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RECORDS MANAGEMENT IN THE GOVERNMENT OF SWAZILAND

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to present the results of an empirical study to assess records management practices within government in the Kingdom of Swaziland. The study investigated types of records generated and how they are used; records organization and retrieval; suitability of records storage facilities; records disposal, preservation and maintenance; and training needs of records/registry staff. Methodological triangulation was used to carry out the study. Data was collected through survey questionnaire and observations. Responses to the open-ended questions were scanned to determine words and phrases used by the respondents and analyse them thematically. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 12.0 for Windows was used to analyse quantitative data. Swaziland government does not have in place a records management programme. As a result the provisions of Swaziland National Archives Act No. 5 of 1971, and ISO 15489 standards for records management are hardly complied with. Across all government ministries, there is no uniform classification and filing system. Besides, a system of records appraisal and disposal does not exist. Records are vulnerable to loss because of lack of adequate measures for their care and safe custody. The study was limited to Mbabane the capital, and seat of government operations. Future research endeavours could extent to cover regional records management departments as well as the private sector from which best practices could be obtained to inform sound records management in government. Without sound records management, the government of Swaziland cannot be accountable and service delivery to citizens is hampered. This article is based on an empirical study that was carried out in 2011 to assess records management in the Kingdom of Swaziland government. The authors recommend the enactment of records management programme to enhance accountability, transparency and integrity in government.

Keywords

Records management, government records, good governance, accountability, transparency, records appraisal, records disposal, Swaziland

Introduction

Government held records in any jurisdiction are intended to help fulfil operational needs such as accountability, efficiency and integrity. In the Kingdom of Swaziland, cases have been reported where particular records sought by individuals, public organizations or private agencies have proved elusive to find even when such records are known to be in the custody of government (Dlamini 2008). This translates into wasted time on the part of the document seeker and a general low regard for registry personnel in terms of their records custodial credentials. Without proper records management systems, governments cannot be made to account for their

decisions; corruption cannot be easily detected or questioned; and service delivery is hampered. Palmer (2000:63), as cited in Makhura (2005:21), views accountability as a particularly crucial governance element for holding officials of public organizations responsible for their actions. Without records, there can be no accountability and no rule of law.

Governments that are transparent and accountable would invariably have in place records management systems that ensure functions, activities, procedures, and the administrative processes that generate them; as well as the facts, acts, and transactions attested to them are clearly documented and appropriate procedures of retrieval put in place. Such governments ensure their future by giving same level of attention and commitment to records as to any other corporate resource by appropriately managing and making them accessible when required (Ngulube 2009). An effective records management system establishes when a record is created, the function it serves, the duration for which it is considered useful by the agency that created it, the parameters for maintaining it and the legal authority for its eventual destruction and/or disposal (Department of Arts & Culture, South Africa 2007). De Wet and Du Toit (2000:85) conclude that successful organizations recognize the value of managing their internal records efficiently and effectively. Makhura (2005) points out that records management services preserve the corporate memory of an organization; document an organization's accountability; preserve the evidence of an organization's activities; enable timely access to current administrative information, and ensure that records of archival value are marked for preservation at the time of creation and not inadvertently destroyed.

Ngulube and Tafor (2006:58) point out that, weak institutional capacity and the absence of comprehensive records management systems are the main causes of poor archival as well as records management Africa. Wamukoya and Mutula (2005) observed that poor records management is bound to result in information gaps, leading to incomplete public records and documentary heritage. Chirwa (1993) concurs that without a proper records management programme to streamline the creation of records, it is not easy to utilize and maintain them. Sebina (2001) shares similar view that without proper records management systems, organizations in general and ministries in particular tend to face problems of high paper proliferation in their offices and experience retrieval difficulties.

Structure of government and records management in the Kingdom of Swaziland

Swaziland is a member of the regional block, the Southern African Development Community (SADC). It is the only unitary state in the region with monarchical powers. Besides, the state allows minimal political party activity and hardly involves citizens in socio-economic decision making of the country (Joubert, Masilela & Langwenya 2008). Due to political suppression, problems of transparency and corruption are not only perceived to be rampant, but real. Despite the peculiarity of Swaziland's monarchical government in a region where multiparty democracy is practiced, the structure of its government mirrors models of democratic states.

The Government of Swaziland consists of 17 ministries. The government is headed by the Prime Minister whose main function is to keep the Head of State (King) informed and advised on government operations. The Prime Minister is assisted by the Deputy Prime Minister whose office performs delegated responsibilities of co-ordination of the government functions; social welfare; disaster management/mitigation; gender co-ordination; co-ordination of children affairs; co-ordination and chairing of national social dialogue (Government of Swaziland 2009). The rest of government consists of the following Ministries: Justice and Constitutional Affairs; Labour and Social Security; Public Service & Information; Tourism and Environmental Affairs; Works & Transport; Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs; Natural Resources and Energy. Other Ministries

are: Agriculture; Finance; Health and Social Welfare; Housing and Urban Development; Information Communication & Technology; Economic Planning; Commerce and Trade; Finance; Foreign Affairs; and Education and Training. Each ministry has several departments and registries (Lukhele 2008).

Records management within the government is undertaken within the framework of Swaziland National Archives Act No.5 of 1971 (Government of Swaziland 1971). According to the Act, Swaziland National Archives has the mandate to empower Swazi citizens to fully participate in their country's social, political and economic life through the equitable development, preservation and protection of the Swazi cultural heritage. In addition, the Act bestows the Swaziland National Archives the responsibilities of:

- Managing public records and ensuring their preservation as historical documents.
- Advising public offices on proper records management.

Government Ministries in Swaziland receive advisory services on storage and preservation of their archival materials from Swaziland National Archives as stipulated by the Act. The Act gives the director of National Archives the powers to examine and provide advice on the care, preservation, custody and control of any public records. The Act further empowers the director at his or her discretion to approve any institution, whether private or otherwise as a place wherein may be deposited, housed or preserved either permanently or temporarily any public archives, or records which have been declared public records.

Some of the Government Ministries have decentralized their activities by establishing regional branches. Geographically, the study was carried out in Mbabane, the capital of Swaziland and did not extend to cover records management in government department outside the Ministries' headquarters.

Statement of the problem

Many an instance has happened that when a person be it a government employee, researcher, journalist (reporter) or ordinary person in the street sought a particular document known or perceived to be in the custody of any of the government's agencies, that document proved to be elusive to find (Mamba 2003). Dlamini (2008) observed that within government in Swaziland "information that is known to exist becomes hard to retrieve". Most often, this translates to wasted time on the part of the document seeker and a general low regard of registry personnel in terms of their custodial qualification for such important documents.

Without proper records management systems, governments cannot be made to account for its decisions. Corruption cannot be easily detected or questioned, service delivery is hampered. Sound records management system enhances transparency, accountability and integrity in government. It is difficult if not impossible to hold government accountable without proper records management.

Methodology

This study was aimed at investigating records management within government in the Kingdom of Swaziland. The study investigated types of records generated and how they are used; records organization and retrieval; suitability of records storage facilities; records disposal, preservation and maintenance; and training needs of records/registry staff.

The study was informed by the records life cycle model (Penn, Pennix & Coulson 1994: 12). The model posits that recorded information has a 'life' similar to that of a biological organism in that it is born (creation phase), lives (maintenance and use phase), and dies (disposal phase). This model is lauded for its comprehensiveness while acknowledging that in the electronic age, physical custody is no longer an essential element of preservation strategy hence the need for complementary model such as the continuum model (Upward 1998). In addition, the ISO 15489 (ISO 15489.1, 2001) was used to prescribe how organizations should create, capture and manage full and accurate records to meet business and legal requirements. From these two models, variables such as creation, classification/filing, storage, preservation/maintenance, disposal and training needs were derived to inform this study. A survey design involving 15 Government Ministries was used. The target population comprised Action Officers and records/ registry staff serving in Government Ministries in the Kingdom of Swaziland. In determining the sample sizes for Ministries and respondents, Israel formula for determining sample sizes was used (Israel 1992).

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n= desired sample size

N= Population size

e= Margin of error

The values of e=±10% and 90% confidence level were adopted. Consequently, using the Israel formula, the following samples were generated for Government Ministries, records/registry staff and Action Officers:

a) Sample for government ministries

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$n = 17$$

$$1 + 17(0.10)^2$$

$$= 14.5 \text{ Ministries}$$

$$= 15$$



A sample of 15 Government Ministries was selected purposively based on size of the Ministry and perceived amount of records generated and managed. Ministries with many departments and staff were assumed to be generating and managing large amounts of records and were therefore included in the study sample. These Ministries included: Justice and Constitutional Affairs; Labour and Social Security; Public Service and Information; Tourism and Environmental Affairs; Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs; Natural Resources and Energy; Agriculture; Finance; Health and Social Welfare; Housing and Urban Development; Information, Communication and Technology; Economic Planning; Commerce and Trade; Foreign Affairs; and Education.

b) Sample for registry staff

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$n = 40$$

$$1 + 40(0.10)^2$$

$$= 29$$




The records/registry staff were purposely selected (to ensure staff at top, middle and lower management levels were included in the sample). From each management level, random sampling was used. The Ministries organizational structure which lists staff positions was used as the sampling frame.

c) Sample for Action Officers

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1185}{1 + 1185(0.10)^2}$$

$$= 92$$


The Action Officers like their records/registry counterparts were purposely selected taking care to include all three management levels followed by random selection within each management level using the Ministries organizational structure as the sampling frame. This resulted in 92 Action Officers. The distribution of the Action Officers was as follows: 31 top level management, 31 middle level management, and 30 from lower level management. The samples of Ministries and staff that were included in the study are reflected in Table 1.

Table 1: Government Ministries and staff included in the study

Government Ministry	Records/registry staff	Action Officers
Commerce & Trade	2	6
Education & Training	2	6
Foreign Affairs	2	6
Health & Social Welfare	2	7
Housing and Urban Development	2	6
Labour & Social Security	2	6
Public Service & Information	2	6
Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs	2	6
Agriculture	2	7
Economic Planning	2	6
Justice & Constitutional Affairs	2	6
Natural Resource & Energy	2	6
Information, Communication & Technology	2	6
Finance	2	6
Tourism & Environmental Affairs	1	6
	(N=29)	(N=92)

Data collection, validity/reliability and ethics

A survey questionnaire and follow up observations were used to collect data from Action Officers and records/records staff. Two sets of questionnaires were used to collect data. The first questionnaire was distributed to the Action Officers. This questionnaire was intended to capture the functions of the various departments of the Government Ministries; the nature of records each department creates, receives and uses; frequency use of the records; type of information that is shared between the department and, users' perception of the services rendered by the registries and Action Officers. The second, questionnaire was distributed to the records/registry staff and was aimed at gathering data about the types of records kept, procedures for opening and closing files; file titling; storage/retrieval, records disposal and other matters affecting operations of the registries. The administration of the questionnaires was followed by physical observation of records units and registries in the Ministries.

To ensure validity and reliability of instruments, the survey questionnaire was piloted to five consultants at the Institute of Development Management in Swaziland before being administered to the main sample after necessary adjustment such as rephrasing, reordering, deleting and introducing new questions. The collection of data was followed by coding of

variables with figures. For example, Officers: **registry** =1 and **Action**=2. Responses to the open-ended questions were scanned to determine words and phrases used by the respondents and analyse them thematically. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 12.0 for Windows was used to analyse quantitative data. With regard to ethical considerations, consent was obtained from the Ministries concerned as well as the individual participants. No particular set of data was attributed to any Ministry, senior Ministerial Officer or records/registry staff. In addition, the reporting of results did not advertently or inadvertently reveal identity of any respondent. A research permit was obtained from the Ministries that were surveyed. Respondents were asked to participate in the study voluntarily and those who participated were not coerced into responding to questions.

Findings of the study

Ninety two questionnaires were hand-delivered to Action Officers and another 29 to records/registry staff. Most of the Action Officers 90(98 %) and all records/registry staff returned their questionnaires. The responses obtained from questionnaires and information recorded from observation were analysed and presented under the following broad subheadings.

Types of records created by the ministries

The survey sought to find out the types of records created by the Action Officers and records/registry staff in the process of carrying out their functions. The majority of the respondents (78%) were involved in creating policies, manuals and personnel records compared to 25% who were creating financial records. The rest of results are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2: Types of records created [N= 119]

Type of Record	Percentage
Minutes	75 %
Reports	78 %
Policies and Manuals	76 %
Circulars and memos	75%
Financial	25%
Personnel records	78%

The majority of respondents were involved in generating reports (78%), personnel records (78%), policies and manuals (76%), and minutes (75%). The minority of respondents (25%) were involved in creation of financial records. Financial matters in Swaziland are largely centralized with only a small number of staff getting involved in handling finance. Despite the large number of staff from different Ministries who were involved in generating various records, creation of records in the Ministries was done without following any conventions such as standardized formats and referencing. Organisations with sound records management practices would invariably have in place a records management programme covering, forms reports, directives and copies management for enhanced standardisation. Such a programme would facilitate a file plan, promote orderly and efficient flow of information, and make adequate provision for retention and disposal. Within Swaziland Government, the records created had several flaws. For example, some of the records did not have reference numbers while some files did not even have file titles. For files that were assigned titles, such titles were very generic making it difficult to search and retrieve specific information. The files that were created were not documented at all leaving room for haphazard management. It would seem, the challenge of records filing is pervasive. A study by Verbeek and Leach (1999) which reviewed filing and document management systems in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Land Affairs, in South

Africa, called for redesigning the filing system as part of the implementation of an efficient records and documents management system.

Regarding electronic records, majority of Action Officers 76(84.4 %) received more records than they created. This pattern may perhaps be due to lack of internal capacity to create e-records, limited education and training, lack of technical support, and poor technical infrastructure. The most prevalent form of electronic records received by Ministries was email as acknowledged by 84.4% Action Officers, memos (78%), reports (77.9%), circulars (77.9%), policies and manuals (76%), minutes (75%) and invoices (18.3%) as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Types of records received electronically (N=92)

Type of record	Percentage
Minutes	75 %
Reports	77.9 %
Policies and Manuals	76 %
Circulars	77.9 %
Invoices	18.3 %
Memo	78 %

As for electronic records disseminated the proportions were: memos (74%), minutes 73%, reports 71%, policies and manuals (61%) and circulars (60%). The proportion of electronic invoices received was much lower compared to the other records perhaps of limited staff that are designated roles of financial management and the fact that financial functions tend to be highly centralized in government of Swaziland (see Table 4).

Table 4: Records disseminated electronically (N=92)

Type of record	Percentage
Minutes	73 %
Reports	71 %
Policies and Manuals	61 %
Circulars	60 %
Memo	74 %

As for emails, 72(80 %) of the respondents said they used e-mail in their work. They received as much emails as they sent. As to the frequency of receiving email, the majority of the respondents 68(75 %) received emails on a daily basis, compared to 48(53 %) respondents who disseminated information on a daily basis. Regarding the nature of records received in the form emails, 78% respondents said reports while 18% received invoices.

Classification of records

The study examined classification of records. The results revealed that 63.3% of respondents were using different classification systems while others did not apply any classification scheme at all. Respondents were further asked if their records were arranged according to some classification scheme. The survey revealed that only 47 % were using some classification scheme to file the records. Those respondents who did not use the classification scheme to file their records often relied on their memory to remember each and every file with limited success. They noted that they were not applying any classification scheme because they were never trained on how to use the classification scheme. This created a problem of accessing information contained in records especially, when the incumbents were away from office. Some respondents (9%) shared the view that because of none use of a classification system decisions could not be taken

because of missing files. In addition, this resulted in improper referencing of mail. The survey findings revealed that only 40% of Action Officers referenced their correspondence perhaps due to limited use of any classification system and lack of any procedures for maintenance and use of the correspondence files. The results also revealed that files had incomplete accounts of what transactions had taken place. Consequently, information that was known to exist was not easily retrievable and replies to incoming mail in many instances never found their way into files. De Wet and Du Toit (2000:79), state that routing mechanism with which records can be directed for processing by specific people will enable structured information flow and appropriate action.

Kemoni (2007:299) points out that a sound records management programme for both paper and electronic records requires the presence of a records classification scheme. Classification is essential as it helps capture records in a system, thus allowing appropriate linking, grouping, naming, security protection, user permission, retrieval and disposal (ISO 15489-1, 2001:13). Classification also enables records to be grouped together by functions and activities and to be managed as an aggregation (Reed 2005:112).

Storage of records

The survey sought to find out where records were kept after being created. The results showed that 73(81.1%) of Action Officers were keeping records in their offices (office cabinets), 47 (52.2%) were keeping records in registries and 22 (24.4%) were keeping records in the storeroom. The Action Officers removed records from their offices only when there was no more space available to store them and dumped them in the storerooms. There were no procedures available for depositing records into the storerooms. It was observed that in the storerooms, records were competing for space with non-records materials such as old computers, chairs, vacuum cleaning machine, fans and heaters. Furthermore, most Action Officers preferred to keep their records in their offices because they felt it is much easier and faster to get access to such records. The Action Officers noted that they were not using the registries because files got lost in the registries; consequently, it was safer to keep current records in their offices and take those that they did not need to the registries. Files in these storerooms were neither well arranged nor documented and it was a problem when Action Officers wanted to retrieve records. Most of the time records which were in the storerooms were forgotten and remembered only when there was a need to extract information from them.

The survey also sought to know how closed files were handled in the registries prior to their transfer to the archives. The results revealed that 62% of the registries staff stored their closed files on the floor and in cupboards while 38% stored their closed files in the store rooms. There was shortage of space in registries to keep non-current records prior to moving them to archives. Due to poor management most semi-current records suffered from damage caused by mishandling, pests, and bad quality paper. The National Archives of the Netherlands, Teygeler, Wassink and van Zanen (2001:77) characterise buildings as the first line of defense against a severe climate and various disasters. For these reasons the buildings should be well equipped to serve this function.

The findings revealed that Action Officers in Swaziland government transferred records to the registries when they no longer used them frequently. Without transferring records for storage into the registry, these officers were undermining the roles of the registry especially that of processing records, keeping them, facilitating their retrieval and also acting as the control centre for all information coming into and leaving the organization (Registry Handbook, 1993). Makhura and Du Toit (2005:221) in a study at South African National Parks (SANParks) also established that most respondents used cabinets to store records in their offices. They also

transferred records to registries only when they were no longer using them frequently. Regarding storage and maintenance of electronic records, the Ministry of Education in Swaziland stood out as the only one which maintained a database of records. The majority of the respondents (43.3%) said their Ministries maintained their electronic records on memory stick, 7.8% on the hard drive and 15.6%, did not create any electronic records in Table 5.

Table 5: Storage of electronic records [N=90]

Storage of E-records	Frequency	Percent (%)
Database	30	33.3
Memory stick	39	43.3
Hard drive	7	7.8
We don't manage	14	15.6
Total	90	100.0

With regard to storage and management of emails, 60% used memory sticks, 65% used folders, and 58% pruned stored emails keeping only those they perceived to be important and of enduring value. The majority, 72(80 %) of the respondents had difficulties managing their e-mails properly. Another 85% of respondents were not aware of the existence of any e-mail storage and retention policy. Only 15% of the Ministries seemed to have some form of email policy. Johare (2001:106) points out that the lack of organizational and legal frameworks for electronic records undermines their value in terms of management (access) and preservation. The findings revealed a lot of duplication of records in the Ministries with virtually no procedures available to assist in the appraisal of records. The prevailing inadequate record storage conditions in the Swaziland government is contrary to the requirements of ISO 15489-1 (2001, p18), which states that appropriate storage conditions should ensure that records are protected, accessible and managed in a cost effective manner.

Benson (1998:88) explains that most organizations have invested in electronic records management systems with the idea of reducing demand for more space from records managers. McLeod, Hare and Webster (1998:23) add that given organizations have started to operate in an environment where an increasing majority of records are created and disseminated in electronic format, policy framework for managing electronic records is vital. Poorly managed, electronic records can pose great challenges than paper records. Spratt (2000:11) in this regard says digital media such as floppy disks, hard disks, magnetic tape and CD-ROMS are generally not as stable as traditional media and, as a rule, deteriorate at a much faster rate than paper and microfilm. MacDonald (1998:6) expresses concern about the lack of policy, legislation, systems, standards and practices for ensuring the protection and proper management of electronic records in most countries both in developed and developing countries. Lack of organizational and legal frameworks on electronic records negatively affects their value in terms of management (access) and preservation (Johare 2001:106).

Disposal, preservation and maintenance of records

Records reach their inactive phase when their primary value to the organization lapses. The survey sought to know the procedures for destruction or preservation of records. The findings revealed that though the national Archives Act No. 5 of 1971 stipulates when records destruction or disposal should take place, most registry staff (70%) was not aware of this provision. Besides, even for those staff who were aware of this provision they did not comply

with it. As pointed out most closed files in registries were stored on top of the cabinets instead of having them destroyed or sent to archives. The reason advanced for keeping closed files was that they needed to be audited, but no plans were in place as when such audit would take place. If information is considered to be of a permanent nature, it must be captured in a form that is reproducible and in a manner that ensures permanence such as microfilming. Regarding the transference of records to national archives, such records must include metadata, identification and definition of all data sets transferred (National Archives of South Africa, 2000, p27). Diamond (1995, p17) points out that once the records have been transferred to the archives, they need to be processed, conserved and made accessible as sources of information or evidence.

The results showed that Ministry of Education records on students who benefited from government scholarship and completed schooling ten years ago were awaiting audit before a decision could be made for their disposal. As to how often records were transferred to the archives, 28% respondents transferred records after 3 years and 72% transferred records after 5 years. Follow ups through observation revealed that those records which took long time to be transferred to archives were financial statements, payment vouchers and scholarships records. Most issues of accountability in government relate to financial mismanagement and this may explain perhaps why such records are not disposed of for a long time. The lack of concurrency among respondents as to when records could be sent to the archives suggests inconsistent practice which could be addressed through a policy framework.

The study found that all registry staff (100 %) used acidic paper to create records. The paper used for the creation of records had no indications of pH values (the degree of acidity or alkalinity of the paper) suggesting lack of standards for care, handling and long-term preservation of records in government of Swaziland. Browning (1970:31) observed that, the permanence of the paper used for records has been a subject of concern for more than 200 years. Permanent paper can retain its original character without alteration over many decades. The use of acid-free paper by the Ministries in Swaziland could guarantee long term preservation of materials. It would also reduce frequency of remedial preservation.

The study findings revealed that files were held together for their use and storage using fasteners. In particular, 24 (83 %) registry staff used plastic clips, and another 17 (59 %) used metal clips. Most of the documents with the metal clips were showing signs of rust and stain. There were no defined criteria for choosing the fasteners. The purchasing of fasteners was done by officers who were unaware of any implications for the long-term preservation of records. Besides, the registry staff was using adhesive tape to repair permanent records which deteriorated over time, and became brown and darkened the paper to which it was attached. This was suggestive of the absence of guidelines and standards of compliance by records /registry staff in the Government Ministries in Swaziland. The National Archives of Canada (2003:1) states that disposal of records is of critical importance for the proper and economical maintenance of office records. Microfilming and digital imaging are the most common form of storing records that may be needed for future reference. Within Government in Swaziland there is hardly any measures taken to ensure long term preservation of records. Consequently, evidential value of records cannot be guaranteed in the long term.

The preservation and maintenance of electronic records in Swaziland Government is not any better compared to paper records in Swaziland. The storage of electronic records is hardly accompanied by adequate technical information (metadata) sufficient to support their use for secondary analysis. The National Historical Publications and Records Commission (1990) cited in Ngulube 2009) states that managing information in electronic form ensures its availability for future use by a broad spectrum of users. Besides, proper documentation of electronic records

provides structure, consistency, security, and control over these records (Mnjama 2003). The National Archives of South Africa (2000:27) cited in Ngulube 2009) points out that, specific information on how electronic information is written, including identification and definition of all data sets, records layouts specifying relative positions, lengths and definitions of all data elements, and codebooks for all unique codes used in the records must be documented.

Training for records/registry staff

Records management is a specialized field that requires well trained personnel to effectively handle it. The study findings revealed that staff appointed to the position of records/registry officers were not fully trained in records management and could therefore not be entrusted with managing government records during their entire lifecycle. The majority of the records/registry officers were Ordinary Level certificate holders with none having undergone formal training to at least diploma level in records management. Figure 1 shows relative qualifications of respondents.

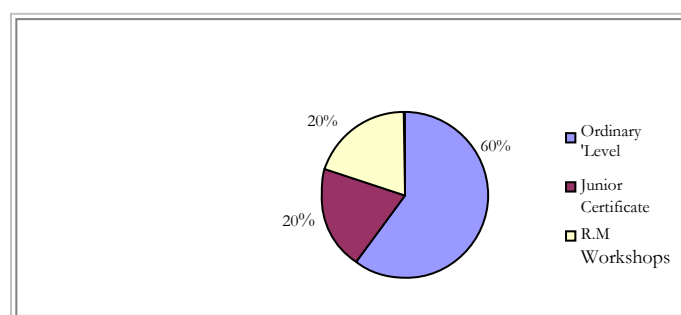


Figure 1: Qualifications of registry staff

On how often respondents attended records management courses, respondents 18(62 %) indicated once a year while the rest did not attend any workshops at all. Regarding how helpful the workshops they attended were, results are depicted in Table 6. Regarding training associated with electronic records management, majority of the respondents (35; 39 %) rated themselves as good in computer literacy, 28 % rated themselves as poor, 12 (15%) rated themselves as excellent, and 14(18 %) rated themselves as average. This contrasts sharply with general records management training which on the whole was lacking among the respondents. This perhaps could be explained by the novelty of new technology and the possibility of people making individual efforts to attain computer-based training to enhance their job profile and performance.

Table 6: The extent to which the workshops were helpful [N=29]

Responses from Registry staff	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Sometimes helpful	10	34.48	34.48
Most of the time helpful	5	17.24	51.72
Always	4	13.79	65.51
Not helpful	10	34.48	100.0
Total	29	100.0	

Effective management of electronic records requires a basic understanding of several areas of IT, including networking principles, operating systems, database systems, imaging systems, workflow, e-mail systems, Internet and intranets and thereafter continuing professional development (Spratt 2000:11), etc. Yet in general, effective training for records management in developing countries is limited (Rhys (1999) cited in Ngulube 2009). In Namibia Toteyemer and Stander (1992) cited in Ngulube (2009) found the archivist profession to be the most underdeveloped as far as training possibilities were concerned. The lack of training and awareness were also isolated by Amehame–Addo (1993) as one of the key factors contributing to the rate of deterioration in the National Archives of Ghana. Sebina (2001) in a Botswana study found that officers appointed to the position of records management were not fully trained records managers and were therefore not prepared to professionally handle all the records management related functions.

Conclusion and recommendations

This study sought to investigate records management within government in the Kingdom of Swaziland. The study in particular, investigated types of records generated and how they are used; records organization and retrieval; suitability of records storage facilities; records disposal, preservation and maintenance; and training needs of records/registry staff. The Study used mixed methods with survey design involving 15 government ministries with the target population comprising Action Officers and records/registry staff in government ministries in the Kingdom of Swaziland. The study was informed by the records life cycle model and the ISO 15489 (ISO 2001).

The findings in general revealed that government of Swaziland does not practice sound records management in accordance with the Swaziland National Archives Act No. 5 of 1971 and ISO 15489 standards. Moreover, Swaziland Government lacks an effective records management program throughout the entire life cycle. Such a records management programme would comprise records management policy, records management procedures, records classification systems, records control mechanisms, disposal and training mechanisms. The National Archives of Swaziland needed to be on the forefront for ensuring compliance with the relevant provision of the National Archives Act as well as the ISO standards on records management. The National Archives and Records Services of South Africa Act (1996) provides the legal framework which empowers the National Archives and records service to regulate the records management practices of all governmental bodies. The Swaziland National Archives should also do the same.

The findings also revealed that there was lack of uniformity across all government Ministries with regard to filing methods, appraisal and disposal of records. Records were poorly stored and therefore vulnerable to loss because there were no existing measures for ensuring their care and safe custody. The records/registry staff were not appropriately trained to effectively manage the records. The authors recommended the enactment of records management policy, developing capacity building plans, and putting in place records management programme that takes cognisance of standardized classification system across all Government Ministries. Besides, particular attention need to be paid to electronic records especially email which is in heavy use, but whose management is haphazard. Compliance with National Archives Act and ISO records management requirements would enable the government of Swaziland enhance accountability, transparency and integrity in a country that has poor record of governance and democracy.

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