

MERITS AND CHALLENGES OF THE INTEGRATED RECORDS SERVICES IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE – A CASE OF BOTSWANA

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Abstract

The introduction of trained and experienced records personnel in the Botswana public service marked the beginning of effective management of records. Prior to this change, arbitrarily nominated administration staff using inconsistent methods and practices managed government records, and that affected the delivery of government business. Botswana integrated the public service records and archives functions in 1992 that brought to being Botswana National Archives and Records Services (BNARS). This was a fusion of what was originally Botswana National Archives with Government Records services in Ministries and Departments. This article starts by discussing the restructuring process that took place in BNARS. The exercise was meant to achieve two objectives, mainly:

- *To increase effectiveness of Government Ministries and Departments in order to provide better services to the public and bring about more effective and faster socio-economic development*
- *To optimise utilisation of the available manpower, financial material and other resources allocated to the public (Permanent Secretary to the President. 1992:1).*

Subsequent to this, the article then assesses both the merits and the challenges that arose from the records restructuring. The assessment is made at the archival and the administrative levels with a view to determining the impact on both. The ultimate question is whether the entire exercise was a good thing or not. Botswana as a nation has developed a twenty (20) year long vision that elapses in 2016, with one of its major pillars phrased as building 'an educated, informed nation', a guarantee that full access to information will be achieved. On this score a determination has to be made to decide whether BNARS restructuring will add any value to this or not.

Keywords: Botswana National Archives and Records Services, Integrated Records Services, Public Service, Records Management

Introduction

The integration of Botswana National Archives and Records Services ushered into the local employment sector a new cadre of trained and experienced records personnel in the Botswana public service. The cadre gave a distinguishing mark to the restructuring process signifying commitment to the records profession and the desire to promote productivity in the public service by Botswana Government.

The designation of personnel is a small part in a whole host of activities that had to be undertaken in a restructuring exercise of this nature.

This article assesses the impact of the integration exercise in the public service. It makes a cursory assessment of the entire restructuring process and determines if the objectives of the exercise were achieved. Evidently the restructuring is at the core of archival theory and business re-engineering processes. Finally, it highlights and discusses both the merits and challenges of conducting the exercise almost 13 years since its inception.

Background

Botswana as a nation has developed a twenty-year-long vision that elapses in 2016, with one of its major pillars phrased as building 'an educated, informed nation' (Presidential Task Group for a Long Term Vision for Botswana. 1997:5) a guarantee that full access to information will be achieved. The Vision states that:

Botswana will have... become a regional leader in the production and dissemination of information... The society of Botswana by the year 2016 will be free and democratic, a society where information on the operations of Government, private sector and other organisations is freely available to all citizens. There will be a culture of transparency and accountability (Presidential Task Group for a Long Term Vision for Botswana. 1997:5).

One of the agencies responsible for the realisation of this vision is BNARS, which is charged with the responsibility of managing local public sector records. BNARS carries the mandate to manage public service records and provide access to these to public servants while the records are in active mode and to the public for research as archives.

Botswana National Archives (BNA) was established in 1965, a year before Botswana attained its independence from Britain. BNA had only one function, which was Archives Administration. An organisational overall review carried out in 1985 by the Directorate of Public Service Management, in the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs to which BNA belongs, recommended that: "The National Public Service Records Services and National Archives be merged into a single unit under the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs" (Directorate of Public Service Management Organisation and Methods Review 1992:4).

The organisational review was followed by the issuance of a Circular in 1992 that declared the commencement of the integration exercise to be effective from 1st December 1992. The Circular proposed a three-pronged strategy:

- BNARS was to establish an internal implementation Task Force to be headed by the Director of National Archives with the Directorate of Public Service Management occasionally co-opted for technical advice.
- The Task Force was to conduct the implementation process.

- The Task Force was to see to it that all other approved changes relating to development of work performance standards and administrative capabilities are implemented.

Organisation and Management problems highlighted in the review

From a records management point of view, there equally were many reported problems in the public service pertaining to poor record keeping practices that affected the general service. It was observed that there were low standards of keeping records with record keepers not trained in records management at any level.

The following constitute the core problems that were identified during the 1985 Organisation and Methods Review of the Department which comment on both the organisation and management of records services:

- *Organisation and Management weaknesses:* public records services were poor, weak, inadequate and lacking in proper organisation and management; the entire public service system was not geared towards providing the essential logistical support services; the management of registries lacked professionalism, motivation and commitment as a result of a lack of a sound and cohesive organisational structure.
- *Systems and methods problems:* registry systems and methods were identified as one of the key weaknesses of registry establishments, with most components of the systems and methods being inadequate, outdated, laborious, slow and time consuming. The manual systems used were lacking in development and thus subject to error.
- *Inability to determine records staff establishment:* it was difficult to establish the complement of staff exclusively engaged in records services work except for Registry Supervisors and their assistants. The rest were classified as General Administration staff in the public service establishment register.
- *Low status of Records Services work and lack of staff motivation:* All staff that manned records, including the Records Services establishment, were accorded a very low status in the public service. They were the bottom line before one reaches Messengers and the Industrial Class.
- *Poor morale and lack of motivation:* Factors such as low status, the lack of scheme of service and the lack of prospects for progression contributed towards poor morale and the lack of motivation that was prevalent among the records staff throughout the public service.
- *Indiscipline and poor supervision:* The lack of sound educational background, the lack of input professional training, a proper aptitude and disposition towards records management and the lack of a deep rooted appreciation of its importance on the part of some of the members of the supervisory cadre were some of the reasons for laxity, easy-going and unenlightened supervision. On the other hand, indiscipline among the records services staff, that is, non-observance/adherence to rules and

procedures, a lax and easygoing attitude, etc, were caused by, among other factors, the same factors that cause ineffective supervision.

- *Ignorance and frustrating behaviour by Action Officers (records users/clients of the records services)*: The records users were not only considered ignorant on how to use the records services properly, but rather were lacking in discipline as regards the appropriate utilisation of the service. Some of the poor practices observed included; holding for too long to files, keeping too many files at a time, removing and replacing letters and documents, taking official files out of the office with them to meetings and conferences, general misplacing and losing of files, opening of new files without the knowledge of the registry supervisor, lack of appreciation, understanding, cooperation and disregard as well as belittling and intimation of records personnel in the performance of their duties. [1]

Objectives of integrating records and archives services

In the Government Circular number 4 of 1992 entitled *Performance Improvement in the Public Service; O & M Review of Ministerial Organisation Set-ups; National Archives and Records Services* Government sought to integrate the National Archives function and Records Services function to achieve the following two-fold objectives:

- To increase effectiveness of Government Ministries and Departments in order to provide better services to the public and bring about more effective and faster socio-economic development
- To optimise utilisation of the available manpower, financial material and other resources allocated to the public (Permanent Secretary to the President. 1992:2).

Integration subsequently led to an increase in the number of functions that the restructured organisation would play. However, there are 3 major notable roles that the BNARS would specifically play:

- Provide national archives services to preserve for posterity historically important records and data for research and education.
- Serve as a focal point for efficient management of all operational records within Government.
- Acquire and preserve documented material of national, historical, research and education value.

BNARS restructuring process

Issuance of the Circular No. 4 of 1992

As already explained above, a Circular from Office of the President was issued to direct that the National Archives was given the direct responsibility for public registries and that its name be changed to National Archives and Records Services. The Circular specifically stated the following measures to be observed:

- *Re-organisation and the new objectives:* Government directed that BNARS was to be re-organised to play the already stated three main objectives.
- *Improving organisational effectiveness of BNARS:* specific measures recommended for improving BNARS' organisational effectiveness included: review of public service records services systems, methods and procedures, the review exercise should be comprehensive and thorough-going, initially to tackle key problems first such as mail handling and filing, and a joint review exercise conducted by both the Records Services Unit and Management Services Division of DPSM to assess services systems, methods and procedures.
- *Developing Administrative capabilities within BNARS:* specific measures recommended to improve Administrative capabilities included; an introduction of effective overall leadership and directions, sound policy and operational guidelines, adequate authority for carrying out the approved functions, and the need for commitment, motivation and the right attitude at both policy and operational levels.
- *Overall organisation structure of BNARS:* the National Archives Division was given an elevated status to be a Department to be known as Botswana National Archives and Records Services, the regrouping of functions resulted in having 4 Units of Archives Services, Records Management, Archives and Records Research and Divisional Management, all Units were to report to the Director, and a distinct cadre of records staff was to be established through the development of a separate and distinct schemes of service for the Department.

Establishment of the Implementation Task Force

An Implementation Task Force that was composed of Registry Supervisors was established to carry out the restructuring process. The Task Force that originally had DPSM staff as members was headed by the Director for BNARS and had to be operational only after records staff was transferred to BNARS. The Task Force met occasionally but ceased to operate around 1997.

Transfer of Personnel to BNARS

A records establishment and transfer form was designed and distributed at the beginning of March 1993 throughout the public service. Within each Ministry responsible officers were requested to give information on the names, educational attainment, work station, designation and grade, date of appointment and training of records staff.

Officers were given the opportunity to transfer to BNARS as records staff or opt to stay in their respective organisations as administration officers. Those that opted to move to BNARS were finally included in the establishment as records personnel. This task proved largely to be the main one that determined the success of the restructuring process. The training of records staff started in

earnest with the introduction of a basic training course in Archives and Records Management at Botswana Institute of Administration and Commerce (BIAC), which is a government-owned institution for training public officers.

Records transfers

Records that were due for transfer to BNARS repository were identified in all Ministries, appraised and boxed then moved to the repository. The biggest numbers transferred were in the 1991/92 and 1992/93 financial years with a total of approximately 1,325 boxes. However, some boxes had to be returned because as they were not properly boxed since the task to box records was assigned to junior officers.

Proposed development of records centres

Land was acquired in Kanye and Francistown, which are major towns away from Gaborone to build regional records centres. However, the records centre in Francistown has since been built but is yet to be used to store records, while the Kanye Records Centre has not been developed due to lack of funds.

Compilation of the records procedures manual

The Directorate of Public Service Management through its learning institution BIAC in conjunction with BNARS produced a records procedures manual called the Registry Handbook in August 1993 (Botswana Government 1993). This manual was initially used as a learning module at BIAC but was enlarged to include most processes that are carried out in records management.

Merits of integration

Restructuring consistent with archival theory

The integration of the Records Services and Archives Administration by the Botswana Government is an acceptable thing from the point of view of the archival profession. Generally Archivists and Records Managers perceive a relationship between Records Management and Archives Administration, and therefore through a lot of research strive to bring both areas together. The consensus is that archival theory is concerned with explaining the care and management of records and information from the point of creation to its disposal either by destruction or transfer to a repository for permanent preservation (Thomassen 2001:385). Thomassen (2001) went on to say that archival research: "is not only about how memories can be kept, but also and maybe even more about how memory is created and how memory works".

The Department of National Archives and Records Services has deployed its personnel across all Ministries and independent Departments to ensure that the proper management of records is carried out at all stages of the record. This approach follows the common but unpopular archival life-cycle principle that recognises that records are created, used, maintained and then disposed of, either by destruction as obsolete or by preservation as archives for their ongoing

value (Penn, Pennix & Coulson 1994: 12-15). The main argument is that the life-cycle principle is a significant landmark within the archival profession, and therefore by adopting its approach Botswana was striving towards employing best practice in the management of the public service records.

Archival international bodies have made strides by developing restructuring models, and most or all of them are based on the notion expounded by the archival theory. For instance, the International Records Management Trust (IRMT) has developed a model called the Integrated Records Management Programme (this shall be discussed later in the article) to guide the restructuring processes (Roper & Millar 1999).

In respect of the Botswana Government's public service reforms and National Vision, a good start in the right direction where the management of records is concerned has been made. However, the management of such records does not take place in isolation, because a relationship of impact between the records approach and the growth of efficiency in the public service has to occur or to be established. Remember, the restructuring exercise was not concerned with attaining archival best practice for its purpose, but to bring about high standards of productivity in the office.

Botswana government adopting the initiative to restructure – commendation

In most countries, including Botswana, records and archives management do not per se receive a 'red carpet treatment' as the professional service is not considered a priority area for government business. Whereas the recognition is there that records are viewed as a strategic resource for business, governments' commitment to their management is lacking.

When the Botswana Government set out to improve productivity levels in the public service by instituting records management reforms it was evidently showing commitment not just to the management of its records, but to the archival profession in general. The recognition that was made was that records indeed are a strategic means of improving quality service in general. Therefore Botswana deserves a lot of credit for this level of commitment. By the same token, BNARS should take advantage of the Botswana Government's readiness to support archival work by ensuring the consistent provision of quality records service and demonstrate dynamism in its practices that will impact positively in the public service.

Introduction of records management cadre

When the restructuring exercise commenced personnel had to be identified and designated as Records Officers. The introduction of this cadre was an endorsement of a recognition made by Botswana Government on record-keeping work as a distinct profession. Prior to the introduction of this cadre, arbitrarily nominated administration staff using inconsistent methods and practices managed government records and that affected the delivery of government

business. The biggest achievement that resulted from the exercise so far is the acquisition and secondment of trained and experienced records officers to all Ministry records management units. In addition, the introduction of the Records Managers cadre enhanced the professional status in the business for managing records.

Within the field of professions that exist in the Botswana public service and organisations in general there now exist Records Managers, Archivists, Records Officers and Archives Officers. Just by their existence, an understanding and appreciation of the archives profession has developed.

Records services performance

General there has been positive feedback from Ministries and Departments. The improvements that have been noted include:

- Reduction in loss and misplacement of files through the development of proper file classifications after the model or prototype was developed by BNARS.
- There has been a reduction in misfiling as result of training the records officers as well as recruiting officers with higher educational levels.
- Records problems are lessened in Ministries with Records Managers.
- The transfer of records to BNARS has been consistent throughout the years.
- File tracking systems and other control procedures have been developed and are being enforced

Training of records management personnel

The requirements of any reform suggest that some form of training on the reform object has to be carried out to equip the designated records personnel. Since the inception of the restructuring exercise the Botswana Government has been training records personnel to equip them with necessary skills for the records work.

Probably up to this day, there has never been any comprehensive conscious plan to train all public officers who are non-records public servants on records and archives management as part of the on-going restructuring. Currently what occurs are scattered efforts by various records personnel in their respective host Ministries and Departments to conscientise records users.

Another benefit that arose from the records reform is the introduction of formal and professional training in some local tertiary institutions in the country. A basic course in records and archives management is offered in Botswana Institute of Administration and Commerce. This is a government-owned institution that offers bridging training to public officers who have to undergo some training. The Institute of Development Management offers varied professional training to students mainly from Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. This institution offers training in records and archives management at the Certificate level. The

University of Botswana offers archival training at the Diploma and Post-Graduate levels, and is currently training some Records Managers from the BNARS at a Master's degree level. Basically, all the mentioned institutions are major tertiary institutions in Botswana, and the introduction of archival studies is not just a recognition of the significance of archival work in the country, but also of the fact that the profession is here to stay and it will continually experience growth.

Establishment of Botswana regional records centres – resource provision

At this point in time the National Archives building is undergoing some expansion developments. Equally, as part of the restructuring process a records centre has been built in Francistown, which is the second major city in Botswana to supplement the storage space that is already filled to capacity in the National Archives headquarters building. Plans are underway to build another records centre in Gaborone to support the southern region of the country with storage for records.

Such developments, which are a positive aspect of the records profession, arose as a result of the restructuring reform. The provision of land for such records centres, finance and commitment by the Botswana Government bode well for a positive growth of the archival profession. With facilities like these being available the archival theory core principles of *respect des fonds*, Life-cycle concept, the Continuum concept and the levels of arrangement and description could easily be satisfied.

Accorded role to be professional leader in records management and archives

None else in Botswana has authority over national archives and records than BNARS. The recognition of records management as a profession through the restructuring process gives BNARS a leadership role in the entire field in Botswana whereby issues of national records' exportation, mutilation, collection, access, etc now have a focal point at which to attend to records matters professionally, administratively and ethically.

Challenges related to the restructuring process

Inconsistencies of the restructuring process

There are various levels that the assessment of the restructuring processes could be made, however, I will discuss the few selected matters that have significance to the whole exercise and to any professional debate.

The restructuring time frame and its review

During the issuance of the Circular No. 4 by the Office of the President to direct the commencement of the National Archives restructuring process, there was no mention of the time frame within which the whole exercise should take place. The implementation strategy in the directive states that:

The implementation task force will determine, on the basis of priorities, effective dates for implementing the specific recommendations. The

overall revised structure of the National Archives and Records Services however will be effective from 1 December 1992 (Permanent Secretary to the President 1992:4).

Much of the literature generated by the Implementation Task Force that was established does not make mention of the time frame to be taken to conduct the implementation.

However, without a doubt, an exercise of this nature and magnitude cannot go on indefinitely without restricting it to any time-frame because that could prove costly. Basically, the exercise was adopted as a reform that had an intended specific purpose; that of promoting efficiency in the public service. In order to determine whether the objective has been achieved it is expected that the implementation process should be completed. In a way, the assessment of the consequent situation would help determine if the approach that was adopted is appropriate or not.

Some form of review has to be carried out to determine the accuracy of the implementation process. The restructuring exercise spreads across many organisations as well as over a long time and therefore requires a constant review of progress to make necessary readjustments when it is required to do so.

Consistency (lack of) with Archival restructuring models

When we place the Botswana National Archives and Records Services restructuring implementation process side by side with any of the archival restructuring models, some inconsistencies begin to show which subsequently suggest that the desired impact will not be achieved. The author, as part of his post-graduate study has made an assessment of the BNARS restructuring against the International Records Management Trust (IRMT) restructuring model. (Chebani 2003: 27-31).

Briefly, the IRMT restructuring model called Integrated Records Management Programme (IRM) identified six (6) stages at which any archival restructuring should take place in the order that is given. These are:

- Restructuring existing systems
- Organising and controlling records
- Providing physical protection for records
- Managing records in records centres
- Managing archives
- Supporting and sustaining the IRM programme

Restructuring existing systems refers to the establishment or review of foundation tools, which should spell out the mandate as well as give authority and guidance to the national archives where records and archives are concerned in the public service and nationally. The Botswana National Archives Act was initially established in 1978 even though the institution was established in 1965.

Similarly, hitherto the review of the Act has not been carried out to be consistent with the current role and structure of BNARS. Just as before the 1978 scenario, BNARS at present faces problems of execution and enforcement if such a legislation tool does not exist. In addition, the lack of other foundation tools such as policies and the scheme of service will drastically affect the performance of the department.

Most observers believe that the success of any organisation is determined by how well founded it is, through the establishment of foundation instruments. Agere, Lemieux and Mazikana (1999:110) explained that:

In the absence of legislation or policy giving public service officials authority to take decisions ... often they are forced to place themselves and the organisation at risk by making unilateral and ad hoc decisions.

It should be observed that the success of national archives institutions in the UK, US and most European countries can be attributed to the establishment of legislation and other foundation instruments before those institutions become functional. This point is emphasised by the IRM manual, which states that “to achieve the integrated management of records, it is first necessary to review and restructure existing records services... the first area to be reviewed and revised in the public sector is the archives-related legislation” (Roper & Millar 1999).

On other stages of the restructuring BNARS has done fairly well. Some Ministries have developed records programmes and some impact is observable. Elsewhere it is reported that BNARS was able to build a records centre as well as have some land allocated to construct another one.

But on the stage of supporting and sustaining the IRM programme, there is no evidence that BNARS restructuring was being supported because there has never been any conscious programme to review and evaluate the process. DPSM has never made any incursions to determine the progress of activities and their desired effect on the public service.

Composition of the Implementation Task Force

The integration of records services and archives administration is essentially a public service reform. The Botswana archival restructuring exercise was rightly proposed and initiated by the Directorate of Public Service Management (DPSM) particularly because the intention was to address performance in the public service. DPSM is the main authority of the public service and owns all reforms that take place that are government-wide.

Initially, DPSM participated in the discussions that led to the issuance of the restructuring Circular of 1992. When actual implementation started the Task Force composition was only confined to the records personnel to drive the process. In this way, a task of this magnitude was left to the records personnel who are officers with no authority over Ministries and Departments as they are

seconded to those to play operational roles, and yet were expected to acquire available resources of accommodation, vacancies, personnel and equipment of their own accord; subsequently the lack of participation by the respective authorities affected those organisations' commitment to the exercise.

The Implementation Task Force composition should have been made of senior representatives from all Ministries and independent Departments who would determine and ensure that all the required resources are provided. In addition, another steering team made up of Heads of Ministries (Permanent Secretaries) should have been established to support the implementation team with policy decisions about the whole exercise.

Performance measurement and evaluation

Botswana Government has introduced reforms of performance of the Performance Management System (PMS) in 1999 and Performance Based Reward System (PBRS) in 2004 to promote productivity in the public service. You should know that BNARS restructuring commenced seven years before the PMS and PBRS reforms were introduced. PMS and PBRS take place through the development of strategic plans for organisations and performance development plans for individuals.

Almost all Ministries are going through their second strategic plans, and what is observable is that it is difficult to say whether any strategic planning evaluation of BNARS overall performance relates to the restructuring process or to general activities in the Department. Similarly, nothing seems to suggest that the strategic planning covers any tasks from the restructuring exercise. However, in itself, the restructuring process needs some form of evaluation to assess the impact that has been made that is consistent with the objectives of the exercise.

Commitment from ministries and departments

Integration has led to stagnation as some organisations leave all responsibilities for records to BNARS. Ministries and Departments have hitherto demonstrated little commitment to improving records because these believe that such a responsibility lies with BNARS.

BNARS should initiate an educational programme that would assist in the training of Ministries about their role in the management of records. Such a commitment should follow a top-down process whereby leadership must act ahead of other organisational personnel. The authority for respective organisational records still lies with the leadership in those organisations.

Records and archival standards

A year after the commencement of the restructuring process a records procedures manual called the *Registry Handbook* for the entire public service was published. This publication has largely been disbursed by giving copies to officers on study leave for their basic training in records and archive

management at the Botswana Institute of Administration and Commerce (BIAC). The manual was an excellent initiative as its main purpose is to promote standard practice towards the management of records.

Above this BNARS has never conducted a comprehensive analysis of whether there is any consistency of practices among records keepers. Remember, this manual does not necessarily exist in all records units in the public service because its disbursement is largely restricted to those who do their studies in BIAC.

In addition, the review should seek any existence of similar emphasis to international standards on records management. In actual fact the manual does not have overt reference to any of the international standards. The restructuring becomes a worthless exercise if practice on the ground does not match any of the known standards in records management. The apparent truth is that none of the public service records units satisfies the ISO 15489 Records Management standard in the way business is conducted. The introduction of such standards could be carried out through the periodic review of the *Registry Handbook*.

Public service centralised versus decentralised services

Prior to integration officers who were responsible for the care and management of records were employees of the respective Ministries and independent Departments. This was a decentralised arrangement to the management of records. However, these officers were deployed and re-designated to be employees of BNARS at the commencement of the restructuring process, as this was a requirement of the exercise.

The move to a centralised arrangement has brought about some problems towards records keeping. The only positive aspect of centralisation was its consistency to the life-cycle principle, which in essence is not a benefit as this factor is equally possible in a decentralised arrangement. The one major problem of centralisation that is evident is the lack of commitment to records and their care by creators. This is so because they consider records to be the responsibility of BNARS.

Similarly, BNARS is saddled with a huge responsibility of coordinating records work of officers scattered across the public service. Administratively this poses a problem because of the supervision methods and progression route that officers have to undertake. The supervision of records officers is carried out by host organisations through the PBRS assessment tool and forwards these to the National Archives. Officers who have no thorough understanding of records work conduct the performance assessment of the records staff. Also, there is always a confusion on which performance objectives records officers will be assessed.

In respect of progression, it is expected that all records personnel will be vying for the position Directorship of the National Archives. This creates a problem of

constriction and subsequent lack of movement up the ladder. A consideration to decentralise the BNARS service should be made. DPSM has decentralised its functions as all administration officers in the public service are in the same cadre as those at DPSM.

Management of administration records only in exclusion of core function records
 Since the commencement of the restructuring process the deployment of records personnel has largely been to administration sections to manage administration records. In the interim records that belong to core activities of Ministries, have to this day been managed by the creators. If there is a possibility that the deployment exercise was initially selective and would eventually spread to other set of records, then it is imperative that such a move is carried out to avoid having a wide gulf in inconsistencies of practice. Oddly, core records make up the bulk of records in respective organisations, and their poor management practices affect the mandate of such areas.

Conclusion: going forward – was the reform a good thing?

On this score, integration has added value to the national big intention, in which the management of records will be concerned with improving efficiency in the public service. The integration of Archival Services and Records Management is consistent with the archival theory, which factor should confirm that archival practices have not been flouted in the bid to satisfy productivity whims. However, if the implementation process goes unchecked the whole exercise will drastically affect many efforts aimed at attaining the national vision.

The effective management of records for good governance provides a foundation for enterprise management of government knowledge, very much akin to the declaration on Archives in Africa by ESARBICA member states, which states that:

The archival heritage of Africa, be it in written, oral or electronic form, is a precious resource that must be well managed, carefully preserved and made accessible to all, in this and in forthcoming generations (ESARBICA 2003).

Evidently the challenges of the restructuring exercise vehemently outweigh the merits garnered from the exercise. In actual fact none of the merits is related to the objectives of the integration. Was the reform a good thing then? Yes. The challenges that have arisen are merely products of poor implementation. The challenges point to a number of shortcomings that arose during the implementation of which BNARS is not culpable. A review of the exercise has to be made to determine what was not addressed. Below is a brief discussion of what should be done.

- DPSM has to be brought in the fold as owners and leaders of the reform as members of the Implementation Team.

- Involvement of all Ministries/Departments (leadership) in the roll-out through the establishment of the Steering Team that oversees tasks of the Implementation Team.
- Review and evaluate the restructuring process to assess the broadness of the exercise and the impact it has created to performance in the public service.
- Consider to decentralise the Records Management function to host organisations.

The restructuring process was a reform exercise, and therefore required full commitment from the leadership in Government. The coordination of an exercise of this magnitude should be elevated to the public service directorate which has authority over all Ministries.

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Endnotes

1. The problems discussed are from an excerpt from the *Organisation and Methods Review: National Archives and Records Services*, of 1985 created after the issuance of the Public Service Circular No. 1 of 1984, pages 114-130.