The Algerian Educational family's perspective on documents and archives

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ABSTRACT

This research seeks to comprehend and scrutinize the viewpoint of the educational family, epitomized by administrators, educators, and the parents of students, regarding the application and significance of documents and archives in their respective roles and functions within scholastic institutions. The methodological framework of this study incorporates a variety of data gathering and analytical techniques, encompassing targeted interviews with the pertinent stakeholders and a documentary examination of germane materials. Additionally, the study encompasses a critical review of pertinent literature, coupled with an analytical discourse on the theories and paradigms pertaining to documents and archives.

The outcomes of this research underscore the criticality of documents and archives as pivotal resources bolstering educational and administrative endeavors within academic institutions. Administrators exhibit a pronounced dependency on documents for orchestrating administrative tasks and formulating decisions grounded in empirical evidence, whereas educators predominantly employ documents for the schematic planning and execution of educational initiatives, as well as for evaluative purposes. Conversely, parents acknowledge the instrumental role of documents and archives in monitoring their offspring's scholastic advancement and fostering proactive engagement in the evolution of the educational process.

The investigation identifies various obstacles encountered by these cohorts in the utilization of documents and archives, encompassing impediments in preservation and retrieval, a deficiency in training pertaining to document management and preservation, and the absence of definitive policies to amplify the utility derived from these invaluable assets. Furthermore, the study accentuates the discrepancy between the potential and actual utilization of documents and archives within the educational milieu.

Keywords: Documents, Archives, Educational Family, Algeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

Amid the swift and successive transformations experienced by educational institutions and the concomitant advancements in modern technological applications in document and archive management, there emerges an imperative need to delve into and scrutinize the actuality of document and archive utilization and management within these institutions. Moreover, it is crucial to assess the viewpoints of the key stakeholders involved, namely administrators, educators, and parents. Situated within this context, the current study endeavors to dissect and evaluate the perspectives of these groups regarding document and archive usage within educational settings, with the objective of unveiling the challenges, opportunities, and potential for effective exploitation of these vital assets in an academic context.

The methodological approach of this investigation encompasses a plethora of data gathering and analytical methodologies, including targeted interviews with stakeholders and a thorough documentary examination of materials and records pertinent to the subject matter. This research also hinges on an exhaustive review of prior literature to construct a theoretical foundation and steer the study's direction. The methodology is meticulously designed to afford a holistic examination of the topic and to furnish a profound comprehension of the research issue, while also generating practical recommendations for the enhancement of document and archive management, preservation, and optimal use within educational frameworks.

The structure of the study is articulated into various principal segments, commencing with an analytical review of the literature and theoretical constructs associated with documents and archives in an educational milieu. This is succeeded by an exposition of the study's methodological framework, along with an in-depth delineation of the data collection and analytical instruments and techniques employed. Subsequently, the research delineates and interprets the findings in relation to the established objectives, culminating in a discussion of the results, the proposition of recommendations, and the exploration of future research avenues in this domain.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Theories and concepts related to documents and archives

In the scholarly discourse on document and archive management, theories and concepts related to these entities offer an intellectual scaffold that facilitates a nuanced comprehension of their significance and utility.

2.1.1 Conceptual approach to documents and archives

Documents have perennially been at the epicenter of administrative communication, embodying the conduit through which administrative actions are articulated and institutional communication is conducted. These documents, encompassing minutes, correspondences, registers, and records, are intrinsically tied to specific issues, events, or activities. The proliferation of administrative tasks has precipitated an exponential increase in document volume, thus engendering challenges for administrators in retrieving essential documents for operational purposes, and for archivists in managing the sheer volume, underscoring the imperative for meticulous preservation and protection. (Al-Agha, 2007)

Documents are delineated as records, the veracity and genuineness of which are substantiated through stringent formalities. These include the involvement of public officials, the attestation of witnesses, the endorsements by the involved contracting entities, and the formal initiation and conclusion protocols, along with the authentication through seals and stamps. Furthermore, these documents are under the purview of the originating or participating authority, be it a notarial body, judiciary, administrative office, or contracting parties, ensuring their integrity and authenticity. (Al-Sayyed, 1993, p.15)

The lifecycle of these documents is discernible; some are earmarked for transient use, while others, by virtue of their significance, are destined to endure as historical testimonies and archival entities. Such documents transition from temporary preservation within the originating institution to specialized archival facilities, following established protocols and procedures.

This metamorphosis into archival material imbues these documents with profound importance, as they encapsulate the historical narrative and operational legacy of the institutions, thereby becoming invaluable for preservation, protection, and subsequent scholarly and institutional exploitation. This archival continuum not only serves as a testament to the state's historical and operational chronicle but also facilitates academic research, rights assertion, and the progressive development of institutional frameworks and sectors.

A. Definition of documents

Documents are conceptualized through various authoritative definitions, each highlighting different facets of their role and significance:

- According to the French national center for scientific research, a document is perceived as "a communication tool regulated by distinct and explicit writing norms, establishing a reading agreement between the reader and the originator" (Hardy, 2005, p.19).
- The archival terminology lexicon articulates a document as "the amalgamation of the information container and the inscribed information therein, serving either as evidence or for reference" (Walne, 1990).
- The Society of American Archivists characterizes a document as "materials produced or received by an individual, family, or organization, public or private, in the orchestration of their affairs, preserved for the information they embody or as a testament to the functions and responsibilities of their progenitor" (Richard, 2005, p.28).
- As per Article 2 of the Algerian National Archives Law 88-09, archival documents are delineated as "documents encompassing information, irrespective of their date, format, or physical medium, generated or disseminated by any natural or legal entity or any public or private entity or service in the execution of its activities" (Law 88/09, 1988).

A document traverses through an evolutionary journey acquiring diverse values:

- **Primary value**: Pertains to the utility of documents to the originating administrations in their operational and foundational roles.
- **Secondary value**: Manifests when documents, having fulfilled their immediate purposes, become pertinent for alternate research or applications. Notably, most documents either lack secondary value or possess a minimal extent of it.
- **Administrative value**: Signifies the document's role in facilitating the management or operational processes of an entity. While all documents harbor administrative value during their active phase, post-completion of their immediate function, they may not necessitate retention except those with unique attributes like guidelines and statutes, which retain value until superseded.
- **Legal value**: Represents documents that delineate legal entitlements and responsibilities towards entities or individuals.
- **Historical value**: Encompasses documents that hold information of significance to researchers, administrators, and officials across various domains.

- **Evidential value**: Includes documents that provide verification or proof of specific undertakings (Al-Tabar, 2023).

B. Definition of archives

The concept of archives is elucidated through various authoritative insights:

Schellenberg articulates archives as "all books, papers, maps, photographs, or other documentary materials, irrespective of their physical form or characteristics, generated or acquired by any public or private entity in compliance with its legal mandates or in the course of its legitimate business dealings, and retained by the organization or its lawful successor as a testament to its functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, and activities, attributed to the informational value embedded within these materials" (Schellenberg, 2003, p.16). This definition encapsulates a broad spectrum of documents, including books, which, despite some specialists' reservations about categorizing them as archival materials, are considered part of the archival realm when they result from an entity's activities.

C. Archive definition according to the archival terminology dictionary

- Non-current records, organized or otherwise, maintained by the creators or by public or private entities for archival utilization, conserved for their historical or archival worth.
- An archive also refers to the institution tasked with acquiring, preserving, maintaining, and enabling access to these archives, variably known as an archival agency, archival service, records office, archive house, or document house. This nomenclature extends to the physical premises housing the archives, like a college or university archive, press/television archive, etc.
- Archive storage signifies the facility or a segment thereof designated for the safekeeping of archives and the provision of access services to these materials, alternately termed a preservation store (Goumid, 2014).

In essence, archives are distinguished by their administrative lifecycle, focusing primarily on documents whose administrative relevance has lapsed, thus excluding current and semi-current documents from this categorization. Additionally, the term 'archive' intricately intertwines with the institutional entity managing these records and the physical locale of their preservation.

Hence, archives can be distilled into three principal dimensions as acknowledged by experts:

- **Place**

An archive embodies the location where a collection of documents, deemed of archival value and utility, is safeguarded.

- **Body**

It signifies the entity entrusted with the conservation of these archival documents.

- **Documents**

This pertains to the documents themselves, irrespective of their date, format, or medium, produced or received by natural or legal entities, or any service or body, public or private, recognized for their intrinsic and diverse values, such as legal and historical significance, and possessing an organized structure, context, and content, whether retained by the owner or custodian or transferred to a specialized archival institution.

2.1.2 The three ages theory in archiving

Archiving as a discipline, concerned with the methodologies of accumulating, conserving, organizing, and availing documents for public access, has matured over time, influenced significantly by distinguished scholars in the field. Among these, Theodore Schellenberg is prominent for introducing the "document life cycle" concept. This paradigm views a document as traversing through distinct phases: creation, utilization, preservation, and eventually, destruction or perpetual retention. Schellenberg's framework aids institutions in managing their documents efficiently by recognizing and accommodating the requirements of each lifecycle phase (Elshami, 2014).

Post-World War II witnessed an exponential increase in document production, compelling nations to address the challenges posed by the burgeoning document volumes and the associated archival preservation dilemmas. The U.S. Navy, recognizing these challenges early on, spearheaded the reevaluation of archival management practices. This led to the adoption of Theodore Schellenberg's three-stage theory in 1956, a groundbreaking model in the archiving domain (Zaâbat, 2018, p.52).

A. Explanation of the three stages theory

➢ First stage archive (active archives)

These are recently produced or drafted documents utilized daily across various organizations. Their retention period in the originating services spans two to ten years, with certain exceptions like employee files, which are kept for approximately forty years, aligning with an individual's career span (Decree 03/1991). Such documents are to be stored within the producing service's premises.

➢ Second stage archive (intermediate archives)

This stage encompasses documents older than five years, accessed sporadically, and stored either in a designated area or transferred to the institution's archival service (Decree 08/1995). Representing a significant portion of an institution's documents, this stage often presents managerial challenges regarding maintenance, classification, and preservation (Decree 03/1991).

➢ **Third stage archive (historical archives)**

Comprising documents aged fifteen years or more and no longer needed for current service operations, these are transferred to the regional or national archival service. The disposal of any document at this stage necessitates authorization from the national archive authority (Decree 08/1995).

The French archival school adapted Schellenberg's theory to create a framework suitable for France's archival needs. Conversely, the Canadian approach delineates three document stages:

➢ **Active documents**

In constant use within the creating administration.

➢ **Semi-active documents**

Less frequently accessed but retained for potential reference.

➢ **Inactive documents**

No longer in administrative use and designated as archival material, preserved within archival services and institutions.

Both the French and Canadian models are pivotal in the archival sector, each representing distinct perspectives: the French model embodies a traditional view, recognizing documents as archives from inception, while the Anglo-Saxon and Australian schools, including the Canadian, emphasize an administrative archiving paradigm, underpinned by document management principles codified in the international standard ISO 15489.

2.2 Literature review

2.2.1Master's thesis by Claire E. Huntley titled "Archives and K-12 education: opportunities for collaboration"

The scholarly exploration of archival integration within K-12 education presents a crucial discourse on enhancing educational methodologies and fostering historical comprehension. The thesis by Claire E. Huntley, presented at Western Washington University in March 2013, scrutinizes the prospects for synergies between archives and primary and secondary education sectors.

Huntley's research underscores the imperative need for embedding archives in educational and research paradigms, spotlighting the dichotomy between the growing inclination to incorporate primary sources into academic curricula and the prevailing deficit in effective utilization competencies among educators and students. This discordance results in the underexploited potential of these invaluable scholarly assets. Huntley's study propounds several key recommendations, including:

- The enhancement of pedagogic and scholarly acumen in utilizing primary sources through targeted training programs for educators, alongside fostering student engagement with these materials to bolster research and analytical capabilities.
- The assimilation of primary sources into educational syllabi, leveraging the rich archival content to deepen students' historical and social scientific insights.
- The development of dynamic pedagogical tools by archivists to facilitate interactive and captivating exploration of primary sources, thereby enriching the learning experience and promoting scholarly inquiry.
- The establishment of robust collaborative networks between archival institutions and educational entities to facilitate accessible and efficacious use of primary sources in academic contexts.
- The strategic application of contemporary technological solutions to enhance accessibility to primary sources, integrating digital resources into the educational framework (Claire, 2013).

However, the research acknowledges the absence of detailed, actionable strategies for educators and archivists to curate and execute interactive educational programs that effectively leverage these archival resources. Additionally, the study does not sufficiently delve into the pragmatic challenges associated with the implementation of such programs, including financial limitations, technological infrastructure needs, teacher training necessities, and the accommodation of the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students.

2.2.2 Study by Francis Garaba titled: "The record and memorabilia in school archives management in Pietermaritzburg schools, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa".

The study accentuates the criticality of preserving the educational heritage encapsulated in documents, artistic materials, and other cultural elements like artworks and textiles. Garaba delineates the hurdles encountered in the management of these heritage assets within educational settings, chiefly attributed to their undervalued status and resource constraints (Francis , 2019).

2.2.3 Study by BurçakŞentürktitled: "The use of archives in education: examples from abroad".
The study elucidates the pivotal role of archives in preserving materials essential for long-term storage and their integration into the educational continuum from primary through to university levels. The study accentuates the multifaceted value of archival materials, encompassing administrative, financial, judicial, and historical aspects, and their potential to illuminate historical and prospective developments. Şentürkunderscores the adaptability of archival practices to educational needs, with a focus on how national archives in countries like the United States, England, Scotland, and Australia have tailored their archival use to suit the developmental stages and interests of students.

The research identifies a gap in scholarly discourse regarding the integration of archives into educational frameworks and posits that archives are underutilized but highly potent resources for enriching education. Through the study's findings, Şentürkadvocates for several strategic initiatives to harness the educational potential of archives:

- The implementation of specialized archival awareness programs aimed at emphasizing the significance of archives in educational realms and highlighting the richness of primary sources contained within them.
- The development of engaging and intuitive research tools tailored for students, particularly at university and high school levels, to facilitate a more interactive and accessible exploration of archival materials.
- The promotion of a collaborative synergy between archivists and educators to enhance the educational utilization of archives, ensuring that archival materials are effectively integrated into the curriculum in a manner that aligns with the educational objectives and caters to the diverse competencies of students (Burçak, 2013).

4. Methodology
4.1 Data collection tools: (Interviews and documentary analysis)
Before delving into the specifics of the interview methodologies implemented in this research, it is crucial to delineate the term "educational family" as it pertains to the Algerian context. In the ambit of our study, the 'educational family' encompasses the parents of students, who are active within associations; the teachers, and the administrators.

4.1.1 Interview procedures
We formulated specific questions for three carefully selected individuals who are

- A primary school principal with 25 years of experience in teaching and inspection, and expertise in administration and management. This provided us with the administrators' perspective on documents and archives.
- A basic education teacher with 23 years of experience in education. This represented the teachers' perspective on documents and archives.
- The president of a parents' association who served for two consecutive terms at a secondary school in Sétif province (Algeria). This represented the parents' perspective on documents and archives.

4.2 Administrators' perspective on documents and archives
Question 1: What are the main tasks and duties that you supervise?
Answer:
Among the responsibilities of a school principal are:

- Leading teachers and staff.
- Setting school goals.
- Ensuring students achieve the primary objectives of the educational process.
- Supervising daily operations in the school.
- Preparing and managing budgets.
- Hiring teachers and different department staff.
- Evaluating the performance of teachers and other employees. (Ministry of National Education, 2005)

Question 2: What do you understand by 'documents and archives' from your perspective? Or what are the main records and files you have dealt with in your career, and what benefits do they provide to the institution?
Answer:
Among them are:

- The incoming and outgoing mail register always found in the principal's office.
- The administrative coordination council register contains minutes of periodic and weekly meetings where decisions from each meeting are recorded.
- The official visits register (in the principal's office) records all the official visits from inspectors, local communities, or school health committees.

- Financial accounts of the institution and daily and annual reports.
- Employee files (administrative staff, professional workers, and teachers).
- The importance of using documents and archives:
- Using administrative documents and archives in making the right administrative decisions.
- Using legal documents to ensure compliance with laws and regulations.
- Using documents and archives for evaluation, review, planning, and development of the institution.
- Providing reliable sources for research and study to interested parties.

Question 3: What are the challenges administrators face in using documents and archives?
Answer:
- Lack of awareness and training on the importance of documents and archives.
- Loss and damage of documents and archives.
- Difficulty accessing documents and archives.
- Lack of clear policies and procedures for the use of documents and archives by teachers.
- Very little financial allocation for the archive storage.

4.3 Teachers' perspective on documents and archives:
Question 1: What are the main tasks and duties that you perform?
Answer:
According to Algerian school legislation, among them are:
- School teachers perform their duties under the authority of the principal.
- The primary role of teachers is to educate and teach students, involving pedagogical and educational activities such as lesson preparation, correction, and evaluation.
- Participating in examination and competition processes.
- Organizing educational outings for students.
- Participating in councils held at the institution.
- Engaging in various training operations.
- Teachers efficiently use the following documents in performing their duties: daily lesson preparation notebook/notes related to lesson preparation/monthly program distribution/annual program distribution/attendance register/deliberation notebook/exam notebooks.

Question 2: What do you mean by 'documents and archives' from your perspective? Or what are the main records and files you have dealt with in your career, and what are their primary uses and benefits for you?
Answer: Among them are:
- Class register/education councils register/department councils register containing minutes of meetings and deliberations for each of the three academic terms.
- School results register for all academic terms.
- Textbooks where each teacher records the lesson taught on that day, preserved at the end of each year.
- All files and documents concerning a teacher's career path, such as the installation and promotion records.
- Library register for borrowing books, dictionaries, encyclopedias, atlases, and maps, and their use in the educational process.

Main uses and benefits include:
- Using academic records to track students' progress.
- Using educational documents for lesson preparation.
- Using the institution's historical archive to study the evolution of educational outcomes.
- Utilizing professional career documents to benefit from privileges in other sectors like discounts on phone and internet bills, reduced-price summer vacations, home and car insurance, etc.

4.4 Perspective of the Parents' Association on Documents and Archives:
Question 1: What are the main tasks and duties that you perform?
Answer:
According to Algerian school legislation, they include:
- Coordinating between the school and parents, informing them of their duties and rights towards the educational institution through regular awareness meetings held by the association's office between parents, teachers, and professors, creating direct dialogue between the school and family that serves the student's interest and enhances academic performance.
- Improving the material and moral situation of students in dire need of help, such as purchasing school supplies, medical glasses, hearing aids, clothing, and supporting orphans by encouraging them to study and alleviating their material and psychological difficulties.

- The president of the association has become an important member of the education and management council, with the right to propose suitable solutions. However, it should be noted that the school principal and their assistants play an effective role in involving and integrating associations in working for educational institutions through constant coordination with their members, assigning them responsibility, and directly holding parents accountable to play their expected role through the use of information in the following documents:
- The scheduled timetable for students and any changes that may occur.
- Absences, tardiness, and behaviors recorded against them.
- Academic results obtained through various evaluation processes.
- Planning cultural and sports activities.

Question 2: What do you understand by 'documents and archives' from your perspective? Or what are the main records and files you have dealt with while presiding over the association?
Answer:
- The register of the parents' association contains minutes of meetings of the parents' representatives.
- The disciplinary council register contains deliberations and minutes related to students' breaches of the school's general order or any misconduct such as cheating in exams or drug abuse.
- The academic results register for the three academic terms with evaluative comments for each student.
- The file of the parents' association consists of the following documents: minutes of the general founding or renewal meeting, the list of council members, the accreditation request and the accreditation decision issued by the provincial authority, the association's statutes, a copy of the annual financial and narrative report, and other related documents. (Boualkhadra, 1999)
- Main uses and benefits include:
- Using academic records related to academic results to track students' progress.
- Using records and files to enhance transparency and accountability.
- Exploiting reliable sources for research and study.
- Documenting successful experiences and practices.

5. Results
Each group has a different set of tasks and duties related to documents and archives, uses them differently, and for different purposes according to their specific needs and objectives. There are several differences between the three presented perspectives on documents and archives, and here are some highlights

✓ **Tasks and Duties**
- **Administrators' perspective**
They oversee school management, including setting goals and supervising teachers and managing budgets.
- **Teachers' perspective**
They focus on teaching and educating students, delivering lessons, and participating in academic processes.
- **Parents' association's perspective**
Their tasks include communicating with the school, informing parents about duties and rights, and supporting students materially and morally.

✓ **Types of Documents and Archives:**
- **Administrators' perspective**
Includes financial, administrative documents, and periodic reports.
- **Teachers' perspective**
Associated with academic activities such as timetables, academic results, and lesson files.
- **Parents' association's perspective**
Relates to meeting minutes, records of students' progress and performance, and the association's own documents.

✓ **Uses and Benefits**
- **Administrators' perspective**
They use documents for making informed administrative decisions and complying with laws and regulations.
- **Teachers' perspective**
They use documents for lesson preparation, tracking students' progress, and evaluating their performance.
- **Parents' association's perspective**
They use documents to document experiences, enhance transparency and accountability, and support student activities.

✓ **Challenges**

- **Administrators' perspective**

They face challenges like lack of awareness of the importance of documents and archives, their damage, and difficulty accessing them.

- **Teachers' perspective**

They may find it challenging to deal with documents and archives and use them in the educational process due to imposed time constraints.

- **Parents' association's perspective**

Obtaining the necessary information from school documents can be a challenge for them.

In summary, the perspectives on documents and archives vary based on each team's role in the school, their individual needs, and potential challenges.

CONCLUSION

The insights gleaned from administrators, teachers, and parents regarding the utilization of documents and archives within the educational sphere underscore their pivotal role in recording academic achievements, structuring information, refining educational quality, and bolstering administrative efficiency. In light of the growing emphasis on transparency and evaluation in educational systems, it is imperative for these stakeholders to cultivate a profound understanding of the significance of preserving and optimizing the use of documents and archives. This would not only augment educational outcomes but also enrich the students' learning journey. Consequently, we advocate for the following initiatives:

- Integrate university alumni holding bachelor's and master's degrees in library and information science into the educational framework, enabling them to contribute their expertise in teaching at schools and high schools.
- Employ graduates with specialized qualifications in archival science or archival techniques to manage the documentation and archival systems of educational institutions. These professionals should be sufficiently staffed and tasked with developing innovative research tools employing modern technologies to facilitate access and utilization of archival collections by educators, administrators, and community partners.
- Forge collaborations and alliances with regional and national archive centers, and facilitate educational excursions for students and educators to these repositories, enhancing experiential learning and practical exposure.
- Advocate for the establishment of a prototype archival edifice dedicated to the educational sector in Algeria, aimed at conserving and leveraging the comprehensive historical records for pedagogical and awareness purposes among students and educators within their specific domains.
- Propose the creation of a centralized archive for each educational entity, serving as a dynamic and enduring repository of the educational journey of all students and faculty members. This archive should include a dedicated space for exhibiting photographs, videos, and other memorabilia that chronicle their contributions and milestones, thereby encapsulating the institution's evolutionary narrative.
- Encourage subsequent research endeavors in this domain to broaden the scope of investigation to encompass larger and more prestigious educational institutions nationwide, thereby yielding more precise findings and facilitating a more thorough and constructive analysis of the situation.

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