
Records management and service delivery: the case of Department of Corporate Services in the Ministry of Health in Botswana

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Abstract

This article explores the role of records management in the delivery of public service in Botswana with specific reference to the Corporate Services Division at the Ministry of Health headquarters. This study used the case study approach and was complemented by triangulation of both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Data was obtained through questionnaires, interviews, observations and documentary review. The population for this study was 83; however only 59 (71.1%) were able to participate in it. Data collected through a questionnaire was analysed to obtain some descriptive statistics while qualitative data was analysed using content analysis to derive particular themes pertinent to the study. The two sets of results were compared and contrasted to produce a single interpretation and then conclusions drawn. The study findings established that the records management practices in the Corporate Service Division were not well entrenched thus undermining service delivery. This was evidenced by lack of awareness and existence of the records management policy, procedures manual based on RMU service standards from the Botswana National Archives; lack of security and preservation measures with rampant cases of missing files, folios and torn folders; delays in access and use of records; lack of an elaborate electronic records management programme and low levels of skill and training opportunities in records management. In order to enhance service delivery, the study recommended that a regulatory framework for records management should be developed and implemented. It is also recommended that management together with the Records Manager should identify training needs for records users and records management personnel.

Keywords: records; records management; public sector reforms; public service delivery; Botswana.

1. Introduction

Service delivery is a topical issue for most governments and scholars alike. It is a consensus amongst scholars that public service delivery is critical to ensuring the national well-being and stimulation of economic development. This is because on daily basis governments carry out several regulated and unregulated activities to provide citizens with services and at the same time guarantee that these services are provided in accordance to the rule of law (Kaunda 2005; Nandain 2006; Shan 2005; Wamukoya 1995).

Pemberton (1991) and Ngoepe (2008) assert that better service delivery always begins with better records management practices. This is because government departments can only take appropriate action and make correct decisions if they have sufficient information at their

fingertips. Hence, proper records management supports efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery in a variety of ways. These could include, among others, documentation of policies and procedure that inform service delivery such as; the type of services provided; who are to be responsible for carrying out the work; and what costs involved.

Kemoni, Ngulube and Stilwell (2007) have also affirmed that proper records management is significant to governments' realisation and achievement of their goals such as the rule of law, accountability, management of state resources, and protection of entitlements of its citizens as well as enhancing foreign relations. Nandain (2006:4) expands on Kemoni, Ngulube and Stilwell's (2007:5) argument and observes that "effective information and records management provides the foundation for accountability, protection of human rights and increases citizens' awareness to their rights". Thus it is imperative for government to continue improving their records management programmes in order to achieve greater service delivery, bearing in mind that the customers' socio-political and economical needs are diverse. The underlining point therefore is that proper records management facilitates planning, informed decision making, supports continuity, consistency and effectiveness of public service delivery.

Drawing appropriate literature review and empirical findings, this study investigates the role of records in the delivery of public health services at the Department of Corporate Services in the Ministry of Health in Botswana.

2 Location of the study: The Ministry of Health

This study was based at the Department of Corporate Services at the Ministry of Health Head quarters. The Ministry of Health (MoH) is responsible for the formulation of policies, norms, standards and guidelines for health services delivery as well as the provision of secondary and tertiary care in Botswana. The mission, vision and values of the Ministry of Health apply to whole ministry, its departments and divisions. These are in line with the countries Vision 2016 objectives that echo strongly with the Millennium Development Goals. The Ministry of Health envisages to provide equal health services to all regardless of social class or geographic location (equity), through a timely manner (timeliness); consistently meeting of customer expectations (consistency); working together as a team (team work) and through the provision of health services in kindly, friendly and respectful manner to all. The Ministry of Health has set the following service standards, which it seeks to accomplish:

- Maintain 97 percent stock levels of all vital medicines at government hospitably;
- Maintain 80 percent of non essential medicine at government hospitals;
- Waiting period of specialist, medical care shall be two months or less;
- Respond to correspondence within 10 working days from date of receipts;
- Pay for all invoices within 10working days from date of receipts of invoice;
- Swiftness in provision of updates and guidance on public health matters during outbreak of diseases;
- Frontline desk shall exist for customer service; and
- Switchboard and direct lines shall be answered within four rings.

2.1 Statutory requirements for records management in Botswana

All the responsibilities of preservation, custody, control and disposal of public records in Botswana rest with the Botswana National Archives and Records Services (BNARS). BNARS is a government department established by the National Archives Act of

1978, amended in 2007. Ngoepe and Keakopa (2011) have noted that despite the fact that the existence of records keeping in Botswana goes as far back as prior to independence, major developments in records management in Botswana came around 1992, when the National Archives and Records Services became a department with its own mandate. The department of BNARS falls under the Ministry of Sports Youth and Culture. The main function of the department is to provide records and information management service advice to government agencies and to collect, preserve and provide access the nation's documentary heritage. Other responsibilities involve the coordination and monitoring of records management practices in the public service as well as managing public records through their life cycle. There are two divisions within BNARS tasked with the management of records; these are the records management division and the archives administration (BNARS 2009b).

According to Shepherd and Yeo (2003) records managers need to have an understanding of the environment, the legal and regulatory frameworks that impact directly on records management. Therefore ministries and departments in Botswana are required by the government to assume a systematic and organised approach to the management of public records. This should be in line with the records management policy and records management procedures manual as developed by BNARS (2009a). The records management procedures manual stipulates that all government ministries and departments have an obligation to:

- Protect records against disasters and unauthorised access;
- Provide adequate security mechanisms;
- Provide adequate resources to facilitate management of records, such as computers, filing cabinets, office space, stationary and transport;
- Develop relevant records management tools, such as records management policy, classification scheme, electronic records management system; and
- Development of records management personnel competencies to enhance service delivery, such as customer care training, public service reforms training (BNARS 2009a).

Kennedy and Schauder (1998) also affirm that government entities and their employees have to be aware of their legal and regulatory obligations in order to be able to present sufficient proof of their fulfilment of the regulatory requirements in the record of their activities. This is because some legislation specifies the requirements for the creation and preservation of certain records. Other legislation stipulates how long a record should be preserve while others provide information on how to govern the formats in which records may be stored if they are to remain authentic and accessible overtime (Luyombya 2007).

In that regard, as part of ensuring that records are created, used, preserved and accessed in an appropriate manner the government of Botswana has enacted a number of regulatory legislation, policies and standards to govern public records management. These are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Regulatory framework for public records management in Botswana

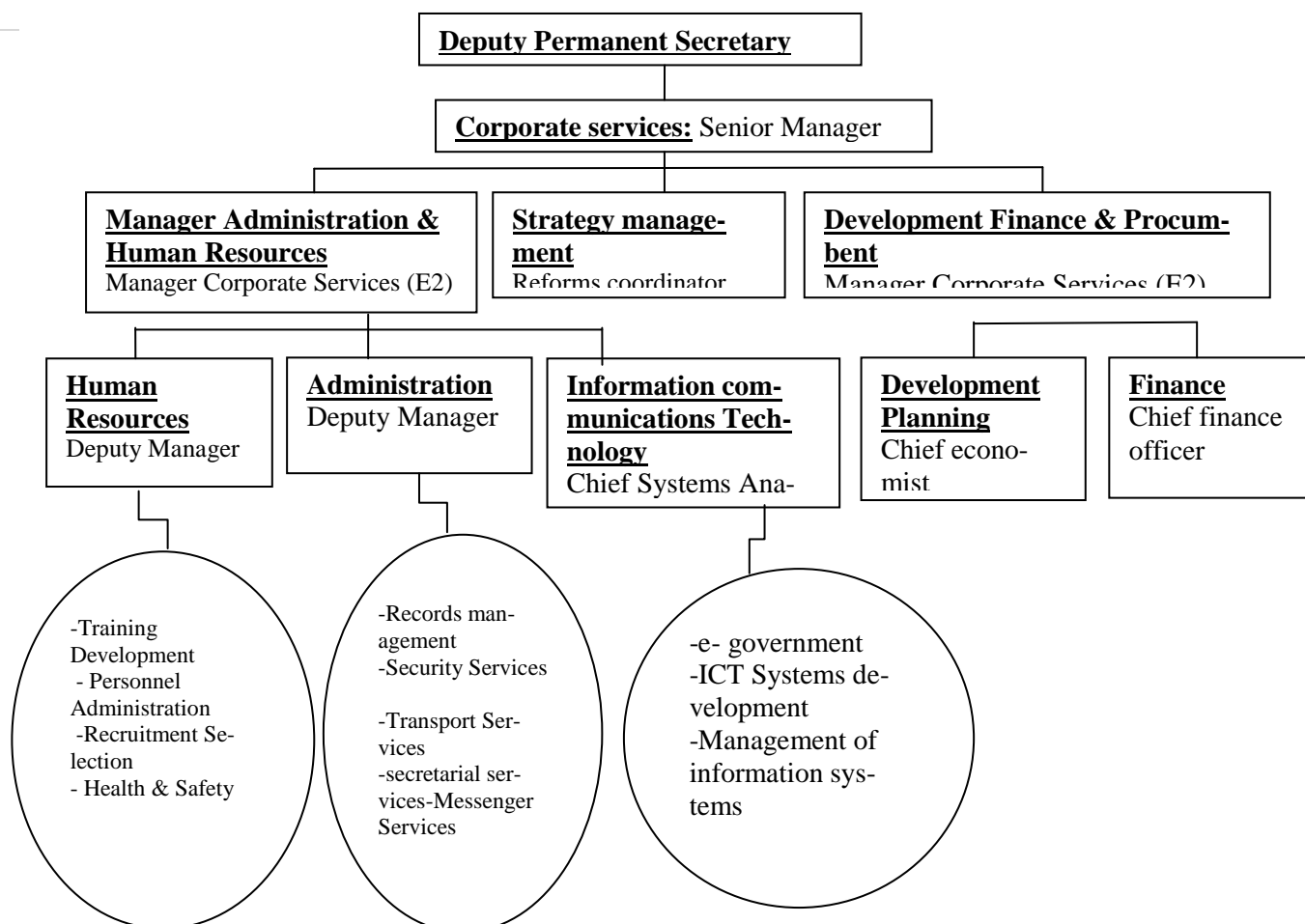
Regulatory framework for records management in Botswana	Records management purpose and requirements
Botswana National Archives and National Archives (Chapter 59:04)	Assigns responsibility and accountability for the management of all official records to the director of the national archives. ✓ Requires for creating agencies to provide assemblage and safe keeping of records in accordance with established regulations. ✓ Requires for permission to destruct public records to be sort from the director of the national archives.
Botswana National Archives and Records Services Records Management Policy, 2009.	A benchmarking tool for records management in public service sector. ✓ Requires for all ministries to assign officials of their governmental bodies to take responsibility for the management of their records. ✓ Necessitate for governmental ministries and departments to put the necessary infrastructure, policies, strategies, procedures and systems in place to guarantee preservation of all records regardless of their formats.
Botswana National Archives and Records Services Records management procedures manual, 2009	Provides guidelines for records management practices and procedures in: ✓ Mail management (records creation and capture) ✓ File management (maintenance and use of records) ✓ Records appraisal, retention and disposal guidelines ✓ Electronic records management ✓ Records security (intellectual and physical security controls)
Botswana Public Service Act, 2008	Provides for the intellectual security for records. ✓ Necessitate for all public servants not to disclose contents of any document communicated to him or her during the course of their duties or in his or her capacity as a public officer.
Botswana Public Service Standards for Records Management	✓ Response to correspondence -10 working days ✓ Response to RMU request- 15 minutes ✓ Mail circulation; 5 minutes. ✓ Mail processing 8 hours

Sources: *Botswana National Archives Act, Chapter 59:04; Botswana National Archives and Records Services 2009; Botswana Public service Act, 2008.*

2.2 Records management place in the Department of Corporate Services Structure

Kennedy and Schauder (1998) have observed that in most cases the records management unit is placed within the business service section of the organisation. This statement holds true for the Department of Corporate Service where the records management is placed under the administration division with other service provision units as secretarial services, transportation services as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Organisational structure of the Department of Corporate Services in the Ministry of Health



Source: Ministry of Health 2012.

The principal records management unit within the Department of Corporate Services reports directly to the Deputy Manager for administration division. The records management unit is responsible for the management of all records created and received in all the Ministry of Health’s Department and divisions. There are 12 records management personnel within the department. There are two registries one for personnel files and one for general policy files. Confidential records are kept in the permanent secretaries offices.

2.3 Records management and service delivery in the Ministry of Health

According to Ngoepe (2004) for a government body to function effectively it has the responsibility of ensuring that it creates and has access to complete and credible information to allow for effective and appropriate decision making on behalf of the public. It has been acknowledged by WHO (2008) that in developing countries such as Botswana records are

the basis for statistics about performance related to interventions such as reduction of child mortality, maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. These interventions however can only become possible if relevant information and records are readily available.

Concerns have been raised that many developing countries, particularly those with poor health services are less likely to reach the millennium development goals. Thus it can be deduced that strengthening health service delivery is a key strategy to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (Jacobs, Thorne, Overtoom, Sam, Indermuhle & Pricc 2009). However it was found that shortage of human resources remains one of the challenges in health improvement as it is a cross-cutting issue that influences the delivery of health services in Botswana. This was documented in the WHO (2009) report on Botswana. The report went on to highlight low utilisation of data within the ministry, which had resulted in inadequate evidence-based planning, monitoring and evaluation of projects within the Ministry of Health. The report also pointed out that poor health service delivery in the Ministry of Health was in part owing to shortage of skilled staff in records management unit and other information management units (WHO 2009:1).

The WHO (2009) report on Botswana pinpoints inadequate utilisation of information as one of the factors undermining Health service delivery by the Ministry of Health. This study focuses on the Department of Corporate Services as this is where issues pertaining to staffing, administration, performance and project implementation are addressed.

3 Methodology

The main purpose of the study was to establish the role of records management in the delivery of services by the Department of Corporate Services at the Ministry of Health in Botswana. This study used the case study approach but was complemented by methodological triangulation of both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods in that data was obtained through questionnaires, interviews, observations and documentary review. A census was employed in that the whole study population of 83 employees from the Corporate Services Division, Ministry of Health was targeted. These were from all the sections and broken down as: Human Resources (18), Administration (13), Heads of Units (10), Ministerial Strategy office of Reforms (5), Information Technology (7), Records Management (12), Secretaries services (15), Finance and Accounting (3); however, only 59 participated in it. Data collected through a questionnaire was analysed to obtain some descriptive statistics while qualitative data was analysed using content analysis to derive particular themes pertinent to the study. The two sets of results were compared and contrasted to produce a single interpretation and then conclusions drawn.

4 Findings and discussions

Data interpretation for this study was based on empirical information collected through the questionnaire; interviews; observations, documentary review, and informed by the records life cycle theory, record continuum theory and the ISO 15489-1. The research interpretation and discussions are based in on the research objectives which were:

- The level of adherence set to records management programmes, policies and standards in place in the context of service delivery.
- Current records management strategies, programmes and systems in the Department of Corporate Services.
- Adoption of ICTs in the Department of Corporate Services and implication in service delivery.

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- Level training in records management in the Department of Corporate Services.

4.1 Level of adherence to records management programmes, systems and service standards in place in the context of service delivery

The levels of adherence to sets records management standards and procedures on service delivery are presented in the following sub-topics:

- Adherence to sets records management procedures, policies and standards on service.
- Records management in service delivery in the Department of Corporate Services

4.1.1 Adherence to set records management procedures, policies and standards on service

The Government of Botswana has enacted customer public service standards to increase efficiency and effectiveness in the public service. All ministries are required to adopt and customize these standards, taking in to account the services they provide. As a result, the BNARS has developed customised service standards with which all records management service provision should abide by. Thus, the study sought to find out how effective these standards are in terms of service delivery in the Department of Corporate Services.

This study acknowledges that in order for a records management programme to succeed there should be some level of awareness of the procedure, policies and standards governing the management of records. The finding showed that many records users and records management personnel were not aware of the records management procedures, policies and standards set by BNARS. A response of 5 (100%) from heads of units showed that they were not aware of the records management policy and procedures manual from BNARS. A total of four (80%) indicated that there were no other policies nor procedures in their line of work that required them to maintain records, only 1 (20%) Head of Unit, (transportation unit) confirmed that there was a transport order and procedure that required the unit to keep records. Similarly, eight (66.7%) of records management personnel indicated that they were not aware on the records management policy and procedures manuals from BNARS. The implication of the findings is that lack of awareness of records management standards policies and procedures by heads of units and records officers means that they are not aware of their role and responsibilities towards records management. It can be taken therefore that this situation contributed significantly to poor public service delivery by the Ministry of Health.

Drawing a parallel to this response the study also sought to establish how records users viewed records in relation to their daily business activities. The majority of records users 24 (68.6%) cited that records were very essential and seven (20%) said that records were essential to their business activities. The response provided by records users is similar to what Ramokate's (2010) study on the management of land board records. The study found that records were important for the conduct of different land board activities such as dispute resolution and land administration with five (100%) response. The study also established that 54 (80%) said that records were important for communication. Similarly, Ngoepe (2010) also underscored that sound records management is crucial to the conduct of business and makes public administration more efficient and effective. Without effective records management programme, projects for instance are difficult to implement in the absence of well managed records (Kanzi 2010).

The question that arises is, despite this recognition, what is the level of adherence to records management programs in service delivery? Shepherd and Yeo (2003) posit that an

effective records management programme ensures that records are available for users when needed. Therefore, it is imperative that organisations should have an effective records management programmes that would make available records and information contained therein when required. This is not always the case in the Department of Corporate Services as the findings of the study showed that RMU service delivery takes longer than required. A total of 19 (51.4%) of combined response from records users said it can take up to hours and days to get information services from the RMU. This is in contradiction BNARS records management customised service standard of a 15 minutes response to RMU requests. The implication is that the records management programme in the Department of Corporate Services does not effectively support public service delivery as it fails to make available records on time.

According to the BNARS (2009) records management manual, timely processing of outgoing and incoming correspondence will lead to operation efficiency and effectiveness. Thus it has a standard that mail processing (registration and distribution) should be done within eight hours (one day). The findings of the study showed that the current records management programme contravenes this standard as eight (66%) responses from records management personnel showed that mail processing can take two to three days in the RMU before it is registered and disseminated. This situation was attributed to shortage of records management personnel. The implication of the results is that information does not reach its intended users on time, leading to delays in providing feedback or service required.

The inability of government agencies to make information available on time was also documented in Uganda by Mukembo (2008) who found that it was a common practice in Uganda for records not to be produced at the right time when required in the courts of law for justice to prevail leading, justice either being denied or delayed and breach article 28 of the Constitution of Uganda. Similarly, a study in Botswana by Ramokate (2010) in the management of land records in the Kweneng Land Board, showed that records retrieval in the RMU was not consistent, with most response showing that records retrieval could take ten minutes up to two days or more. Ramokate (2010) noted that the length of records retrieval was likely to hamper productivity and the land board's ability to make decisions on time.

4.1.2 Records management in service delivery

A records management system should contain complete document of all transactions that occur in relation to a particular record. These include processes associated with an individual record. Such documentation should be “documented as part of the metadata in, attached and associated” with a particular record (ISO 15489-1 2001:9 Section 8.3.2). According to Kennedy and Schauder (1998) the purpose of registration is to provide proof that a record has been created or capture in a record keeping system. All 12 (100%) records management personnel concurred that these tools were useful for identifying when mail was received in the Department of Corporate Services and for providing if action was taken on the matter.

Dikopoulou and Mihiotis (2010:262) observed that information created during the activities of an organisation is a critical resource not only to the organisation but also for the society the organisation operates in. They further argue that, to “achieve an efficient use of information assets we must control their production, transfer, retention, and use”. While Kanzi (2010) opines that sound records management programme is the foundation for managing resources and the delivery of services to the public. It also allows for an organisation to find information easily and the orderly and efficient flow of information enables the organisation to perform its functions successfully and efficiently. On the contrary, this sentiment

does not hold for the Department of Corporate Services as records users were of the view that current records management programmes in their department undermined service delivery as evidenced by a high response of 25 (71.4%).

Further, the record users stated that the current recordkeeping practices in the Department of Corporate Services affected service delivery in numerous ways. For example, 17 (34.3%) of records users did not agree that current records management program added free flow of information, 11 (31.4%) did not agree that current records management programs aided easy retrieval and access to records; 10 (28.6%) did not agree that it encouraged accountability.

In addition, the inadequacy in providing to access, use and preserve records by the records management programme means that service delivery could be affected. For example, the Human Resources division would not be able to process recruitments on time; Accounting Division would also not be able to provide payments on and supply would not be able to acquire the necessary material and equipments required to deliver services. In relation to the above findings, all 5 (100%) Heads of Units concurred that records management systems and programmes in the Department of Corporate Services were not up to scratch and has had adverse negative impact on their ability to deliver services. For example, the Chief Administration Officer stated that sometimes correspondence takes longer to reach their offices and as such it is often difficult to deliver required services. He said that:

“there was an instance where we were unable to provide transportation for activity malaria campaign only because the communication requesting transportation did not reach our office on time and as results the campaign had to be cancelled”

The Chief Human Resources Manager indicated that, “there have been instances where we were unable to hire medical specialist because their applicant’s letter did not reach our offices on time and some got lost”

According to Kemoni (2007) public sector records management programmes in Africa are plagued by various problems, due to the inability of registries to play their roles effectively. This study also found that there were existing problems that hindered the RMU from providing information and records management services effectively. Records management personnel identified factors contributing to the current records management situation in the Department of Corporate Services as including; small mall budget for records management 10 (20.9%), shortage of skilled personnel 12 (100%).

4.2 Current record management programmes and systems

As indicated in the preceding sections, records management is a business process that is required to support business activity of an organisation. It therefore comes as no surprise that organisations should adopt regulatory frameworks that will ensure best in records management records management practices. The research findings on current records management programmes and systems within the Department of Corporate Services are discussed in line with best records management practices. The findings are presented and discussed as follow:

- Records management structure in the department of corporate services;
- Records management policy and procedures manual;
- Records creation and use;
- Mail management;
- File management;

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- Records storage;
 - Records security;
 - Appraisal and retention scheduling; and
 - Records disposition.

4.2.1 Records management policy and procedures manual

According to Kennedy and Schauder (1998:29) a records management policy is “the official charter for performing all records management functions”. They further point out that a records management policy should be clear and should outline records management functions in relation to the organisations records keeping requirements. As a standard for best practices in records management ISO 15489-1 (2001 Section 6) specify that organisation should “establish document, maintain and promulgate policies, procedures” to guarantee that “its business need for evidence and accountability and information about activities is met”. The ISO 15489-1 (2001 Section 5) stipulates that a records management policy and procedures of an organisation should demonstrate the application of the regulatory environment to their business processes. On the other hand, Kennedy and Schauder (1998:527) define a records management manual as a guide for the functions of a records management system within an organisation. This is because the manual provides information on “who, what when where and how the records management systems operates for those who may use the service of the RMU” (Kennedy & Schauder 1998:527). A records management manual serves four purposes:

- Standardising procedures;
- Establishing responsibility;
- Assisting in employee training; and
- Providing for updates on policies and procedures (Kennedy & Schauder 1998:527).

In the context of Botswana, the Botswana National Archives Act 1978 amended in 2007 requires government ministries to develop regulations for effective records management functions in the public service. As earlier noted in the literature reviewed, BNARS is mandated to provide guidance on the management and preservation of public records. However, Ngoepe and Keakopa (2011) have noted that BNARS still faces challenges in satisfying its role in the management of public records especially more so in the development of policies and procedures. Kalusopa (2011:228) also noted that there has been very little effort to extend these services to public service organisations. True to this statement, the study revealed that Department of Corporate Services neither has a records management policy nor a procedures manual. Other previous research findings on public records management in Botswana have also shown that there are minimal records management regulatory frameworks in many government public service organisations (Kalusopa 2011; Keakopa 2006; Kootshabe 2011; Ramokate 2010). As a result, challenges in the management of public records such as inadequate training in records management for users and records management personnel have been documented.

It has been established that lack of records management regulatory framework has negative implications for public service delivery. According to Kemoni (2007) without a records management policy for instance, it is difficult to establish efficient records management systems that supports decision-making. Kemoni (2007) further posits that the absence of a records management policy has the ability to obstruct the role of public service providers. Thus the lack of a records management procedures manual would have implications

such as records management personnel not having the necessary guidelines for managing records during the continuum of activities that would make the management of records throughout their life-cycle easier.

4.2.2 Formats of records used

Shepherd and Yeo (2003) are of the view that an effective records management programme should encompass the management of all records regardless of their formats. The study discovered that both electronic and paper based formats were used and produced by the Department of Corporate Services, as indicated by the 22 (62.9%) response, followed by 13 (37.1%) for paper based records use. It was also revealed that paper records were still the dominant used as compared to e-records. Previous research has also established that paper based records are the most dominant in most government organisations (Kalusopa 2011; Kootshabe 2011; Ramokate 2010; Thotlo 2010). In terms of e-records, however, the study found that e-mails 25 (21%) Microsoft package (word excel and power-point), 24 (20.2%) and web site, intranet were the most used in the Department of Corporate Services.

According to Kalusopa (2011), knowledge on available records type and formats in labour organisations in Botswana “were largely incomplete”. Thus this study reiterates his point of view that organisations need to conduct records surveys not only to establish the formats of records created but also to ensure their timely access, use, appraisals and disposal.

4.2.3 Records creation and use

According to Ricks, Swarfford and Gow (1992), records are important for a number of reasons within an organisation; they provide evidence for decision making, for documentation, for reference and for response to enquiry amongst others. The study found out that there were no established procedures for the creation of new files. The study also found out that a large number 25 (71.4%) of records users used records on daily basis, six (14.3%) used them weekly and two (5.7%) used them sometimes. The findings of the study also showed that files were requested from the RMU telephonically most of the time.

4.2.4 Classification of records

ISO 15489-1 (2001 Section 9.5.1) defines records classification scheme as a tool in records management that assists in various processes such as providing linkage between individual records which accumulate to provide a continuous record of activities. ISO 15489-1 (2001 Section 9.5.1) further points out that a classification scheme is important for the below outlined:

- Ensuring records are named in a consistent manner over time;
- Assisting in the retrieval of all records relating to a particular function;
- Determining security protection and access appropriate for sets of records;
- Distributing users permissions for access to, or action on, particular groups of records; distributing responsibility for management of particular sets of records;
- Distributing records for action; and
- Determining appropriate retention periods and disposal actions for records, (ISO15489-1 2001 Section 9.5.1).

Kennedy and Schauder (1998) have also pointed out that the ability to effectively locate and retrieve records required in the course of a business is a key component of any records management programme. They further posit that records classification allows for certain actions such as grouping, naming, user permission, security protection and retrieval of records to be done with ease.

All 12 (100%) of records management personnel agreed that there was no record classification scheme for the management of paper records in the Department of Corporate Services. Furthermore, the findings revealed that records in both the confidential and open registry areas were arranged numerically and an index has been developed for these records. Discussions with records managers revealed that there are plans to develop a functional classification scheme.

A significant number eight (66.7%) of records management personnel said that the file index created a problem in allocation of file numbers. They gave an example where two files could be given one file number and this created confusion during file retrieval. The implication of the current situation in the Department of Corporate Services is that lack of a classification scheme may lead to misfiling of information and delays in information retrieval and dissemination, thereby compromising service delivery.

Previous research on public records management in Botswana has highlighted incompetent and poor classification of records as being a problem in the public sector. For instance, Tshotlo (2009) noted that records in Gaborone City Council (GCC) did not have a standardised classification scheme. She for the purport that records at GCC were not arranged in a logical manner which had resulted in delays in records location and retrieval.

This situation does not seem to be exclusive to Botswana alone. Elsewhere in Kenya, Kemoni (2007:296) noted that, although a large number of ministries in Kenya had written classification schemes “they were not fully documented and updated”. Kemoni found that 84 (53.5%) institution surveyed were of the view that classification schemes were not backed by procedures manuals and 65 (41.4%) showed that the file classification schemes did not support organisational requirements.

4.2.5 Records registration and control of file movement

According to Ngoepe (2008:134), the purpose of tracking records is to “document the movements of records so that the organisation knows where its records are at any time, to monitor the use of records and to maintain an auditable trail of record keeping processes, such as access to records by users”. Shepherd and Yeo (2003:130) purports that an essential element in record registration is giving it a “unique identifier” that sets it apart from all other records within a records management system. Kemoni (2007) also opines that is essential for mail to be recorded as a way of providing evidence of mail receipt, and as a way of discouraging deceitful records management personnel from removing or destroying mail.

The findings of this study revealed that mail registers were used within the Department of Corporate Services as indicated by the 12 (100%) response from records management personnel. They indicated that they have three registers, one being for incoming and two outgoing mail. For outgoing mail registers one was for hand delivery to other departments of the Ministry of Health and their divisions while the other register was for mail that required posting.

This study also investigated aspects related to the tracking of records during their use. Based on the results of the interview response from records management personnel it became evident that the most common methods used to monitor the movement of files are the

file movement card as shown by the 12 (35.3%) response, file census 12 (35.3%) and physical checkups 10 (29.4%) response for file that cannot be located through the other two means.

4.2.6 Records storage

The findings of the study were that lockable steel cabinets named by 12 (100%) of respondents were used for the storage of records in the RMU. Observations revealed that steel shelves were used in the storerooms. The study found out that there was shortage of storage equipment in the Department of Corporate Services as some current and semi-current file in the storeroom had to be kept on the floor. This is contrary to the ISO 15489-1 (2001 Section 9.6) which requires for records storage to be stored in a media that will ensure that their authenticity, reliability, usability for as long as required.

Kemoni (2007) also found out that inadequate storage of current and semi-current has the capability to delay speed in decision making as records retrieval would take long. He further posits that inadequate records storage equipment could increase the deterioration of records and thus affect their access and use.

4.2.7 Records security and disaster management

As an ISO 15489-1 (2001 Section 8.3.6 & 9.7) requirement an organisation should have guidelines as to who is permitted access to records, and on what circumstances is access permitted. Furthermore, e-records management system in place should also control access to guard their integrity and authenticity.

The study revealed that the Department of Corporate Services had a number of security measures and procedure in place. For security of paper records, the presence of lockable steel cabinets and lockable doors to storage areas were shown to be present by a response of 12 (100%). This was also confirmed through observation. Records management personnel also indicated that it is common practice for action officer to retrieve files for themselves especially when there was shortage of RMU staff. This situation created an opportunity for some action offices to temper or steal records contains valuable information. A study by Kootshabe (2011) also found that records security in many government ministries had challenges such as unauthorised access in to records storage areas as messengers and cleaners often had accesses to records storage areas.

In terms of e-records security the study established that, users were provided with usernames and passwords to use for login in to the computer. The use of password and user name was important for tracking user's activity in the computer. Sensitive information was said to backed-up in to the server every month. However the biggest threat to e-records could be the fact there were no regulation on what information should be backed up. Furthermore the fact that it was the responsibility of the records user and creator to determine what and which records to back-up, presented a threat of loss of valuable information.

Ricks, Swafford and Gow (1992:245) are of the view that as organisations becomes aware of records importance towards the continuity of business operations more direction should be geared towards the protection of their physical properties and their content integrity. This is because "once original records are destroyed they cannot be replaced". On disaster management the findings of the study 12 (100%) of records management personnel indicated that the Department of Corporate Services did not have any regulatory framework for disaster management.

4.2.8 Records retention and records disposal

According to Kennedy and Schauder (1998) a records disposal is a process closely connected to the implementation of records appraisal decisions. It entails the deletion, or destruction of records from a records management system. Records disposal may also include the migration of records from one records management system to another or transfer of custody of ownership of records. An effective records management system should be able to capable of assisting in making and implementing decision on records retention and disposal. This system should also provide an audit trails in order to “track the complete disposition of records” (ISO 15489-1 2001 Section 8.3.7).

For this study interviews with records management personnel established that Department of Corporate Services does not have records retention and disposal guidelines as evidenced by their 12 (100%) response. The lack of retention and disposal schedules would mean that semi-current and no current records are kept together, and this is likely to affect semi-current records retrieval.

On the other hand, records users were asked to indicate retention periods for the records they used, a total of 12 (34.3%) showed that the records they used were required permanently, seven (20%) indicated that records were required for a period of 6-10 years, 6-1 and the least score was for period between 11-15 years. The implication of this response is that in the absence of retention and disposal guidelines records users used experience and long standing procedures to determine how long records were required for.

4.3 Extent of ICT adoption in records management and effects on service delivery

The interpretation of research findings regarding the adoption of ICTs in the Department of Corporate Services is presented according to the following sub-themes:

- ICT infrastructure in the Department of Corporate Services;
- Creation and use of e-records;
- e-records storage and security; and
- Challenges in ICT usage.

4.3.1 ICT infrastructure in the Department of Corporate Services

According to Tale and Alefaio (2005), many countries in the developing world have come to realize the importance of ICT to economic and social development particularly where tradition systems have tended to hamper public service delivery. They are of the view that the adoption of ICTs present numerous opportunities in records management such as; records retrieval and compact storage through electronic and digital storage devices that offer an alternative to the bulky paper records that require a considerable amount of space for storage.

Kalusopa (2011) puts it that it is the user’s acceptance and use of ICTs that defines its success or failure and that the integration of ICTs in records management functionalities is critical for effective e-records readiness in organisations. Electronic records thus depend on ICTs. They are created and managed by computer hardware and software. Therefore, electronic records require mediation in order to be accessed (IRMT 2009). The findings of the study showed that the Department of Corporate Services has embraced the use of ICTs as indicated by presence and use of a number of hardware and software from IT officers. However, the study also found out that ICTs in the Department of Corporate Services were largely used for communication purposes with a response of 22 (62.9%) followed by data

processing with a response score of seven (20%) with the minimal use in records management. Other previous studies in Botswana also do affirm this (Kalusopa 2011; Keakopa 2006; Kootshabe 2011; Ramokate 2010; Thotlo 2010).

4.3.2 Creation and use of e-records

According to Shepherd and Yeo (2003) electronic records are created and used in the same business context as their paper counterparts. They however pointed out that with the advent of ICTs, e-records creation, documents addressed to other offices may never be in the paper format as they can be sent directly from one PC to the other. The IRMT (2009) also posit that the utilisation of ICTs improves information handling and allows for the quick retrieval of records. As an end result, policy makers can make knowledgeable decisions quickly and competently, contributing to the effectiveness of the organisation.

In terms of this of study, it was established that the Department of Corporate Services is able to create an ever-increasing amount of its records in digital format. For instance data collected interviews with IT officers showed that more officers created and used e-mails with a response of 20 (57%). The implication the that information communicated electronically would need to be to be identified and, where necessary, retrieved, transferred and controlled in systems that complied with established records management procedures and standards.

On another note the study established that in addition to being used for communication, 16 (15.5) of records users indicated that ICTs were instrumental to records retrieval, while 15(14.6%) said for information storage and 14 (13.6%) said information access. This findings were similar to Sichele, Ngulube and Stilwell's (2011) study in which government employees indicated that computers provided assistance in the management of records such as records storage 25 (73.5%), enhanced retrieval 29 (85.3%) enhanced use 25 (73.5%), enhance preservation 22 (70.5%) and security 24 (70.7%) just to name a few.

Taking the use of ICTs to the public service delivery domain, IRMT (2009) avers that the use of ICTs also exposes organisations to communities outside of their normal client base, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. For example, the creation of an institutional website can raise awareness and increase interest from clients or members of the public far from the physical location of the organisation.

4.3.3 E-records storage and security

In terms of e-records storage Shepherd and Yeo (2003) explain that where computers are networked the storage of online electronic records can be centralised or decentralised, where records are kept on central server or local servers in the different parts of an organisation. The findings of the study established that the Department of Corporate Services has a centralised server, where all records users in the department could have access to e-records stored.

According to the ISO 15489-1 (2001 Section 8.3.6) an electronic records management system should apply control on access of records so that the integrity, authenticity and reliability of records is not compromised. The study established that there were procedure for ensuring security of record as controlled access within the Department of Corporate Services in the form of usernames and passwords.

4.3.4 Challenges in the adoption and use of ICTs

Using a multi-response list, the challenges in the use and adoption ICTs were identified as including:

- Inadequate financial resources (25.9%);
- Lack of training on ICTs use, seven (25.9%);
- Inadequate security measures, five (18.5%);
- Shortage of software, five (18.5%);
- Inadequate standards procedures, two (7.4%); and
- Shortage of software, one (3.7%).

This study acknowledges that the adoption of ICTs involves considerable costs and requires special management and skills; however it is worth noting that there is a need to improve the way computers are acquired, deployed and used. This comes in light of the fact that there is shortage of computers in the Department of Corporate Services especially in the RMU were 6 (50%) indicated that they did not have computers. Tshotlo (2009) noted that there was minimal computer usage at Gaborone City Council.

4.3.5 Training in records management

According to IRMT (2000:35), the success of any integrated records management program depends on the professional capacity and status of the staff responsible for the use, creation and maintenance of records. This is because the “continuous records management process at any phase of the record life cycle should be performed within an integrated structure” with no limit to “professional collaboration and development”

The study revealed that there was inadequate training in records management policies, and procedures for action officers with a response of 5 (100%) as well as inadequate training in electronic records management with a response of 4 (33.3%) while training in records management roles and responsibility got a response of 3 (25%).

Furthermore, the study revealed that most of the records management personnel were inadequately skilled. This is because the majority four (33.3%) respectively held certificates and diplomas in records management. Some two (16.7%) have no professional training in records management only one (8%) has a university degree and one (8%) has a masters in archives and records management. None of the records user had received any form of training in records management.

Similarly, Manyambula (2009) also established that most of the records management personnel in the Tanzanian public sector were under trained. He pointed out that most records management personnel had no training in records management and for those who did, the training they received was very little to enable them to effectively execute records management responsibilities. As a result of lack of professionalism in records management public service delivery was affected (Manyambula 2009).

Kemoni's (2007:343) study on records management and service delivery in Kenya also showed that most of the records management personnel in the public sector were under trained. The study showed that 31 (19.7%) held diploma in archives and records management and a large number of 78 (49.7%) had no training in archives and records management. The study also expressed concerns from senior ministerial officers regarding lack of training of training opportunities for records management personnel. For example, it quoted a statement from Office of President, Directorate of Personnel Management as saying: “registries

are more or less manned by untrained personnel... personnel training on the job has acquired unprofessional techniques”.

This study concurs with Kemoni’s (2007:342) sentiment that records management training has to “undergo a radical transition” if is to serve “the needs of African nations and if the profession was to make a useful contribution to nation building”.

5 Recommendations and strategies

The following are the key recommendations arising out of the study:

5.1 Adherence to record management programmes, standards and procedures

This study established that as echoed by Kemoni (2007) that adherence to records management programmes, standards procedures facilitates effective records management for public service delivery. Therefore this study recommends that:

- 1 Though there were no records management policies and procedures manuals for the Department of Corporate Services; the records manager should publicise and ensure compliance to the already existing regulatory frameworks from BNARS. In doing so the records manager should also seek assistance and guidance from BNARS to ensure that records management best practices are met.
- 2 The study recommends that a records management committee encompassing of officers from all Department of Corporate Services’ division and units be formed. This will be useful to the development of records management regulatory frameworks, their dissemination and adherence leading to efficient and effective service delivery.
- 3 This study recommends that there should be a records management performance evaluation for both records officers and records users. This will be instrumental to establishing adherence records management programmes, as well as establishing responsibilities between action officers and records management units’ ability to perform.

5.2 Current records management strategies, programmes and systems

This study recommends that:

- 1 The Department of Corporate Services should develop a records management policy and procedures manual because records management policies and records management manuals are instrumental to enhance accountability of record users and records managers as they outline each ones responsibilities in the management of a record through its life cycle and record continuum. This could enhance performance of records users and records management personnel and ultimately public service delivery.
- 2 A functional classification scheme should be developed in order to archive efficiency in records retrieval and service delivery.
- 3 The Department of Corporate Services cannot afford to keep all non-current records produced by its divisions in the conduct of business. This is because some of them contain no value for business continuity. This study finds it unnecessary to spend money on their maintenance and storage. Therefore, it is recommended that records

management appraisal and retention guidelines be created, to ensure timely disposal of records of no value. This would create space for the current and semi-current records and would even improve on their preservation thus enhancing access and use and public service delivery.

- 4 Staffing levels for records management personnel should be increased as the present staff does not cope with the work load.

5.3 Adoption of ICTs

It was established that ICTs facilitated communication in the Department of Corporate Services hence effective service delivery. Therefore, this study recommends that:

- 1 The Department of Corporate Services should introduce e-records management systems in the RMU. This could prove to be valuable to compliance of service standards. An e-records management system would enhance the speed at which records are classified, retrieved disseminated and tracked resulting in timely access to records and efficient and effective delivery of service. Furthermore, this will require that records management personnel and IT officers' work together.
- 2 With e-mails being the most created and used forms of e-records; an e-mail management system be developed. This will be instrumental to ensuring the authenticity and reliability records are accessible as long as they are required.
- 3 Action officers and records management personnel should be sent for short courses in ICT usage since it was apparent that not all officers were conversant with the use of computers.

5.4 Training in records management

This study established that there was inadequate training in records management in the Department of Corporate Services in general, for both records management personnel and records users. Therefore, this study recommends that:

- 1 Records users should be sent for short courses in records management such as workshops and seminars so that they can appreciate what effective and efficient records management entails and the benefits it holds for service delivery.
- 2 Junior records management personnel should be taken for further studies, those with diplomas should be sent for degree while those with no professional qualifications should at least be sent for certificates. It was also recommended that top management should be sensitised on the value of records so that they can support management by providing funding for equipment and other necessities.

6 Conclusions

This study investigated the role of records management in the Department of Corporate Services in the Ministry of Health. The study revealed the records management system in the Department of Corporate Service was inefficient and does not effectively support public service delivery. This was evidenced by the fact that there was no awareness and existence of the records management policy, procedures manual and RMU service standards from the Botswana National Archives. This resulted in an ineffective records management programme

as records management personnel and records users lacked direction and guidance on how to efficiently and effectively execute their duties and responsibility. It was also established that security and preservation measures were not effective as cases of missing files, folios and torn folders were recorded. The study revealed that delays in access and use of records were a common feature. Further, it also found out that even though the Department of Corporate Services generated and used e-records, there were no strategies for their management. This was so because the use of ICTs for records management was non-existent in that there were few computers in the RMU and the majority of officers lacked functional ICT skills thus undermining effective service delivery. It was also apparent from the study that lack of and low levels of training were a hindrance to effective records management programme thus affecting the management of records for effective service delivery. In order to enhance service delivery, the study recommended that a regulatory framework for records management should be developed and implemented. It is also recommended that management together with the Records Manager should identify training needs for records users and records management personnel.

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