

## **Big Bucket Records Retention Theory as a Framework for Understanding Record Retention in Non-profit Organization**

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**Abstract:-**This paper discusses Big Bucket of Records Retention as a framework for understanding Records Retention. The paper defined Records Retention as the act of keeping Records for permanent use. It discusses Big Bucket Records Retention Theory as a framework explaining large amount of Records are grouped in to series for permanent Retention. It also mentioned principles of Big Bucket Theory as principle of Records Identification, principle of Records Organization, principle of leg adherence and principle of Records period assigning. The paper describes Big Bucket Records Retention Theory's principles are applied in retaining Organizational Records. The paper summarized some of the previous studies conducted using Big Bucket Records Retention theory.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Records Retention is the act of keeping Records for permanent use. Organizations generate and receive different types of Records. Baba (2014) asserted that Records that are found in an organization are categorized into short lived and long lived ones. Records that have short life span are not retained permanently by the Organization that generates or receives such Records. While Records that have long life span are retained by the Organization because of their values which include Administrative, Historical, Legal, Land research values. For an Organization to Manage its Records with long life span Records Retention schedule must be used as a guide.

Records Retention schedule is a tool that guides an Organization in retaining its Records. Adikwu (2007) maintained that Records retention schedule describes the types of Records to be retained by an Organization and how such Records will be retained. This is because not all the Records generated in the Organization are needed for future reference.

Ashley (2014) reported that poor Records Retention makes the Organization to face problem of retrieval when a particular reference is to be made. This paper tries to find out how Records are retained in an Organization. The paper will discuss the stages followed towards retaining the records generated or receive by the Organization. To achieve that, the Researcher will adopt Big Bucket theory of Records Retention. This is because the theory will guide a Researcher as a framework during this study.

### **II. SCOPE OF RECORDS RETENTION**

Records Retention has to do with the keeping of Records for permanent use. It is the act of storing Records of a particular individual or Organization permanently because of their values. This value includes Historical, Administrative, Reference, Fiscal, Information as well evidential ones. Retention of Records is done after following a particular judgment on such Records. This judgment is called appraisal of the Records. Adikwu (2007) maintained that appraisal of a Records is a basic function of determining the eventual disposal of Records based on their values.

In Records Management discipline, Records Retention comes at the last stage of the life-cycle stages of Records. For Records to be retained by an individual or organization, such Records must contain an intellectual content that will be needed in the future for permanent use. Baba (2014) asserted that Records are retained after following all the life-cycle stages of the Records. These stages include Creation, Distribution, Use, Maintenance and Disposition of the Records. At disposition stage, Records will either be destroyed or retained

### **III. BIG BUCKET RECORDS RETENTION THEORY**

The theory explains how large amount of Records will be grouped into Series or Bucket in such a way that Records that have similar characteristics will be placed together for easy retrieval and use Cisco (2008). The resultant group of similar Records that contains multiple of such Records is called "Big Bucket". Another interpretation of Big Bucket in the context of Records Management is called Record Series. The essence of grouping similar Records into one Bucket or Series containing multiple numbers of the same Records is for the permanent retention of such Records.

Retention of Records in any Organization is expected to be guided by a tool. This tool is called Records Retentions policy. Baba and Olugbeja (2012) established that Records Retention Policy is a tool that guides Records Disposal. Records disposal is an exercise involving judging the values of the Records. These values include Historical, Administrative, Informational, Fiscal, Research and Evidential ones. At the end of the exercise, some Records that are judged to have a permanent value will be retained. Other Records that do not have a permanent value will be destroyed.

Similarly, Taiwo et al (2011) believed that before Records Retention takes Place Records must past a particular judgment. This judgment is called Records appraisal where the value of the Records will be determined before Destroying or Retaining of such Records.

#### **IV. PRINCIPLES OF BIG BUCKET RECORDS RETENTION THEORY**

Big Bucket Records Retention Theory explains how Records are Retained in the Organization as follows; Principles of records identification, Principles of records organization, Principles of legal adherence and Principle of records period assigning These principles are explained below;

#### **V. PRINCIPLES OF RECORDS IDENTIFICATION**

These principles talks about type of Records generated in a particular Organization Cisco (2012). In any Organization, Records are generated in either Printed or Electronic format. Both Printed and Electronic Records need to be retained permanently based on the need of that Organization. Adikwu (2014) reported that Records that are retained permanently in the Organization are generated during the transaction of Businesses in that Organization. As a result of that, some Records need to be retained permanently for Future reference.

#### **VI. PRINCIPLE OF RECORDS ORGANIZATION**

This principle shows that Records in any Organization are organized for easy retrieval. After identifying group of Records to be retained in the Organization, the next thing is the Organization of such Records. United States National Archives and Records Management (2014) reported that Organization of Records as part of Records keeping ensures easy retrieval of such Records. During Organization of the Records activities such as sorting, Classifying, Arrangement and filling are carried out. These activities serve as the technical aspects or components without which Records cannot be organized.

#### **VII. PRINCIPLE OF LEGAL ADHERENCE**

This principle talks about the strict adherence of the laws of the Organization concerning Records Retention. Every Organization has laws that guide the activities in such Organization. Brock (2010) asserted that Records in any Organization are retained based on the laws of that Organization with respect to such Records Created in that Organization. In the same vein, university of Vermont Records Retention Policy (2012) established that Records in every Department in the Organization is retained through following the laws that are stated in the Policy Document of that Organization concerning Records Retention.

#### **VIII. PRINCIPLE OF RECORD PERIOD ASSIGNING**

This principle shows that each Records Created in the Organization should be assigned period of Retention. Retention period has to do with the time of Records Retention assigned to such a record. Records that are adjudged for permanent retention receive permanent retention period. This is because the time assigned to such Records makes the easier for the retriever during retrieval of such Records.

#### **IX. PREVIOUS STUDIES THAT ADOPTED BIG BUCKET RECORDS RETENTION THEORY**

A study conducted by Joseph et al (2012) titled paradigm shifts in record keeping responsibilities: Implications for Iso15489's Implementation adopted the theory. The study's introduction states that the international standards for records management, ISO 15489 has been widely accepted as an influential and critical set of principles and guidelines that ensure records management (RM) systems are fit for purpose. The research questions were what are the techniques used in record keeping? And what standards are in place for records keeping? The study used qualitative methodology, case study method was used, instrument used was content analysis with the findings as new techniques for records keeping existed and there are gradual changes from old method of record keeping to modern one. The study recommended that strict adherence to the ISO15489 should be done and the existing techniques of record keeping should be improved through adopting regularly coming techniques.

A study conducted by Kyobe et al (2009) titled Investigating Electronic Records Management and Compliance with Regulatory Requirements in a South African University adopted big bucket theory. The study's introduction was that electronic records management has become an essential business activity and an

element of compliance with regulation in many countries. The research questions asked were how electronic records are managed? What is the extent of compliance with regulatory requirements? The methodology adopted was quantitative, method used was survey, and instrument used was questionnaire. The findings of the study were there was poor management of electronic records and poor compliance with the regulatory requirement, the recommendations were management of electronic records should be done by experts and compliance with the requirement should be done strictly.

A research conducted by Cisco (2008) titled *Big Buckets for simplifying Records Retention Schedules* had the introduction as follows; an up to date retention schedule protects the interests of an organization and its stakeholders by ensuring that the official business records are kept for as long as they are needed to meet legal, regulatory, and operational needs and provides a “safe harbor” for disposing of outdated information. The study’s research questions were how does the big bucket theory being applied in record retention exercise? How does the big bucket being applied to electronic records? The methodology used was quantitative, the method used was survey and the instrument used was questionnaire. The finding of the study revealed that big bucket theory facilitates records retention, and it is found out that electronic records are best retained using big bucket theory as a guide. The recommendations of the study showed that for an organization to effectively retain its records, the use of big bucket theory is a must also it is recommended that electronic records should be retained using big bucket theory as a guide.

A research conducted by Cisco (2013) titled *Streamline Retention with the Big Bucket approach* adopted big bucket theory: The study Introduces that records generated in the organization have some values, which include legal, administrative, fiscal, historical, evidential and research values. The research questions used were how does big bucket theory being used in streamlining records retention? What types of records are retained using big bucket theory? The methodology used was qualitative, the method used was case study, the instrument was interview, the findings of the study revealed that big bucket theory helps in streamlining organization records, the types of records generated in the organization need to be retained using big bucket theory as a guide. The study recommended that for organization’s records to be streamlined, big bucket theory is needed and financial, legal, business records need to be retained using big bucket theory as a guide.

Harris (2008) carried out a research with the topic *Adapting Retention Schedule to Electronic Records: The Big Bucket Theory*. The research introduced that records retention in the organization ensures regulatory compliance in the organization. The research question used were what are Big bucket Categories? How many records series does your current retention schedule have? The methodology used was quantitative, the method used was survey, and the instrument used was questionnaire. The findings of the study reported that organization large records series were not retained properly, the categories that made up of big bucket were not up to the records retention standards. The study recommended that for organization’s records categories to be retained properly big bucket theory must be adopted and the organizations records series should be selected base on Records retention standards.

A research conducted by National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) (2012) with a title *Managing Government Records Directive* adopted big bucket theory. The introduction of the study was that government records keeping practices determine the success of administration of that government. The research question raised was how government records are managed permanently? The methodology used was quantitative, the method used was survey. The instrument used was questionnaire. The finding of the study showed that government records are not managed effectively; the study recommended the use of retention schedule for effective retention of the government records.

Julie (2012) conducted a study with a title *On Being Part of the Solution, not the Problem: Taking a proportionate Approach to managing Records using big bucket theory*. The introduction of the study was that cloud is our information and records future; the basement of our information and records legacy. The research question was what are the future path way strategies for managing records? The methodology used was qualitative, the method used was case study and the instrument used was interview. The finding of the study showed that the traditional method of records management was not efficient and it recommended that cloud technology should be incorporated for effective records management.

Brock (2012) carried out a research titled *Federal Electronic Records Management with the introduction as Association of Records Managers and Administration (ARMA) recently developed principles-based approach to records management emphasizing the use of universal accepted principles of records management*. The research questions asked were why are electronic records difficult to manage? What are the technologies used in managing electronic records? What are the challenges encountered during managing electronic records? The methodology used was qualitative, the method used was case study, and the instrument used was interview. The findings of the study revealed that electronic records are not managed effectively, there were few technologies known and used by electronic records manager and lack of expertise was reported as a challenge facing electronic records managers. The study recommended that electronic should be managed using

retention guide, more technologies for electronic records keeping should be used and training and re-training of records managers is needed.

Ashley and Cisco (2014) carried out a study with a title M08516- Less is more: How to Apply Big Bucket Theory to Retention Schedule simplification. The study introduced that retention schedule provides a structured framework for identifying an organization's official records, documenting those records using policies of such organization. The research question of the study was what is the different retention periods are in use today? What current strategies are available in the organization? What are the systems used in creating and storing records in the organization? The methodology used for this research was quantitative, the method used was survey. The research instrument used was questionnaire. The finding of this research was that big bucket theory was not used in many organizations hence their records retention system was poor. The study recommended that for organizations records to be retained properly big bucket theory needs to be adopted as a guide.

William (1997) carried out a study on research issues in records management theory, modeling and practice with the introduction as follows; there is the need for generic models of records classification, records filing, retrieved and retention scheduling for managing records in the organization. The research question asked was can logical theories of archived and records management concepts be formulated within the context of set theory? The methodology used was qualitative, the method used was case study, the instrument for data collection used was interview. The finding of the study showed that different organizations need different models as well as theories for retaining their records. The study recommended that for the records generated in various organizations to be retained effectively records retention models and theories are needed.

## **X. HOW BIG BUCKET RECORDS RETENTION THEORY IS APPLIED IN RECORDS RETENTION IN THE ORGANIZATION**

Big Bucket Records Retention Theory is applied in Records Retention in the Organization as follows; In every Organization, Records are being Created or Received on daily basis. These Records made up of Financial Records, Production Records (in terms of goods production organization), Personnel Records, Reports of duties, Minutes of meetings, Records of achievement etc. some of these Records need to be retained permanently.

For these Records to be retained, they should first be identified. Identification here means knowing the type of the Records to be retained. This is because the Records Created or Received are many. To retain the Records identified from different types of Records, the principle of identification of Records needs to be applied. Records that are essential to the continuation of the operations in the organization are identifies because of their importance. These Records include legal Records, Financial Records, Records of sole Administrators' Achievement in the Organization, Records of disaster that happened in the Organization United States Environment Agency Vital Records (2012) Also, principle of identification of Records can be applied to identify Records that are created in the midst of many Records that are not all vital to the operations of the Organization. University of Washington Records Management Services (2014) reported that Records in the Organization are identified using certain criteria in order to be retained permanently in the Organization. Records are identified in the Organization before permanent retention using the policy of Records management of that Organization as a guide. The question likely to be asked; how are Records identified in an Organization?

The principle of Records Organization of Big Bucket Theory can be applied in Records retention because this principle shows that Records are retained in an organized manner. University of Wisconsin (2014) maintained that Records are organized in the Organization through filling and arranging of such Records for easy retrieval. This means that for Records to be retrieved in an easy way, proper Organization of such Records is needed. This Organization is done by experts in Records Management discipline.

Similarly, Livestrong (2014) asserted that for an Organization to organize its Records in an efficient and effective way, three ways need to be followed. These ways are; collecting all the important Records of the Organization, storage of such Records and making a list of all the Records Organized for easy retrieval. Important Records in this case include personnel Records, Records of insurance policies, Receipt and other bargaining Records, Security Records, Health issues Records, personnel payment Records etc. these Records should be Organized and kept in a safe place where only individuals that are permitted will have an access to such Records. This is because provision of access to the organized Records by everybody leads to disorganization of such records which in turn leads to the wastage of time when such Records are to be accessed. The question likely to be asked; How are Records being Organized in an Organization?

Principles of legal adherence is applied in Records Retention in such a way that before Records are retained in the Organization, there must be a legal issue backing such Retention of the Records. This principle holds that when an Organization is to retain its Records for permanent use, certain laws and regulations affecting Records Retention of that Organization have to be followed strictly. Cisco (2008) believed that after identifying type of Records to be retained in the Organization and organizing such Records, the next thing is the

consideration of existing laws of that Organization concerning Records Retention. These laws tell the Records Manager who is involved in Records appraisal what, how and why Records are to be retained.

After consulting laws guiding Records Retention, the next thing is the Retention proper. During retention of the Records, technical activities will be carried out on the retained Records on a regular basis. These activities include Preservation, conservation, lamination, Encapsulation etc. the reasons of apply these activities on the retained records is that any record that is kept for permanent use must be protected both physically and in intellectual content part. All these are carried out in order to make sure that the record life span of the Records is prolonged because of future references.

When appraisal of the Records has been done, the Records that are adjudged for permanent preservation should be assigned an identification sign that shows that this particular Record is kept permanently. Texas State Library and Archives Commission (2014) reported that for Records to be retained, such Records will be assigned retention codes. These codes help in the identification of the Records to be retained.

Also, Records codes can be in different forms. This is depending on the policy of the Organization that wants to retain the Records. Some Organizations policies show that letters of the alphabet should be used. While some Organizations use numbers such as Arabic or roman numbers, some use the combination of letters and numbers. This system is called alpha numerical. The question likely to be asked; what tools guide the retention of Records in the Organization?

## **XI. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, it is found out that Big Bucket Records Retention theory is a good guide for Records Retention. The theory can be used as a framework in carrying out research in Records Retention discipline. From the theory, a researcher will have a better understanding of how the problem of Records Retention can be solved.

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