

**STUDENT ASSESSMENT OF THE MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY
IN INFORMATION SCIENCES (RECORDS AND ARCHIVES
MANAGEMENT) DEGREE PROGRAMME AT MOI UNIVERSITY,
KENYA**

Henry Kemoni

School of Liberal and Technology Studies, The Kenya Polytechnic
University College, University of Nairobi
Email: hkemoni@yahoo.com

Elsebah Maseh and Nelly Mzera

School of Information Sciences, Moi University
Email: jmaseh@gmail.com; nelly.mzera@gmail.com

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to determine student assessment of the Master of Philosophy (Mphil) and Master of Science (MSc) in Information Sciences Records and Archives Management (RAM) programmes and propose recommendations to enhance the course content and structure to meet the education and market needs of Kenya. The specific objectives of the study were to: find out the status and characteristics of the students, establish students' perceptions regarding adequacy of curriculum in relation to market needs, establish the adequacy of resources availed to students, find out the students research thesis themes and titles, determine the challenges faced by students while undertaking the programme and provide recommendations to improve curriculum content and delivery and meet market needs. The study population comprised of 21 students admitted into the MPhil and MSc RAM programmes from the academic year 2007/2008 to 2009/2010. Purposive sampling was used to select all the cases for study. Data was collected through the use of open-ended interview schedules. Data collected was subjected to qualitative data analysis techniques.

The study findings revealed that the programme has strengths and weaknesses, some courses needed revision to meet market demands, the resources offered to students were inadequate,

some lecturers took longer periods of time to read and return students work and do not offer the much needed supervisory support and lecturers were overworked and at times missed classes since they had many students to supervise in addition to other responsibilities. The study recommended the need to revise the courses and particularly those that require a practical orientation and an introduction of new courses, acquisition of more information materials including books, journals, and computers and improve on Internet connectivity and the strict adherence to the University policy on postgraduate thesis supervision that stipulates a maximum of six to seven candidates per supervisor within one academic.

Keywords: Content and Delivery, Curriculum Review, Records and Archives Management, Student Assessment, Kenya

Introduction and context

The value of good records and archives management in the promotion of accountability, good governance and human rights cannot be overemphasized. However, this can only be possible when a pool of well-trained human resources exist in the field of records and archives management. The curriculum should produce able managers and policy makers to implement records and archives management programmes in both public and private sectors (Obura 2009). Katuu (2009), citing Samarasinghe (1994), discussing archives and records management education in Europe and North America, note that there are four models of archival and records management education found globally namely:

- Italo-Hispanic (Italy and Spain) model which have well developed archives system that supports education, training and recruitment into the profession precedes actual training;
- France, Germany and the Netherlands model where training schools are either autonomous institutes or are attached to principal archives services or associated with historical faculty of a university;
- United Kingdom model which is characterized by in-service programmes and lacks scholaristic and research oriented traits found in the other models but recent developments in universities such as University College London, Aberystwyth and Liverpool have addressed the concern; and

- North America where records managers and archivists consider themselves as two separate, yet related professions.

A study conducted by Yusof and Chell (1999) on records management education and training worldwide established that courses in records management are being offered in different guises. In some institutions, they are being strongly influenced by archival traditions, in others they are influenced by information science, management science and information systems methodology. Although most courses are offered by information and library studies departments, others are delivered through Departments of Archives Studies, Schools of Business Management, a School of Art, Management Information Systems (MIS) Departments, a Computer and Mathematical Science Department and History Departments.

The Society of American Archivists (2010a) points out that a graduate programme in archival studies should provide students with a solid foundation in archival studies and should consist of: core archival knowledge that provides the theoretical and practical basis necessary to work as an archivist; inter-disciplinary knowledge – introduces students to other disciplines, knowledge to deepen their understanding of archival work; and provides students with a solid foundation in the theory, methodology and practice of archival studies and in the scholarship of their discipline (Society of American Archivists 2010b). Rankin (2003) pointed out that in Scotland, recent studies, mid-career professionals, employers and other stakeholders identify a range of areas for special attention in a curriculum relevant to records management. These include:

- Applied (hands on) records management;
- Wider management training- budgeting, project management and other transferable skills;
- General ICT skills awareness;
- Digital preservation;
- Electronic records management;
- Information policy and cross-sectional awareness;
- Leadership;
- Cultural diversity and social inclusions;
- Advocacy, publicity and fund-raising; and

- Specialist modules (for example, health records, pharmaceuticals/scientific records and business records).

A lively programme of research and publications would be critical to the viability, success and reputation of a new course as well as invigorating professional discourse and accreditation by professional bodies is an important prerequisite (Rankin 2003). Moi University is one of the few universities in Africa that offers education and training in recordkeeping (Wamukoya and Kemoni 2001).

There are universities that offer masters level education and training in records and archives management. According to Ngulube (2001), these include:

- University of Ghana – Master of Arts;
- University of Ibadan – Master of Archival Studies;
- University of Witwatersrand – Masters in Heritage Studies; and
- University of Dar-es-Salaam – Master of Arts (Records and Archives Management).

Since Ngulube's (2001) study, universities in Africa have established Masters Programmes in Information Sciences with specialization in Records and Archives management namely:

- Moi University – Master of Philosophy in Information Sciences (Records and Archives Management), Master of Science in Information Sciences (Records and Archives Management) (Moi University 2010e);
- University of Botswana – Master of Archives and Records Management (University of Botswana 2010);
- University of South Africa – Masters in Information Science focusing on an archival topic (University of South Africa 2010); and
- University of KwaZulu-Natal – Master of Information Studies (University of KwaZulu-Natal 2010).

Courses offered at postgraduate level in records and archives management have various objectives. At the University College London (2010), the MA/Diploma in Archives and Records Management:

provides the skills and knowledge that are needed by new entrants to the profession, students learn to manage records

created in the present and those inherited from the past, and also to maintain and preserve records for use in the future. The modules offered include principles of archives and records management, preservation, access: policy and practice; records management, archival description, management skills and reading and interpretation of archives.

School of Information Sciences at Moi University

The School of Information Science is among the twelve Schools that constitute Moi University. Moi University was established in 1984 as the second public university in Kenya. The vision of the university is to be “the University of Choice in nurturing innovation and talent in science, technology and development” (Moi University 2010 a). The mission of the university is to:

- Preserve, create and disseminate knowledge;
- Conserve and develop scientific, technological and culture heritage through quality teaching and research;
- Create conducive work and learning environment; and
- Work with stakeholders for the betterment of society (Moi University 2010 a).

The School of Information Sciences (SIS) was established in 1988 to offer education and training for information professions at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The vision of SIS is to “be recognized internationally as a centre of excellence in information sciences” while its mission is to “offer education and training by developing high-level manpower for the management of information systems, services and resources in the country through practical and development oriented programmes, research, continuing education programmes and community-based information activities (Moi University 2010b).

The School of Information Sciences offers various programmes at undergraduate and post graduate levels, namely (Moi University 2010):

- Bachelor of Sciences (Information Sciences) started in 1988;
- Bachelor of Science (Informatics) started in 2010;
- Bachelor of Science (Media Science);
- Master of Philosophy (Records and Archives Management) started in 2007;
- Master of Philosophy (Publishing Studies);

- Master of Philosophy (Information Technology) started in 2007;
- Master of Science (Information Sciences) started in 2008; and
- Doctor of Philosophy (Library and Information Studies [LIS]) started in 2003.

Master of Philosophy in Information Sciences (Records and Archives Management)

The programme seeks to provide education and training to record-keeping professionals to enable them to manage Kenya's records/information/knowledge sources for sustainable socio-economic and political development (Moi University 2010c). It places emphasis on problem solving, synthesis of knowledge adapting to change, inquisitive and original thinking. It recognizes that records and archives are key sources underpinning public service delivery accountability, transparency and good governance in society. In other words the programme seeks to:

- Enable students acquire knowledge and skills in records and archives management through the study of core and interdisciplinary courses;
- Provide students with theoretical knowledge and skills through teaching, practice, consultancy, research and publications in records management field and its related disciplines;
- Provide students with relevant record-keeping knowledge and skills for socio-economic development, public service delivery and attachment of UN MDGs; and
- Produce graduates capable of managing records and archives in both public and private sectors, for socio-economic and political development (Moi University 2010d).

The programme takes twenty-four months and extends over four semesters. The first year semesters one and two are devoted to coursework, developing a research proposal and to writing a practical project. Second year semester one is devoted to thesis work, while semester two is devoted to thesis work and coursework. Table 1 and 2 shows the MPhil in Information Sciences (RAM) programme course distribution, content and structure in the first and second year while Table 3 shows the academic staff distribution.

Table1: Course distribution Year 1 [Moi University (2010e)]

YEAR 1: SEMESTER 1 - CORE COURSES		
Course code	Course title	Units
INS 800	Research Methodology	2
INS 801	Information Technology	2
RAM 810	Advanced Records Management	3
RAM 811	Advanced Archives Management	3
RAM 812	Advanced Electronic Records Management	3
ELECTIVES		
RAM 813(E)	Managing Personnel Records	2
RAM 814(E)	Managing Medical Records	2
SEMESTER 2		
RAM 815	Records Management and Service Delivery	2
RAM 816	Knowledge Management	2
INS 802	Information and Communication Theory	2
INS 804	Thesis	2
INS 805	Practical Project	4
RAM 817	Advanced Preservation Management	3
ELECTIVES		
RAM 818(E)	Record-Keeping and Accountability	2
RAM 819 (E)	Managing Legal Records	2

Table 2: Course distribution Year 2 [Moi University (2010e)]

SEMESTER 1		
Course code	Course title	Units
INS 804	Thesis (Field research)	9
SEMESTER 2		
CORE COURSES		
INS 822	Information Policy Studies	3
INS 804	Thesis	9
ELECTIVES		
RAM 820(E)	Managing Church Records	2
RAM 821(E)	Managing Financial Records	2

Table 3: Academic staff establishment [Moi University (2010e)]

Rank	No.	Specialization		Remarks
		LIS	RAM	
				-
Professor	1	1	-	-
Associate Professor	4	3	1	-
Senior Lecturer	3	2	1	-
Lecturer	6	5	1	-
Tutorial Fellow	2	-	2	-
Graduate Assistant	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	15	11	5	-

Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to determine student assessment of the Mphil and MSc in Information Sciences (RAM) programmes and propose recommendations to enhance the course content and structure to meet the education and market needs of Kenya.

Objectives of the study

The specific objectives of the study were to:

- Determine the motivation for student admission into the programmes;
- Establish the relevancy and adequacy of programmes courses in relation to market trends and industry needs;
- Find out the major strengths and weaknesses of the programmes;
- Establish the adequacy/inadequacy of resources provided to students;
- Determine students experience with thesis supervision and writing;
- Find out the challenges faced by students in undertaking the programmes; and
- Propose recommendation to make the programmes dynamic in relation to market needs.

Research questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- To what extent is the curriculum relevant and adequate in relation to market needs?
- What are the major strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum?
- What challenges do students face in undertaking the programme?
- How can the identified challenges be addressed?

Scope and limitations

The Commission for Higher Education (CHE) in Kenya has formulated criteria and standards to evaluate programme/curriculum (The Inter-University Council of East Africa

2008). These include: qualified staff, size of the programme, goals and aims, admission of students, content of the programme, assessment process, academic resources and evaluation and teaching. In the present study, researchers sought respondent's views on some of the criteria for programme evaluation as stated by CHE namely: motivation for admission and numbers enrolled since the programme commenced, curriculum content and relevance, adequacy of academic resources and evaluation of staff in relation to teaching supervision and experience (see Appendix 1). The majority of the respondents were from the Mphil programme with only one respondent from the MSc programme. This was largely due to the fact that there are more students enrolled into the Mphil Programme as compared to the MSc Programme. The study intended to collect data from a total population of 21 students. However, it was not possible to get responses due to the location barriers and busy schedules among some of them. To overcome this challenge, the researchers sent interview schedules to some of them after which they responded in writing and sent back the schedules.

Methodology

The population for this study comprised of 21 students admitted into the MPhil and MSc RAM programme from the academic year 2007/2008 to 2009/2010. Purposive sampling was used to select all the cases for study as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Study sample size

Academic year	Total population	Sample size
2007/2008	6	6
2008/2009	11	11
2009/2010	4	4

The interview method was used to collect data since the study was a qualitative study that required in-depth data. Consequently, data was analyzed using thematic categorization. However, since it also yielded some quantitative data, figures, tables and charts were also used.

Requirements of curriculum development

Any discussion on curriculum development objectives ought to make reference to Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy of educational

objectives. Benjamin Bloom (1913-1999) was a Jewish-American educational psychologist who made contributions to the classification of educational objectives and to the theory of mastery-learning (Wikipedia 2010). According to the University of Queensland (2010), Bloom's three domains of educational objectives are:

- Cognitive domain (about knowing) – has a hierarchy of six levels namely knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.
- Affective domain (attitudes, feelings) – has a hierarchy of five levels namely receiving, responding, valuing, organizations and characterization.
- Psychomotor (doing) – levels of the domain are characterized as reflex, fundamental movements, perceptual abilities, physical abilities, skilled movements and non-discursive communication.

Education theorists have presented the determinants of a relevant curriculum. According to Otunga (2010), some of the determinants of a good curriculum include:

- Promoting holistic development and individual excellence in the learner namely cognitive, attentive and psychomotor attributes;
- Being inclusive and being non-discriminating;
- Promoting human rights, democracy, justice and rule of law;
- Focusing in achievement of national development goals; and
- Taking on board contemporary and emerging issues and problems such as globalization, technological development, social justice, interdependence, sustainable development, terrorism and HIV/AIDS.

Bukenya (2010) further points out that a curriculum design should follow certain principles. These include:

- Epistemological – what should count as knowledge and knowing;
- Political – the control, selection and distribution of knowledge and institutions;
- Ideological – knowledge which is most worth;
- Technical – Making curriculum knowledge accessible to students;
- Ethical – Ideas of moral conduct and community which serve as the underpinnings of the ways students and teachers are treated; and

- Historical – traditions in the field that already exist to help us answer questions arising.

In the present study, researchers collected data from respondents regarding adequacy and relevance of curriculum. These include courses to be reviewed, new courses to be introduced, core areas/themes in the industry that curriculum should address, whether the curriculum meet the needs of the industry and the major strengths and weaknesses of curriculum.

Research themes

According to Hart (2005), the purpose of a master's thesis is to give students an opportunity to demonstrate "mastery" of the skills of analysis, synthesis evaluation, argumentation, data collection and handling by applying them to a specific topic. Further, masters' level research should include the following aspects: ability to identify a topic; justify the topic; write clear aims and objectives which are interrelated; search and review relevant literature; design data collection tools and apply them; manage the data collection and make sense of it; and making conclusions and recommendations. Table 4 shows research themes undertaken by students in the Department and the methodology adopted.

Table 4: Students' research themes

Year	Research theme	Methodology adopted
2007/2008	a) Management of e-records b) Digital preservation c) Records management and risk management d) Business continuity planning for records management e) Records management and human rights f) Managing e-mails	Qualitative Qualitative Qualitative Qualitative Qualitative Qualitative
2008/2009	a) Records management and service delivery in Universities b) Records management and implementing ISO 2000:2008 quality management systems c) Medical research and health care	Qualitative Qualitative Qualitative

Year	Research theme	Methodology adopted
	d) Records management and Freedom of Information law e) Personnel records and rights and entitlements	Qualitative Qualitative
2009/2010	a) Land records and preservation of rights and entitlement b) Records management in public schools c) KNADS e-readiness and provision of archival information to researchers d) Indigenous knowledge and University development	Qualitative Mixed methods Qualitative Qualitative

Data presentation and analysis

The study sought to determine students' assessment of the Mphil and MSc in Information Sciences (RAM) and propose recommendations to enhance the course content and structure to meet the education and market needs of Kenya. Data is presented and analyzed based on the objectives of the study.

Characteristics of respondents

The respondents were asked to indicate their current employer, designation and duties. The study showed that the respondents were employed in records management units at various institutions as shown in Table 6.

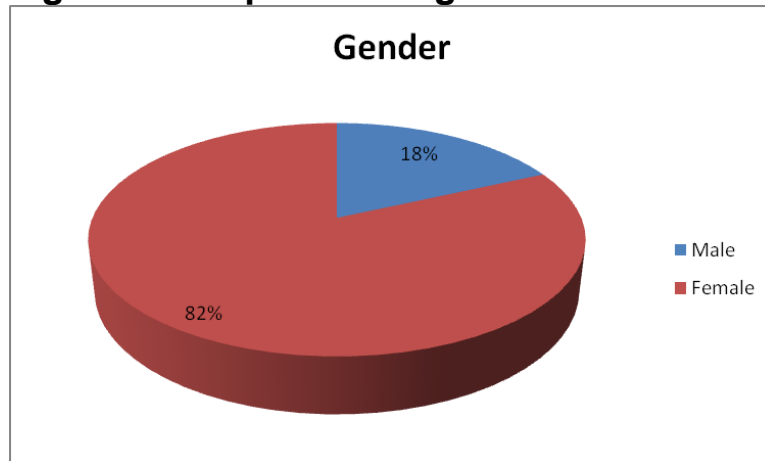
Table 6: Current employers

Current organization	Number of respondents
Kenyatta National Hospital	2
Kenya Power and Lighting Company	2
Moi University	3
Office of the President (Tanzania)	1
Inoorero University College	1
Ministry of State for Public Service	1

Table 6 reveals that only one of the respondents was not employed at the time of the study was carried out. Most respondents indicated that they were chief or senior records

officers in their organization. Their duties ranged from management and preservation of records, planning and coordination records activities, supervision of staff to teaching in places of higher learning. On gender, the study found out that there were more female than male students joining the Programme as shown by Figure 1.

Figure 1: Respondents' gender



Motivation for admission into the Programme

The respondents were asked to indicate what motivated them to seek admission into the Programme and their responses are indicated in Table 7.

Table 7: Motivation for admission

Motivation to apply for admission	Number of respondents
Career development	6
Knowledge advancement	4
Conducive environment	2
Sponsorship	1
Passion for records management	1
Academic mentors	2

Table 7 shows that most respondents (6) sought admission into the Programme for career development while the least cited was passion for records management and sponsorship.

Relevancy and adequacy of the Programme courses

In order to obtain data on the relevance and adequacy of the Programme courses in relation to market needs, the respondents were asked if there were courses that they thought should be revised. Ten (10) out of the eleven (11) respondents agreed that some courses needed revision and cited the following:

- INS 805 Practical project – year 1 semester 2;

- INS 811 Advanced archives management – year 1 semester 1;
- INS 812 Advanced electronic records management – year 1 semester 1;
- INS 815 Records management and service delivery – year 1 semester 2; and
- INS 817 Advanced preservation management – year 1 semester 2.

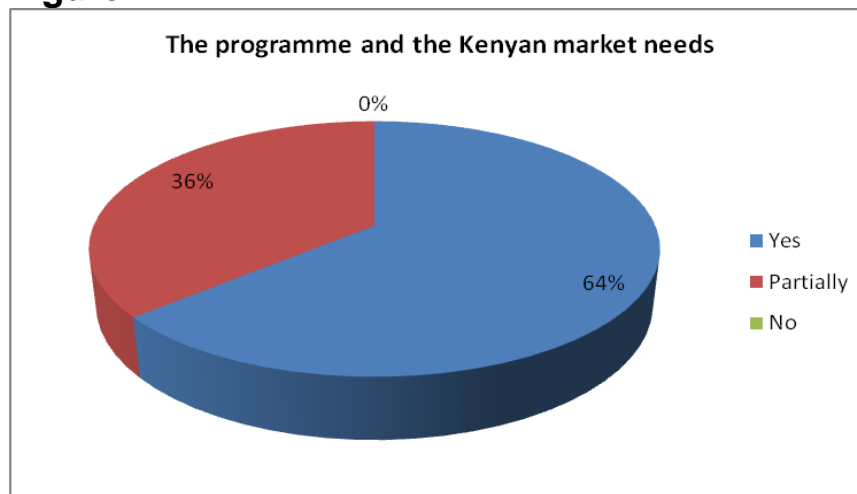
Respondents suggested that the courses should be in line with Kenya's vision 2030 and should be practical oriented.

They also suggested that some new courses be introduced into the Programme as indicated below:

- Health information management;
- Intranets management;
- Computerization of records and archives services;
- Records management and socio-economic development;
- Advanced database management systems;
- Content management; and
- Risk management.

When asked if the programme met the Kenyan market needs, their responses are indicated in the Figure 2.

Figure 2



Those who indicated “yes” argued that the fact that those who had graduated from the programme had been employed in various organizations showed that the Programme met market needs. They also felt that the courses covered contemporary issues in records management. Those respondents who indicated “partially” said the courses lacked a practical perspective. From the above, it shows that the courses offered by the Programme need to be revised if their relevance and adequacy is to be guaranteed.

Major strengths and weaknesses of the Programme

Respondents were asked if the programme had strengths and weakness and their responses are indicated in the following tables.

Table 8: Major strengths of the Programme

Strength	No .of respondents
Unique (not offered in other Kenyan universities)	1
Covers contemporary issues in records management	4
Comfortable study hours	4
Supportive lecturers	3
Meets market needs	3
All round curriculum	1

From Table 8 the most cited strength of the Programme is its coverage of contemporary issues in records management and its comfortable study hours.

Table 9: Major weaknesses of the Programme

Weakness	No. of respondents
Lacks practical perspective	5
Too expensive	2
Overworked lecturers	2
Inadequate resources	3
Lacks local content	1

Table 9 cites lack of a practical perspective in the courses offered as a major weakness of the Programme.

Adequacy/inadequacy of resources provided to students

The study sought to find out how adequate journals, books, Internet accessibility and computers were in the course of their studies. The following were their responses

Table 10: Adequacy/inadequacy of resources provided

Resource	Very adequate	Adequate	Inadequate
Journals	2	3	6
Books	-	-	11
Internet accessibility	-	6	5
Computers	-	2	9

Table 10 reveals that all the resources offered to students were inadequate. The implication for this is that if the Programme is to

be improved then adequacy of the resources needs to be addressed.

Students experience with thesis supervision and writing

The respondents were asked to indicate the aspects of thesis writing that they felt was most challenging. The majority of them noted that data collection and analysis was most challenging. This was because, while collecting data, some respondents were not willing to provide the much needed data. Another aspect that they thought was also challenging was the literature review because of the inadequacy of information materials.

On supervision, three of the respondents indicated that their supervisor was excellent. This was because the supervisor provided the much needed support in terms of information materials and timely reading of the work and suggesting corrections. Six (6) respondents also agreed that the supervisor was supportive while two indicated that the supervisors were not supportive. The reason given was that the supervisors took too long a time to read through the work and did not offer any support in terms of information materials. The implication of the above was that the students had varied experience depending very much on their supervisors.

Challenges faced in undertaking the Programme

On the challenges faced while undertaking the Programme, the following were cited by the respondents:

- Financial constraint – most felt that the Programme was expensive and posed a challenge especially to those who were not on a scholarship.
- Overworked lecturers – The respondents reported that the department had few lecturers who were often overworked since each of them had to supervise many students at any one time. They also reported that these lecturers missed classes quite often because of the many other responsibilities they have.
- Inadequate information materials – as reported elsewhere the respondents indicated that all the information materials were inadequate and was a big problem especially during the literature review.
- Delay in thesis examination after submission – the respondents indicated that it takes long for a thesis to be

examined after submission bringing about delays in submission and subsequent graduation.

Respondents' recommendations

Basing on the above, the respondents gave the following recommendations:

- “Reduce programme fee”;
- “Recruit more lecturers”;
- “Acquire more information materials”;
- “Formulate and implement a postgraduate policy that spells out how long each thesis writing steps should take”;
- “Communicate new board regulations to the students in time”; and
- “Keep pace with the industry through regular surveys and review of curriculum”.

Recommendations of the study

Basing on the findings, the study recommended the following:

- Study findings revealed that some courses needed revision to meet market demands. The study therefore recommends the revision of these courses and particularly those that require a practical orientation such as RAM 817 (advanced preservation management). It is also recommended that new courses be introduced to blend with those that have been revised.
- The findings indicated that all the resources offered to students were inadequate. The study thus recommends that the department should acquire more information materials including books, journals, and computers and improve on Internet connectivity.
- Data indicated that some lecturers took long periods of time to read and return students work and did not offer the much needed supervisory support. This was because the lecturers were seen to be few in number as compared to students' enrolment. The study therefore recommends that the University should employ more lecturers and the head of department to encourage the lecturers to meet deadlines in thesis supervision as stipulated by the University policy which allows a maximum period of one month.

- The findings also showed that the lecturers were overworked and at times missed classes since they had many students to supervise in addition to other responsibilities. The study recommends that the University policy on postgraduate thesis supervision that stipulates a maximum of six to seven candidates per supervisor be strictly adhered to.

Suggestions for further research

It is proposed that similar studies be conducted in other African universities offering programmes in records and archives management at postgraduate level. Such studies will provide useful comparable data. Further research is done to source the views of stakeholders (public and private sector, professional associations) regarding the nature and relevance of training offered at postgraduate level in relation to the country's vision and national development agenda.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR STUDENTS' ASSESSMENT OF THE MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN INFORMATION SCIENCES (RECORDS AND ARCHIVES MANAGEMENT) DEGREE PROGRAMME AT MOI UNIVERSITY, KENYA

SECTION A

- 1. Current organization
- 2. Designation
- 3. Duties
- 4. Sex
- 5. Number of years in current position
- 6. Year admitted into the programme
- 7. Year of graduation
- If not yet graduation, please indicate current level/status
-

Section B

- 8. What motivated you to apply for admission into the programme?
.....
- 9. Are there courses you would like to be reviewed? If yes, please state them and provide justification
.....
- 10. Are there course you would like introduced in the curriculum? If yes, please state them and the justification
.....
- 11. What do you consider to be the core areas/ themes in the industry that the curriculum should address?
.....
- 12. Does the curriculum meet the needs of the industry? If yes or no, please justify your answer
.....
- 13. What do you consider to be the major strengths and weaknesses of the present curriculum?
Strengths
.....
Weaknesses
.....

14. Kindly comment on the adequacy or inadequacy of the following resources:

(a). Journals
What journals did you mostly use?
What journals would you like to be added to the collection?
.....

(b). Books

(c). Internet accessibility

(d). computers

15. What is your thesis research topic?
.....
What factors influenced choice of topic?
.....

15. What aspects of thesis writing did you find challenging?

16. What aspects of thesis writing did you/ do you find challenging?
How did you/do you cope with the challenges?
.....

17. How would you rate supervisor support in thesis writing? Kindly explain your answer
.....

18. Did you/do you face any challenge(s) in working with your supervisor? If yes, please state the challenge(s)
.....

19. Did you/do you face any challenges while undertaking the programme? If yes, please state them
.....

20. Provide recommendations to enhance the programme in order to meet market needs
.....

Thank you.