer of service, recruitment and discipline. Which means records in the form of briefs are created regularly by schedule officers.

- b. Letters of approval are always created by management in response to requests from employees or approval for new appointments, and these letters are always made in three copies. The original copy will be sent out to whoever it is concerned, the second copy will be put in the file, while the third copy will be filed in the flimsy file, which is normally kept in the main registry, or appointment registry as the case may be.
- c. A record created when a minute is written by an officer to a superior to support verbal discussions.
- d. The Commission always documents all the decision making processes and activities, thereby creating records.
- e. Records in form of application forms are being created when applicants into the Civil Service fill forms and send them back to the Commission for processing. The application form has already been designed in standard format to be filled by job seekers. The creation of these forms is being controlled in the Ministry. For an applicant to get a form, he has to show evidence that he/she genuinely needs the form. This is to monitor the use of forms.
- f. Another type of important form that is being created is the Annual Performance Evaluation forms. It is normally filled by employees to evaluate their performance on the job. These forms are passed to the Confidential Registry after filling where they are enclosed in the confidential file of each staff. The bulk of the forms are printed by the Government Press, and they are kept in a store under the care of the Office Manager.
- g. Reports by different departments or individual reports are also created to be sent to management. Reports are normally written quarterly, or early, and there is always the need for them. An example is the Budget report and financial statements. The reports are put in files in the main registry.

- h. Directives are created by the Management and these include Instructions or procedure circulars, guidelines about duties or work. Copies of circulars are filed into the policy file and kept in the record section of the registry, for future reference.

Although the control of records is not centrally done, they are not created at random. Before an important letter or any transaction is created, an employee has to take a directive from the head of department or a superior officer.

Also, directives (circulars) on operations are only issued from the Chairman, or Director General's office, or any superior officer who has been delegated to do it, and it must have proper signature, with date and a file number.

#### **4.5.2 Maintenance and Use**

In the Federal Civil Service Commission the maintenance of record files is spread over three registries. Each registry creates its own files. The manual method of record keeping is being used in the Commission, and the records are in hard copy form (paper records).

Maintenance of records in the registries include the following functions - receiving, opening, recording, classifying and indexing of mails and files, storage of files and the keeping of correspondence documents or other records in pertinent files to facilitate their identification, location and speedy retrieval when the need arises. The registries also supply files on demand, and despatch the mails. The control of incoming and outgoing mail is centrally done in the main open registry. When correspondence comes into the Commission, it is normally received in the open registry by a receiving clerk. The mail is recorded in a mail incoming register and stamped as received.

However, before filing the mails, they are put in mail jacket (file) and forwarded to chief executives of the Commission, such as the Chairman or the Director General, who, after going through the mails will initial them and endorse them to appropriate officers for necessary action.

When the mails are brought back into the registry, the records clerk will then file the mail, and then send the file to the schedule officer concerned.

The outward mail is also monitored with the use of outgoing mail register. All outgoing mails for dispatch has to pass out through the main registry, with the letter signed for the Chairman (on his behalf), with the Commission's stamp, date sent out and file reference number.

There are also registers for the circulation of internal mail. When an officer requests for a record or file for action, the registry will record the file in the register, including the date, file number and the officer who is going to make use of the file.

### *1. File Management*

There are regulations on records and filing procedures in the Commission. Although the three registries create their files independently, the filing system is the same. The records are first of all classified into two categories namely, subject or policy matter files, and personal files relating to individual officers. The files are maintained on the basis of one subject, one file; this allows related records to be filed together.

Since large variety of records are maintained in the registry, numeric system of filing is used. That is, code numbers are assigned to different subjects, and individuals. Files are however arranged according to serial numbers. When a new file is to be created, an appropriate file title will be given, then the registry clerk refers to the register or accession book to take the next unused number in the sequence - consecutive numbering. Numeric filing implies that each item to be filed has a unique number or number and letter combination.

In the Commission, a combination of letters and a prefix is used with file number to denote the origin of a file like the name of the Ministry . For example, a staff's personal file is numbered - FCP978 - The FCP stands for Federal Commission - Personal file. The numbering system is also used for subject files. An alphabetical index card to the numbered files is always consulted to locate a subject or personal file. The index card or file contains the names of all correspondents or names of subjects, with the

code number assigned to them. Once the code number has been determined from the index, the file clerk can file or retrieve the desired record. The combination of finding aids, and the numerical filing system, help in reducing the total percentage of loss and misplacement of files or records in the registries.

## ***2. Storage Facilities***

The storage equipment used is the drawer type steel filing cabinet and also file rack - open shelf filing cabinets. There is also special storage for vital records such as the staff confidential files kept in the secret registry.

To ensure the security of documents the secret/confidential registry is tightly restricted. No record is open to the public. Also, in the appointment registry, the staff are only allowed to check through the index cards or the register, while the handling of files is an exclusive preserve of the registry staff. As for the main registry, circulars and gazette publications are available to the public. A member of staff cannot go to the registry to collect his or her file personally, it is the registry clerk who will take the file to the schedule officer, or the boss as the case may be. The file will be entered in the register, and a clerk in the officers' section will sign for it, as being received. In this way the Commission protects its documents and records.

Records kept in the three registries are not classified as active, semi-active and in-active records, although some files are regarded as "closed volumes". However this has two meanings - the files regarded as 'closed' volumes could be the initial files opened for a subject but which have become too full that a new one has to be opened. Secondly, it means, the files in which no further action is expected, except for reference purposes in future. It then shows that files belonging to the two categories are not frequently accessed. There is no systematic way of transferring closed files to the store. The inactive files are lumped together with active files on the shelves thereby causing congestion in the registry. In some instances, files are left open for long periods.

On accommodation and physical arrangement, each of the registries occupies different parts of the Civil Service Commission's office complex. Beside one large office accommodation for each registry, including offices

for staff, none of them has an annex (record centre) elsewhere, except for the secret registry which has a small store area. It is noticed that with the vast number of files stored in the registries, the accommodation is not enough, and no renovation or expansion has been done. The space is not enough for the flow of documents and movement of staff especially in the Appointment registry. As safety devices, the registries have fire extinguishers, but there is no automatic water sprinkler system, and no fire detector or fire alarm system, as a tighter safety measure. A closed access method is used to guard records from theft and mutilation as security but there are no preservation facilities, such as fumigation or disinfection equipment to safeguard insect infestation in the registries.

#### **4.5.3 Records Disposition**

Since the records in the Commission are stored in three different registries, the supervisors might know some of the records they keep, but no form of inventory or records survey is being done to know the series of records within the Commission. Both the active and inactive files are kept together in the registries, which means there is no retention and disposition schedule. There has not been any disposition of the so called 'closed' volumes or in-active records hence each unit keeps piling up its inactive records which occupy a lot of space. It is also observed that there is no planned transfer of records to either a records storage centre or the national archives.

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## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 CONCLUSIONS**

The study has examined the process of communicating information and the management of information resources in the Federal Civil Service Commission of Nigeria. In doing so, it has been necessary to look at the historical development of the Commission, the structure, and its role (functions) as a link between the Federal Government and the Civil Servants. It was established that the Commission was an important machinery of government which makes use of a lot of information to perform her administrative activities. The activities as pointed out include: appointment, promotion, transfer and discipline of employees, as well as delegating, regulating and monitoring the activities of the Ministries and Extra Ministerial Departments in the Federal Civil Service.

#### **5.2 COMMUNICATION**

Due to the bureaucratic structure of the Commission, the communication pattern is very formal. This however provides the basis for coordination and control of activities. The structure provides stability to the communication process and thus facilitates the accomplishment of administrative tasks. The directions of communication are downward, upward and horizontal flows.

### **5.2.1 Downward Communication**

It was discovered that the Commission emphasise downward communication at the expense of upward flows. The downward communication is typified by a boss giving orders, rules, commands and instructions in form of letters, circulars and procedures manuals, without response. Two way communication allows immediate feedback. It helps the superior to know whether the message has been received and accepted, or resisted. To make downward communication work effectively, written-plus oral method of communication should be used.

### **5.2.2 Upward Communication**

The upward communication flows in the Commission are relatively less than downward flows. This is because the employees, especially the ones in the lower levels, always shy away from communicating to their superiors. Sometimes, there are barriers in superior - subordinate relationship. This will however put management in the dark regarding employee dissatisfaction, criticisms and ideas. Thus, it is being recommended that, to secure effective upward communication, the Commission should set up a suggestion scheme whereby employees are free to make suggestions on the improvement of operations and place them in a special suggestion box. The important suggestions will then be implemented for the development of the departments.

Whatever method is used for upward communication, it is absolutely vital that management respects the views of staff and this direction of communication should be encouraged. Employees should have access to senior managers. It will be helpful if employees in the communication process have the opportunity to participate in it, because it allows them to take actions in line with organisation policies and objectives. It makes



them feel that they are contributing, and can also encourage motivation. Communication with subordinates helps to promote harmony and enhance morale.

### **5.2.3 Horizontal Communication**

The study also found that horizontal communication is a regular and important facet of activities in the Commission. Some communication is affected by hierarchy it makes it natural for people about the same level in the organisation to communicate with themselves. It is more informal than formal and generally more rapid. The advantages of horizontal communication are that;

- (1) There are many operations where success depends on rapid execution, so with horizontal flows quick action can be taken.
- (2) It encourages 'cross talk' between different sections as opposed to vertical communication.
- (3) It is the basis for cooperation. Employees need to communicate with each other in order to work effectively in joint effort.
- (4) There is need for system of horizontal communication simply to keep employees appraised of activities in the Commission and thereby avoiding expensive and needless duplication of effort.
- (5) Colleagues have wealth of knowledge and experience which can save valuable time and costly mistake so, its is good to seek specialist information and advice.

### **5.3 RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

Information is an important resource in the Commission and Information resources in the form of records touch every aspect of the work activities. It is however vital that the records should be managed in the best way possible so that they can be accessed again when needed to support office operations - hence the need for records management programme. Records keeping activities exist in the Commission but there is no formal records management techniques or programme. However the three registries (Main [open] registry, Appointment registry and Confidential registry) are assumed to be serving records management purposes. There are registry staff, but there is no single professional as Records Manager. Consequently, it is the intention of this writer to recommend that it is essential to have well trained personnel in records management. The record officers in charge of the three registries can be trained on the modern skills of records management, because of their wealth of experience at the registries.

#### **5.3.1 Records Creation**

Everyday, the Commission creates or receives information in large quantity. One other important point is that the Commission handles more information than it can possibly use. Thus, it is recommended that the creation of records should be controlled to ensure that only records that are needed are produced, and that records are maintained and kept accessible. There is need for centralised control of records, which is the responsibility of the records manager. He has to apply effective control over the written records of the organisation such as correspondence, reports and forms. To have a directive which spells out the procedure to

be followed when creating new records. The control will guard against records explosion, resulting in fewer but better records.

### **5.3.2 Maintenance and Use**

On the maintenance and use of records, no distinction is made between active and inactive records in the registries. All the records are filed together on the shelves. The recommendation of this writer is that, it is necessary to keep inactive files in separate shelves or cabinet, or transfer them to the store. So, there will be enough space for the active files in the office. The files can be accessed easily and quickly when required and the staff will be able to work conveniently in the available space.

The registries have findings aids such as index cards and registers, which make retrieval of the files from the cabinets easy. It is also necessary to have a user education on finding aids and a procedure manual on the filing system, with regular updating to guide the registry staff.

There is a mechanism for controlling the flow of records within the Commission through the movement registers - incoming and outgoing. Records need much careful handling, and a more durable type of file jackets will enable the records to withstand the heavy usage to which they are subjected. It is also important to prolong the life span of records, with an effective conservation methods - such as installation of air conditioning units in the record store and constant fumigation of records to safeguard against insect infestation and prevent the records from deteriorating quickly. The protection of records against potential disasters should embrace the followings:

- (1) The discouragement of smoking within the building and complete ban on smoking in filing areas.

- (2) General tidiness and removal of hazardous clutter such as piles of files, papers or rubbish.
- (3) Destruction of useless records.
- (4) A clearly marked and regularly tested, fire alarm system, with triggers in every room.
- (5) Fire extinguishers in all offices, especially in the registries and regular safety checks of all electrical wiring and rodent traps.
- (6) Clearly posted fire escapes, exits and procedures, with regular fire drills on their use.
- (7) Water damage and flood precautions is also important. To constantly check water pipes and drains for any leakages.
- (8) The best disaster prevention is to train staff to look for trouble spots, or any irregularities, and to report them. Because of their daily familiarity with the records and the environment, they will be the first to notice anything suspicious.

There are serious problems with space in the registries. There is shortage of space for proper storage of files. To have a better management of available space, the inactive records should be removed from the office area and keep in the store. There should be an installation of lateral filing cabinets which will result in much savings in floor space, because a five level lateral filing cabinet takes less office space and accomodates large volume of files. Files are easier to access in lateral units and less effort is required to insert and remove them from the cabinets.

### 5.3.3 Records Disposition

There is every need to have an effective scheme for the disposition of records that are no more useful in the Commission. The standard practice is to have an inventory of all the records that exist in the Commission, so as to identify the classes of records. Then the records will be appraised, to determine their value, in order to know for how long and where to return them. Records will be kept on the shelves in the registries if it is being constantly referred to; it will be transferred to the store or record centre when it becomes inactive, that is when the reference level in the office has dropped below two references per month. For example, the personnel records of employees who have been retired but still receiving their pensions can be sent to the records centre; if the record has been determined to be very important and valuable to the Commission, it can be transferred to the National Archives in Ibadan; and it can be destroyed if it is no more useful.

Finally, there is need to create awareness of the value of records. Information and records help the Commission to communicate and make decisions, but if they are not well managed, it will be difficult to achieve efficiency. It must however be emphasised that the Commission needs to undertake a disciplined approach to the management of her records, because it is sensible, beneficial and cost efficient. It should be noted that good administration demand the establishment of an effective programme of records management, to eliminate the creation of unnecessary records; to provide for economy and efficiency in the creation, maintenance and use of those that are necessary; and to devise an orderly system for the preservation of important records and the disposal of those that have served their useful purpose.

Therefore, developing an effective records management programme will lead to efficiency in operations and helps with the effective achievement of the goals of the Federal Civil Service Commission. Attempting to patch up the system will not solve the problems. An efficient system must encompass the whole life span of records in accordance with the record life-cycle concept.

## **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the observations made, positive solutions are needed for the improvement of records management system in the Commission. In addition to the specific recommendations which have been made in the previous section, the following general recommendations are also worth considering by the Federal Civil Service Commission, to be able to implement an effective and efficient organised records management programme.

### **5.4.1 Records Management Policy**

Records management involves planning, implementing and review of the functions for the administration of the records of an organisation. Before implementing a programme, the Commission needs to first of all establish a policy for the management of information in the Ministry.

To lay down a comprehensive policy which will have a clear concept of records management and have the support of management. The policy should be detailed, and include instructions, procedures and standards on the handling of records.

It should clarify the custodianship of all information resources, and the centralisation of activities in the control of records. It should outline criteria for creating, storing and using information. The policy should

give a clear definition of responsibilities in relation to the implementation of records management programme. It is also necessary for the Commission to develop policy relating to the retention and timely destruction of records-the policy statements should cover the records retention scheduling and disposal function.

It should include plans for the use of up-to-date technology for the management of information of resources. The policy statements should be enclosed in a manual or handbook and communicated to all concerned.

The overall aim of the policy shall be to improve the quality of records management in line with the established needs and goals of the Commission, and to enhance the use of records as an information resource.

To ensure that the policy works well and effectively, it should be monitored from the centre, that is, it should have high level support and be officially promulgated. The records manager in the Ministry should see to the implementation of the policy, and also contribute to the working needs of the management (policy makers) and officers who create and use the records and information.

#### **5.4.2 Support of Top Management**

In order to achieve good records management the most important factor is the commitment to the whole programme by top management within the Commission. Improvements in records management practices will only be achieved when they receive attention and support. The Chief executives and other administrators involved in decision making processes should begin to see records as a corporate resource comparable to other resources. Records must be seen as indispensable resource providing information for effective decision making and planning. Once this has

been realised, the decision to organise effective records management systems will be put in place.

Better storage facilities for current and semi-current records will be provided.

Training opportunities for those involved in records management work will be made available and better scheme of service will be implemented. Management will appreciate the importance of registry clerks and custodians of files. Records should be managed just like other resources-people, money and materials, because it contributes to the success and effectiveness of the operations. It has been observed that registries and other information systems and services are too often poorly supported, financially. Enough funds should be made available for the development of the registries and the management of information resources, because it is an investment, Infact, management of the Commission should realise that a well organised records and information management will save a lot of money for the Ministry, it is a valuable way of improving cost effectiveness. Management should set up a Committee to look into the implementation of a records management programme and to make recommendations.

#### **5.4.3 Records Manager**

The ability to manage records of an organisation depends on the calibre and professional competence of the personnel who are required to do such jobs. The services of a records manager are required in the Commission, who will be responsible for the records management functions, and be in charge of all the records registries in the organisation. He will play a key role in both the development of records management policy and implementation



It is vital that the records manager is suitably trained, and fully aware of the requirements of the job.

He must understand the values and uses of information better than their users, how the records are created, their functions what to save and what to destroy. The records manager will take up the responsibility of controlling written records of the Commission. He will give specific advice on the design of forms, so that they are designed in such a way that they contain only the information required. The large bulk of the forms will be stored in the records centre. Another area of responsibility is to advise on the design and layout of filing systems and the type of filing cabinets that is most appropriate for a particular registry.

The records manager must have the direct backing of management and be answerable to a director. A records management unit should be set up in the Commission, for the records manager and his staff. He should be in a position as a leading professional to initiate, control and implement the records management programmes and systems. He should be involved in selecting staff for the registries, and be responsible for continuing training and education of staff. There are induction courses, seminars, workshops and so on organised by the National Archives of Nigeria, and also, the department of Library, Archival and Information Studies of the University of Ibadan take courses in records management. To evolve an adequate formal training for records staff in the Commission will be a step in the right direction. Such facilities will provide opportunity for acquiring new techniques in records management and this will enhance their rate of productivity.

There is an urgent need for professional personnel in the registry to coordinate all the activities involved in records management.

#### **5.4.4 Records Appraisal, Retention Schedule and Disposition**

It is very expensive to keep records in prime office space. This practice should be limited to records that are referred to frequently. The longer documents are retained, the greater the cost in terms of equipment, space and personnel required to maintain them. In order not to allow outdated files to accumulate in current files, a record schedule should be established. This stipulates what records should be retained, for how long or be disposed of, and the appropriate method of disposal. The objectives of establishing retention schedule are

- (a) to eliminate the storage of unnecessary records, thereby releasing valuable storage space, in the cabinets;
- (b) to promote efficient and timely access to active and inactive records;
- (c) to identify and protect vital records.

A committee, which should include the records managers should be set up in the Commission to design a retention and disposition schedule for the records and their decisions on what to retain or destroy must be made on a sound logic. The schedule should be an action document which must be complied with by the registries. In order to work efficiently, the retention schedules need to be maintained and kept up to date.

#### **5.4.5 The Use of Computers**

On a long term basis, the Commission should consider the use of computers for records management process. The records in the registries can be computerised. However, the use of information technology must be based on sound and co-ordinated policy, and there should be a need for it. It is very important to note that the use of computers may not in all cases

be the answer to problematic records keeping practices. One should automate success and not failure, and that means, it is necessary to identify the problems first, and correct them before implementing a new technology. The introduction of an automated system in the Commission, should be an enhancement of an improved manual system.

The use of computers will make records management programme more efficient and effective and a lot of benefits will be gained. Records management involves a lot of routine clerical work, and repetitive nature of the work can result in boredom, which can lead to mistakes. The use of computers can reduce boredom, or reduce clerical labour, increase workers potentials and quicken the pace of producing and disseminating information.

With an automated system, a file name can be entered once, then it can be copied into other parts of the data base, can be printed on lists, on labels or on index cards. Computers also provide retrieval facilities, and allows the user to extract the information which it contains from a variety of access points, by searching on keywords to identify items of interest.

The usage of computers can aid all aspects of records management. Computerisation can reduce the time used for listing files and documents in the management of active records. It allows improved subject access to the information recorded. Extra information can be added for an entry: If action is required in a particular document, this can be recorded, as well as when the action is completed.

Automation of records can help the Commission in the management of space. It can solve the space problem especially in the Appointment Registry. All the information and records would have been converted into

disks or tapes. The records will be stored in the computer, and this can be on a table in an office.

Computers can also be useful in the area of retention scheduling. It is preferable to prepare a retention schedule using word processing facilities which allow easy updating of the text. The retention periods of the list of documents held in the registry can be identified automatically, and it will indicate when material should be destroyed or reviewed.

The use of computers in records management has developed rapidly, and there are a number of computer software packages in the market, which are made specifically for records management applications.

The importance of automation cannot be over emphasised. With the use of computers, electronic mail can be introduced in the Commission as a means of communication. Electronic mail allows messages to be sent and received on computer screen. This is faster, less time consuming and less expensive than hand delivered messages and files.

Also, there is need for the Commission to consider setting up a computer data processing unit. This will be manned by information scientist or computer analyst, who will help fashion efficient, modern information management policies, programmes and systems. So there is an appreciated need to plan staff training on the use of computers in the Ministry. However, in contemplating the use of new technology in the Commission, it is necessary to plan well in advance, and think many years ahead.

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