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Legal and institutional issues for the management of electronic records at an archival institution in Zimbabwe

Godfrey Tsvuura

Zimbabwe Open University
tsvuurag@zou.ac.zw or gtsvuura@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-0317-0916

Patrick Ngulube

University of South Africa
ngulup@unisa.ac.za
ORCID: 0000-0002-7676-3931

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Abstract

This study examined the institutional and legal issues in managing e-records at the National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ). The NAZ developed a Public Sector Digital Records Management Framework in 2018 in response to the need to manage e-records at the national level. However, the implementation of this framework is yet to be realised. Besides this digital framework, the NAZ also operates within the framework of the National Archives of Zimbabwe Act [Chapter 25:06] of 1986, as amended by Act 22 of 2001. This amendment did not fully address the issues of digital records management; hence, the digital framework needs to align with the national legislation. Electronic records management is new to most records officers and archivists and requires an institutional and legal framework; training; guidance on policy implementation and standard operating procedures. The pragmatism of the electronic records management system has been described as a revolution that has dominated and challenged the traditional paper record-keeping system. Data was collected from interviews with key participants, complemented by document reviews of the NAZ Act and the Public Sector Digital Records Management Framework. For analysis it was organised into broad themes and reported in a narrative form. The researchers used an emergent framework to code and categorise the data and group them into themes. The study found that records managers and archivists at the NAZ are still grappling with the advent of electronic records management in terms of legislative, policy and skills requirements. The study recommends that the NAZ should first address institutional and legal issues such as the allocation of resources; development of implementation strategies of the framework; standard operating procedures for the whole public sector; skills training and the amendment of the NAZ Act for effective management of electronic records. The study deepens the understanding of electronic records management, and records managers and archivists at the NAZ can use to implement and manage e-records at national level properly.

Keywords: electronic records management, paper records, records managers, archivists, National Archives of Zimbabwe

Introduction

This study examined the institutional and legal issues in managing electronic records (e-records) at the National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ). The NAZ developed a Public Sector Digital Records Management Framework in 2018 in response to the need to manage e-records at the national level. However, the implementation of this framework has not yet been implemented. Besides this digital framework, the NAZ also operates within the framework of the National Archives of Zimbabwe Act [Chapter 25:06] of 1986, as amended by Act 22 of 2001. This amendment did not fully address the issues of digital records management; hence, the digital framework needs to be aligned with the national legislation. Public institutions in Zimbabwe are creating digital records to improve service delivery and corporate governance. This has created an influx of e-records in every government office. E-records, like paper, are also supporting service delivery and corporate governance. Electronic records management has become an enthusiastic process at all organisations worldwide, as the move from paper to electronic takes a centre stage of development. Odhiambo (2018) notes that this enthusiasm has been recognised around the world as the possibility of sharing digitised information, which has led to many organisations undertaking digitisation projects. In Zimbabwe, the NAZ developed a Public Sector Digital Records Management Framework in 2018 in response to the need to manage e-records at the national level. This shows a commitment by a regulating authority to provide guidelines on how e-records should be managed in Zimbabwe. However, enthusiasm should come together with institutional commitment to the allocation of resources. There is a need for government and public sector records management to show their commitment by addressing institutional and legal issues that can inhibit the successful stories of electronic records management at the NAZ. This must be seen in addressing and developing implementation strategies in the acquisition, records creation, description, storage, access and security of digital records and archives. Therefore, their commitment must be enhanced in their structural workflow systems through amendment of the legislation, strategic management about the implementation strategies of the framework, adequate financial resources allocated to the digital records management framework, and training and hiring of qualified records and archives personnel.

Institutional mandate of the National Archives of Zimbabwe

The concept of archives and record-keeping is not new (Venson, Ngoepe & Ngulube 2014:47). As Tsvuura (2016:25) notes, “world over, archival systems and services continue to map up government operations to the extent that each country boasts of having an archival institution”. The NAZ’s mandate “is to acquire, preserve and provide access to historical documents, objects, and stories that promote national memory, pride, and identity” (Director’s Annual Report 2016). Penn (1989) justifies the purpose of an archival institution as that of acquiring, organising, preserving and making available for research information of enduring value. The NAZ is a service department with a mandate to control and dispose of records and to select and permanently preserve archives for use by the government and the research community (Tsvuura 2016). “The institution occupies a central position in Zimbabwe’s documentation and information networks, as it functions as a centralising agency for the country’s unpublished documents (archives) and legal depository of all published materials in the country” (Tsvuura 2016:25). Venson, Ngoepe and Ngulube (2014) outline the important role played by national archival institutions in national development. Accordingly, Tsvuura (2016:25) notes the provision of records management services to central government, local authorities and statutory bodies by the NAZ to ensure adherence to records management principles. The NAZ Strategic Plan (2005) provides the following main functions of the institution:

- Provision of records management services to central government, city and rural councils and parastatals.
- Provision of archival and library services to the public.
- Undertaking of oral history programmes to fill the gaps currently existing in the document areas of the national history.
- Preservation of audiovisual archives.
- Provision of photographic services.
- Document restoration.

According to the (2018), the institution has been given a new mandate to properly manage e-records in the public sector and these include to:

- provide guidelines for the identification and implementation of appropriate digital records management systems
- harmonise emerging digital records systems with existing paper-based record-keeping systems
- standardise records management across public institutions to enhance information sharing and exchange
- enhance resource sharing for public sector efficiency and cost-effectiveness
- provide a platform that continues to support the acquisition and preservation of documents of historical significance.

Millar and Roper (1997:29) state that “an archival institution has a key role to play in oversight of records management in the public sector.” The mandate of archival institutions has also been mentioned by the International Council on Archives (2004), which states that the reasons for preserving archives are three-fold:

- Preserving the memory of the nations and society, as it is fundamental for national identity.
- Supporting corporate administration of the State.
- Guaranteeing citizens’ rights to access information, thereby knowing their history.

However, despite the importance of national archival institutions, Venson, Ngoepe and Ngulube (2014) note the low priority given to them by politicians. This resulted in them being severely under-resourced, inadequate planning, a low skills base among personnel and the absence of a clear career path, among other challenges. The advent of e-records management while underfunded has further strained archival institutions, resulting in failure to meet e-records management requirements. Managing e-records presents a significant challenge for an organisation of any size or sector (National Archives 2012).

Legal mandate of the National Archives of Zimbabwe

The NAZ operates within the framework of the National Archives of Zimbabwe Act [Chapter 25:06] of 1986, as amended by Act 22 of 2001. In Zimbabwe, the National Archives of Zimbabwe Act [Chapter 25, 06] of 1986 and the Public Sector Digital Records Management Framework of 2018 are the two legal instruments that mandate the creation of e-records in the public sector. These two instruments should clearly communicate with each other, hence the need to urgently amend the national legislation to speak digital language. The two instruments place the legal mandate on public institutions to systematically create, maintain and dispose of

records in a consistent manner that would retain their authenticity and integrity as sources of information. The NAZ Act provides the legislative and legal framework for the management of public sector records. It is the law that establishes the need for effective records management in Zimbabwe, as it provides the authority to create, maintain, use and dispose of records. One task of this law is to help public institutions manage their records appropriately and dispose of them systematically. As time passed from ancient to modern, the introduction of computers and the challenges of keeping digitised records and archives has been widely discussed in archival sciences, yet the solutions are more difficult to achieve than with paper records. The NAZ Act is hazy on digital records management and digital records are not yet accepted in the legal system as authentic evidence in a court of law in Zimbabwe (Tsvuura, Mbawuya & Ngulube 2021).

Management of e-records at the National Archives of Zimbabwe

Organisations and governments around the world are adopting the use of EDRMS to improve work processes and good governance, as they create e-records. Studies on e-records management in Zimbabwe, as noted by Tsvuura et al. (2021), Sigauke (2014) and Matangira, Lukileni and Katjiveri (2013) indicated an increase in the creation of e-records by government departments. However, the management of e-records at the NAZ remains in an infant stage. The systems to manage e-records are still not in place, as the institution is grappling to put its house in order in terms of the acquisition of the EDRMS. The current legislation has not yet been amended to include e-records management systems. Even though the institution has designed a digital records management policy, it must be compatible with the national legislation. Abdulkadhim et al. (2015) posit that developing countries are developing initiatives to adopt EDRMS to manage e-records, but they are failing. The failure to adopt and implement EDRMS, as noted by Kwatsha (2010), is attributed to strategic, social and technical factors, including issues of top management support and commitment. Such challenges are becoming hindrances and drawbacks to the smooth adoption and implementation of EDRMS in the government departments and the NAZ.

Even though the NAZ has developed a digital records management policy for use in the public sector, the adoption and implementation of an EDRMS requires continuous support from the government and top management at the NAZ as well as appropriate and implementable strategic plans. Abdulkadhim et al. (2015) and Mosweu (2016) highlight the same concerns of top management support, user involvement, implementation plans, data quality and collaboration among those involved in the EDRMS process. In other countries such as Namibia, Karlos (2015) and South Africa, Kwatsha (2010), the same challenges were revealed as hindrances to the adoption of EDRMS in most government institutions. In Namibia, Karlos (2015) further categorises low use of the EDRMS by users as the biggest hindrance, whereas in South Africa, Kwatsha (2010) mentions a lack of policies and procedures to support the EDRMS strategy. However, across the world, in a bid to overcome the challenges of e-records management, many organisations have resorted to hybrid record-keeping systems where they manage both paper and electronic records. This concept was a solution to the challenges of managing fully-fledged electronic records as organisations resort to parallel systems. This is because e-records management has come with some challenges that are difficult to overcome. To prepare for the management of e-records, the NAZ established an ICT unit in 2019 to implement the Public Sector Digital Records Management Policy Framework. The NAZ (2018:3) states that “digital records, just like their paper counterparts should be systematically managed to support business process and public sector accountability”. When managing e-records in the public sector, Baron and Payne (n.d.) note the importance of implementing

software that adequately categorises or classifies records in a manner that is in line with policy directives of retention schedules. “If records management policies and practices are not updated for a digital age, the surge in information could overwhelm agency systems, leading to higher cost and lost records” (Baron & Payne n.d.). Mulati and Wasike (2017) lament that hybrid record keeping was to continue for the unforeseen future, as it was unlikely that pure e-records management would be found anywhere around the world. The NAZ has also adopted the hybrid approach and has developed a parallel model, as shown in Figure 1 below, to properly manage e-records the same way paper-based records are managed at the institution.

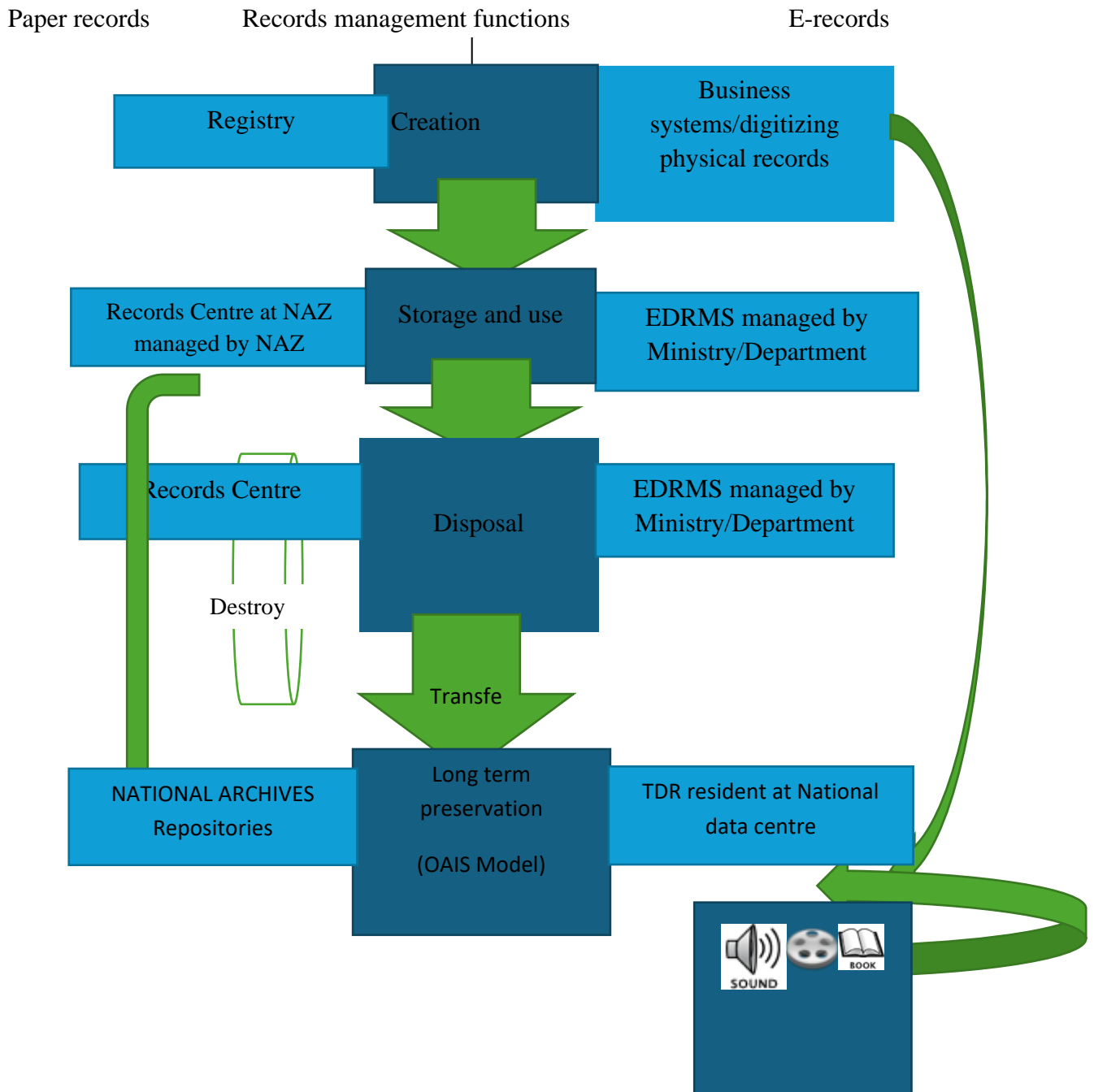


Figure 1: Digital Records Management-Parallel to the existing paper-based model (NAZ 2018)

In this model, it is important for the registries to be instructed to come up with one file plan that can be understood well in the EDRMS. This could enable the registries to have a range of file names that the computer could recognise and bring in a compatible system and better security of the records. The view of Mulati and Wasike (2017) that some organisations prefer paper-based record keeping is being defeated, as e-record-keeping systems enable easy capturing of information, the quick generation of reports and access to the required information in real time. The American Health Information Management Association (2009) laments that organisations operating in a hybrid environment could benefit, as their vital records in electronic records systems would be well backed up and can be recovered for business continuity. Even though other organisations prefer paper-based record keeping averting the risk of technological obsolescence and data corruption, MacDonald (2006) argues that computerised record keeping has now become the norm in many organisations since there is a wide range of commercial packages on the market. Many organisations around the world are, therefore, “implementing EDRMS to manage records and documents to enable better delivery of services” (Mosweu, Bwalya & Mutshewa 2016:41). Yin (2014:7) defines an EDRMS as “an automated system that supports the creation, use, and maintenance of documents and records in both paper and electronic format, with the intention of reaping an efficient organisation’s workflow and process.” Cako (2015) points out that “organisations that implement an EDRMS benefit from such an investment in the technology, among which include increased business productivity.” Leikums (2012) and Mahadi (2013) both emphasise that implementing an EDRMS improves effectiveness, reduces costs, keeps information safe and secure, manages records versions, manages the integrity and reliability of data, improves service delivery and generally enhances business processes.

However, Yin (2014:7) further states that “an EDRMS is supposed to provide a more integrated and efficient solution for records management within organisations.” This affirms that an EDRMS can enhance the public sector’s transparency and accountability of e-records management. It has been noticed through literature that, globally, developed countries like Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia have advanced in e-records management (Malanga & Kamanga 2018; Maseh 2016; Moloji & Mutula 2007). Malanga and Kamanga (2018) and Maseh (2016) observe that public organisations in these developed countries have formulated records management policies, committed adequate resources, established effective records management systems, trained staff in records management and audited performance to show the best value and accountability. In sharp contrast to the developed world, Malanga and Kamanga (2018), Maseh (2016), Moloji and Mutula (2007) and Mnjama and Wamukoya (2007) also observe several challenges affecting proper e-records management in Africa, which include low awareness of the role of records management, lack of legislation, policies and procedures to guide records management, lack of skills and training, and inadequate resources for managing records. However, various configuration options exist for managing digital records in business applications. According to ISO 16175-1 (2020), organisations that make decisions about software types should also consider risks linked to business processes. Such decisions might also be affected by the legal and regulatory framework within which organisations operate. For instance, organisational readiness or maturity should be reflected in its policies, responsibilities and skills requirements for appropriate organisational use of the system.

Statement of the problem

Electronic records are being created in government ministries, departments, local authorities and parastatals in Zimbabwe. Despite this phenomenal growth of e-records, Eke (2011) says

that “institutions face challenges such as the absence of policies governing their management, lack of awareness of the need to manage e-records over time and absence or low level of allocation of financial resources towards e-archiving and preservation”. Consequently, the nature of how e-records and archives are being created and managed in the public service of Zimbabwe leaves much to be desired. Most government departments are creating e-records, as the government of Zimbabwe adopts the e-governance and e-government systems (Tsvuura, Mbawuya & Mutsau 2021) while the regulatory authority – the NAZ’s e-records management systems are not yet in place. This results in e-records created in the public sector not accounted for in the national record-keeping systems of the country. The consequence is a wide information gap for future generations. Odhiambo (2018) notes that the trend of challenges is likely to continue for institutions that are not taking measures to handle the situation. Therefore, it must be clear for the NAZ to take major steps necessary to reduce the risk of losing such records to technological vagaries and maintain the quality of services offered through electronic platforms. The institution’s support and implementation strategy of e-records must be adequately known in the public sector. The main objective of this study was to identify the gaps in the management of e-records at the NAZ. The other objectives were to find out the institutional obligations of the NAZ in the management of public sector e-records and to ascertain the legal framework for the e-records management system in Zimbabwe.

Literature review

According to Katuu and Van der Walt (2016:1), “any improvement in the management of e-records has to be done in full cognisance that records are generated in an organisational setting and based on a national legislative and regulatory framework”. Therefore, it is imperative for any country to develop and implement a legislative framework that will assist in guiding records management (Katu 2015; Cullinan 2006). Marutha (2019) argues that e-records management needs to be governed using a legal framework to avoid records being lost, modified, altered, misfiled and damaged. In his study on the legislative framework for managing medical records in Limpopo Province of South Africa, Marutha (2019) revealed that legal prescripts were not appropriately followed in healthcare institutions due to a lack of fundamental resources. Marutha (2019) notes that legislative frameworks are at the heart of the achievement of business goals in all business sectors. Asogwa (2012b) conducted a study on the challenges of managing electronic records in developing countries and revealed that there was no adequate legislation and infrastructure for the management of electronic records. These sentiments were also alluded to by Boonstra and Broekhuis (2010:11) and Marutha (2019:551) when they stated that the significance of an archives and records management law in any country or organisation cannot be overemphasised. Accordingly, Ismail and Jamaludin (2009) and Ndenje-Sichalwe et al. (2011) underscore that these laws are made to ensure the mandatory establishment of a sound organisational records management framework for any organisational business transaction. The legislative and policy frameworks should govern how records should be created, kept and maintained for future organisational and individual employees’ accountability (Ismail & Jamaludin 2009; Ndenje-Sichalwe et al. 2011). Chachage and Ngulube (2006) and Ndenje-Sichalwe et al. (2011) allude to the fact that the way records are captured, created, transmitted, used, stored, indexed, retrieved, controlled, retained and preserved should comply with legislation and standards.

However, Asogwa (2012a:207) and Ndenje-Sichalwe et al. (2011) argue that in most African countries, legislative frameworks are not updated regularly. This results in the creation, management, use and preservation of recorded information conducted according to legislation that is not up-to-date and not in line with the current records management technology (Marutha

2019:553). For instance, Marutha (2019) notes that in most African countries, the scope of archival laws covers basic models of paper-based records. As such, the laws inhibit organisations from managing electronic records (Marutha 2019). As a result of these outdated laws, Asogwa (2012) further states that in most African countries, there is no lawful definition of records or electronic records, and they are not admissible in legal proceedings in the court of law. Asogwa (2012b) further argues that in Africa, there are no laws or legislation on electronic records and electronic archives management, and therefore, it is useless to manage these records without procedural and legal laws since they are not fully recognised in courts of law as legal documents because of their propensity for alteration. In addition, Decman and Vintar (2013) argue that inadequate legislation exists for records management in public administration. However, Asogwa (2012a:209) emphasises that there are still gaps in legislative prescripts due to the fast advance of technology. Marutha (2019) suggests that there is a need for the public sector to review legislation regularly or when the situation requires it. Legislative prescripts about the current situation and technological requirements need to be reviewed and improved occasionally (Marutha 2019). In Botswana, Mosweu (2019) notes that the legislative framework for digital records management is available, although not supported by operational guidelines to fully support the e-government agenda, specifically when managing resultant digital records.

A lack of capacity to manage digital records has come to the fore due to the implementation of e-government by the Botswana government (Mosweu 2019). As such, the government of Botswana acknowledges the potential of e-government to propel Botswana into the knowledge economy (Mosweu 2019; Government of Botswana 2010). As such, the Botswana government developed a masterplan with the following objectives:

- Innovate service delivery through seamless connectivity between government agencies (G2G).
- Improve access to information by reducing digital divide and improving network speed (G2C).
- Enhance competitiveness through economic diversification (G2B).
- Provide realistic and relevant technologies to support e-government (Mosweu 2019:112).

A study conducted by Mosweu (2019) on the knowledge and skills requirements for records managers in Botswana revealed that archives and records management personnel are ill-equipped to manage digital records. Other studies by Mnjama and Wamukoya (2007), Kemoni (2009), Ngoepe and Keakopa (2011), Marutha and Ngulube (2012), Nengomasha (2013), Katuu (2015), Katuu and Ngoepe (2017) and Mosweu and Ngoepe (2019) revealed that archives and records management professionals lack necessary skills and competencies to manage records in the networked environment. These studies were conducted in the ESARBICA region, including Botswana. According to Mosweu (2019), beyond Africa, in Australia, for example, a similar challenge is a reality. The National Archives of Australia (2015), after recognising that the digital age requires a skilled and knowledgeable workforce, developed a digital information and records management capability matrix for records managers and ICT specialists to enable them to cope with requirements for the management of digital records (Marutha 2019).

As such, Mnjama and Wamukoya (2007) and Kemoni (2009) argue that the advent of e-government brought the reality that African archives and records management practitioners were limited when managing digital records. Nkwe (2012) and Mosweu, Mutshewa and

Bwalya (2014) hold that with the implementation of e-government in Botswana, ICTs were used to deliver services. Therefore, Segaletsho and Mnjama (2017) emphasise that knowledge and skills for every profession are vital in equipping human beings with informed planning and decision-making. However, studies by Keakopa (2007), Moloji and Mutula (2007), Mosweu (2012), Mosweu (2014), Moathodi and Kalusopa (2016), Rakemane and Serema (2018) and Mosweu and Ngoepe (2019) all revealed a lack of competencies and skills to manage records generated in the networked environment in Botswana. For instance, Mosweu (2019) states that this situation is attributed to inadequately qualified staff members in institutions of higher learning, shortage of locally trained professionals as educators, inadequate knowledge and training for educators in computer technologies, virtually non-existent research, poor quality of educational materials and outmoded programmes. Solutions for the lack of skills and competencies for digital records management in African countries are needed to keep pace with the global economy (Mosweu 2019:112).

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative research approach with interviews and document review as data gathering tools. The data collection procedures involved face-to-face interviews, supplemented by document reviews. Astalin (2013) and Creswell and Poth (2018) describe qualitative research as a systematic scientific inquiry that seeks to build a holistic, primarily narrative description that informs the researchers' understanding of a social or cultural phenomenon. A structured interview guide was prepared to guide the authors as they conducted the interviews. The six participants were purposively chosen, as they were at management level at the institution. Data were collected using interviews and document reviews of the National Archives of Zimbabwe Act of 1986 and the Public Sector Digital Records Management Framework of 2018. Data was thematically analysed, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2022). The findings were presented in narrative form.

Findings

The study found that the EDRMS had not yet been approved, and procurement was at 80%. The hardware and software for the EDRMS had not yet been purchased and no intense training had been conducted for the archivists and the rest of the records personnel in the public sector. Interviews with the key personnel indicated that the institution intended to conduct 'train the trainer training' and produce experts who will train and advise all government departments. The participants were asked if they had already developed the curriculum to delve into e-records management in the public sector. They indicated that the curriculum had not yet been developed, but consultancy with key stakeholders was ongoing. The participants were further asked if they accepted e-records from various government departments at the National Archives for permanent preservation. This was asked because some government institutions were already creating e-records in their daily work. The participants indicated that e-records were not yet accepted at the NAZ due to the non-availability of the EDRMS to manage such records. They said they were working on a document management system (DMS) for uniformity and compatibility of all current records in the public sector. One participant said that the DMS was a solution for the uniformity of current records for the whole public sector. This could enable proper use of the EDRMS, as all the government departments would have one file plan.

The document reviews indicated that the National Archives of Zimbabwe Act [Chapter 25:06] 1986 is not explicit about the e-records management framework, and, therefore, the security of

e-records was not guaranteed. The study found that the policy framework – the Public Sector Digital Records Management Framework – was developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology and aligned to the Zimbabwe National Information and Communication Technology Policy of 2016. The framework was also issued in terms of the National Archives of Zimbabwe Act [Chapter 25:06] 1986 with recommended International Standards from ISO 15489 (2001) and ISO 16175-1(2020), which establish fundamental principles and functional requirements for software used to create and manage digital records in office environments. In this framework, the NAZ has been given two important roles and responsibilities: 1) providing expert guidance on and oversight of the creation, management and permanent preservation of e-records by way of developing policies, decisions, guidelines, tools and procedures 2) certification of e-records management systems proposed by government institutions.

Further interviews with the participants indicated that e-records in Zimbabwe are not yet accepted in a court of law as a true reflection of what transpired. Therefore, all born-digital records are still not admissible in a court of law, except those that would have been printed and kept as hard copies. The participants were further asked if they had revised the retention and disposal schedules to accommodate e-records management at national level. They indicated that the institution had yet to revise the records retention and disposal schedules. However, in line with these findings, the National Archives of Australia (2011) provides guidelines for EDRMS implementation strategy as:

- Justifying the need for EDRMS as a business need and not as a belief that technology
- is the solution to all issues and challenges.
- Change management, such as EDRMS, needs to be treated as a change management
- project.
- Top management support for the provision of required resources, funding and staff
- training.
- User involvement and their acceptance and adoption of the new system.

Discussions

It should be noted: “Managing e-records presents a significant challenge for many organisations of any size or sector” (National Archives 2012:4). As Asogwa (2012b) notes, e-records management is at its weakest point due to a lack of appropriate legal framework such as legislation and policies as well as a lack of proper organisational structures. Despite the findings of this study, ISO 15489 (ISO 2001) has a clause that empowers records managers and archivists, as it prescribes that “records management responsibilities should be defined, assigned and promulgated throughout the organisations and delineates who is responsible for taking necessary action”. However, the Zimbabwean government's creation of electronic records (e-records) is undeniable, as e-records are found in every office in the public sector. Studies on records management in Zimbabwe by Tsvuura, Mbawuya and Ngulube (2021), Sinanke (2014) and Matingi (2016) showed an increase in the creation of e-records in the public sector. Other studies in Botswana by Moloi (2009) and Rakemane and Serema (2018) also reported an increase in the creation of e-records among many government departments. In South Africa Kwatsha, (2010), and in Namibia, Nengomasha (2009) and Matangira (2013) also witnessed the same trends of an increase in the creation of e-records. Alshibly, Chiong and Bao (2016) argue that “many organisations have become aware that efficient control of information flow leads to effective management, increased productivity, transparency and accountability”. As an application that manages e-records, EDRMS has become popular, as organisations use

them to manage their records and information. However, the successful implementation of EDRMS hinges on several critical factors like resource commitment, skills acquisition, top management support and change management. Previous studies by Grange and Scott (2010) reported that the failure of EDRMS implementation was due to a variety of factors such as “computer illiteracy, attitude towards technology, and poor change management”. Consequently, an in-depth assessment of the prevailing environment to determine an organisation's readiness to implement and, by extension, adopt an EDRMS is essential. Johnston and Bowen (2005) point out that the basic benefits of an EDRMS is that work processes are done easily (less effort required) and more quickly. In addition, it enables an audit of what has been done and by whom to be traceable. The benefits of implementing an EDRMS include standardised terminology within the records, entry of information into an EDRMS can be quicker and more efficient as well as more comprehensive than in paper records. Other benefits include easier, faster access to information and improved legibility of the documentation, as well as the accountability and efficiency of the staff (Brent, Sullivan & Garner, 2020). An EDRMS gives an organisation advantage in terms of speedy information and records retrieval and reduces operating costs (Aziz, Yusof, Mokhtar & Jambari 2017). Yin (2014) points out that an EDRMS gives advantages to organisations in terms of speedy information and records retrieval and reduced operational costs. EDRMSs have been proven in providing good security measures in government records processing procedure and improved accountability and transparency making it a dynamic information management system (Leikums 2012).

Conclusion and recommendations

The study revealed that the NAZ was in the process of adopting an EDRMS to manage e-records in the public sector in Zimbabwe. Therefore, it was concluded that the NAZ is still in its infancy in managing e-records, even though e-records have been accepted in the public sector in Zimbabwe. The institution is still in the planning phase of the e-records management. E-records created in most government departments are yet to be accounted for in the country's national record-keeping system. However, the adoption of the hybrid record-keeping system by the NAZ is a positive development, as the institution, firstly, makes sure that paper records are well organised to avoid garbage-in-garbage-out. Given the findings, the following are recommended:

- The NAZ needs appropriate hardware/software to enable it to manage e-records in the public sector.
- The NAZ needs to collaborate with other stakeholders such as universities for a change of curriculum.
- The NAZ needs to benchmark with other countries that have already introduced e-records management systems.
- The NAZ must put in place transitional intervention and implementation strategies.
- Restructuring of public sector records management and intensive training for all civil servants to prepare them for the transition.
- There is a need for government programmes to speak to each other in a well-coordinated effort, for example, for uniformity and compatibility, requires a DMS in the whole public sector for current e-records management.
- Amendment of the NAZ Act to speak e-records management is urgently necessary.
- This would assist the institution in legalising electronic records in Zimbabwe.

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