



THE ROLE OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT IN ENHANCING SERVICE DELIVERY IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate sound records management in Nairobi City County (N.C.C) in enhancing service delivery with the intention of making recommendations. The theoretical foundation for the study was based on systems theory. The study adopted the descriptive research design. The target population of the study included all the 22 records clerks in the various departments of Nairobi City County as well as the records manager. A census approach was used to select all the 22 records clerks staff while purposive sampling technique was used to select the records manager. The data collection tools were self-administered questionnaire and interview. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics with the aid of SPSS. Qualitative data was organized into broad themes and the content reported in a narrative form. The researcher collected from the respondents all the questionnaires which translated to a return rate of 100%. The results of the study established that although N.C.C had a records management policy, it was rarely complied with and there was no mechanism in place to monitor the staffs' compliance with it. The policy had also not been reviewed since its formulation. The study recommended that the records manager should establish a mechanism through which the records management policy can be complied with by the personnel.

Key Terms: Disposal, Document, Electronic record, Integrity, Preservation, Record, Records management, Records management policy, Records security, Records system

INTRODUCTION

Records are a critical source of information and knowledge. They are imperative in helping the government to make timely, relevant and informed decisions and as a result contributing to sustainable socio-economic and political development (Kemoni, 2007). A record is not simply characterized by its physical form, the information it contains or its age but by the essential characteristic of providing evidence of some particular activities.

Kennedy and Schauder (1998) noted that a records management policy is “the official charter for performing all records management functions”. They further point out that a records management policy has to be clear and should outline records management functions in relation to the organization’s records keeping requirements. As a standard for best practices in records management ISO 15489-1 (2001) specifies that institutions should “establish document, maintain and promulgate policies, procedures to guarantee that its business need for evidence and accountability and information about activities is met”. Kennedy and Schauder (1998) defined a records management manual as a “guide for the functions of a records management system within an organization”. This is because the manual provides information on how records management systems operate. A records management manual serves to standardize procedures, establishes responsibility, assists in personnel training, provides for updates on policies and procedures (Kennedy and Schauder, 1998).

The ISO 15489 Standards for Records Management point out that a policy sets vital governance plans for all records that are either produced or received in accordance with established best practices and principles. The records management policy is applicable to all information regardless of the formats. A records policy incorporates all stages

within the records lifecycle such as the creation/receipt, maintenance, use, appraisal, retention and disposition. 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 indicates 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 lifecycle easier.

However, despite the above findings from different researcher’s service delivery in county governments in Kenya has been slowed down due to improper usage of records formats and the fast trend onto which technology is changing, hence this study sought to establish clear formats and technologies of records that could be adopted in managing records at the county thus improving service delivery.

The Nairobi City County is a predecessor to the defunct City Council of Nairobi. It is a creation of the new Constitution of Kenya that was promulgated in 2010. The auspices under which Nairobi City County operates are The Devolved Governments Act and the Cities and Urban Areas Act. The Nairobi City County is mandated to provide wide ranging services to residents under its area of operation. These services relate to roads, water, environment, urban planning, urban renewal, housing and building services, education, youth and social services, public service management, commerce, tourism and co-operative services, health services among a host of other services. These are services that were being provided by the then defunct City Council as well as those that were decentralized from the national government. These services are provided by the following departments; Roads, Public works and Transport,

Environment, Energy and Water, Urban Planning and Lands, Urban Renewal, Housing and Building Services, Education, Youth and Social Services, Public Service Management, Commerce, Tourism and Co-operative sector, Health Services, Information Communication Technology and e-Government, Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Natural Resources, County Security, Compliance, Fire and Disaster Management.

Inadequate records management practices in the county offices may lead to fraud, delayed service delivery, multiplication of same services, lack of accountability, poor governance and poor decision making processes and this might lead to a failed county government. Musembi (2004) and Kemoni (2008) point out that poor records management practices have far reaching implications including poor and delayed service delivery. In the area of records management, new initiatives and advances in ICT present organizations with opportunities to deliver services more efficiently and effectively. Adding skilled, knowledgeable and adequate staff to ICT application could be one of the ways in which to offer effective and efficient public services. It was thus necessary to conduct a study in order to investigate the role of records management and how it enhances public service delivery within Nairobi City County in the context of existing records management practices.

Objectives of the Study

- Examine the records management policies and procedures applied for proper records management in Nairobi City County.
- Evaluate Use of ICTs in Facilitating Storage and Retrieval of Records

RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework

Systems Theory

This theory was coined by a biologist Bertalanffy (1968). He opined that “systems are open to and

interact with their environments and they acquire qualitatively new properties through emergence resulting in continual evolution”. He proposed that in a system, there are subsystems which are dependent and yet they are interdependent. When one system is affected, a ripple effect goes throughout the system. Every system is goal directed and has its outputs. The theory has three properties of input, process and output.

Record management and service delivery can be viewed through the lens of systems theory. In Nairobi City County, inputs are received from the environment and can be viewed as infrastructure, personnel and the records. The personnel consist of managers, middle level personnel and the subordinates. These three categories of personnel have different functions but all are aimed at achieving one goal. If the subordinate staffs fail to do their functions, the whole system would fail. So, each person is expected to report on duty in time, do what he/she is supposed to do at the right time and at the right place.

The process can be viewed as the various functions which take place within the work place. Personnel have specific duties to perform upon which they are answerable if not performed. These functions include supervision, monitoring, receiving information, creating files, retrieving files, issuing permits, and maintaining files throughout their life cycle. For all these functions to take place effectively there is communication among the personnel to enable efficient management among the managers and the subordinates. There is also communication among the personnel and the citizens who are being served. During communication, there is feedback from both parties which facilitates efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery. Communication can be verbal or written.

Output refers to the services that are delivered. If the records were poorly managed, kept and retrieved

then the service delivery would be poor. On the other hand, if the records were properly managed, kept and easily retrieved without wasting time, service delivery would be effective and efficient. These services are rendered to the citizens who are from the environment. Nairobi City County can thus be viewed as an organization which receives information from the environment, processes it and gives services as the output.

Records Lifecycle Model

The information lifecycle encompasses phases that range from record creation to record disposition through either designation of the record as permanent or controlled destruction process. The legal and regulatory requirements as well as the business function determine the length of time that a record is considered current, its retention, storage and retention and destruction if applicable. The lifecycle of records according to Yusof and Chell(2000) begins first during their organization, maintenance and active usage by the creators. This lifecycle continues during the record's additional storage period of dormant or infrequent use and ends when they are considered as archives and transferred to an institutional archive, or when they are destroyed after being declared as having no value.

All records, despite their purpose and form, pass through phases that are well defined (Newton, 2003). The lifecycle of a record simply refers to the logical steps movement of records from their creation, through use, storage, retention in active files, and transfer to inactive files and finally disposal (Gill, 1993). Effective and efficient public service delivery will be determined through whether records pass through all the phases of the lifecycle. In the event that the records do not pass through the entire lifecycle, then there would be challenges in public service. This model is applicable to this study as it would seek to establish whether the records at the

Nairobi City County passed through all the phases of the lifecycle which facilitate better service delivery.

Service Quality Gap Model

The service quality gap model is one concept that elicited much debate and interest in the field of scientific research given the difficulties of defining as well as measuring it (Wisniewski, 2001). Varying definitions of what service quality means has been discussed by different authors. According to Wisniewski(1996), "service quality is the extent to which a service meets customers' needs or expectations". The service gap model was developed by Parasuraman in 1985 in which he identified four gaps that include knowledge gap, design gap, performance gap and the communication gap. The fifth gap, which focused on customers' expectations and perceived service, was identified by (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1990). These gaps can be viewed as those that relate to the records management practices. The difference between what the records management practices provide and the customer expectations is the service being provided.

Despite the systems theory, records lifecycle model and the service quality gap model being relevant to this study, the researcher will adopt the systems theory. This theory is concrete in explaining the relationship between the records management and its influence on service delivery within Nairobi City County. The theory identifies the input factors that whose processing delivers the expectations of customers in terms of service.

The use of ICT in Facilitating Storage and Retrieval of Records

Information technology is a very powerful tool that can be utilized in smoothening access to records and information. In the event that the digital records cannot be identified, retrieved or used, or improperly stored or there being absence of linkage to related

paper documents, then ICT systems will fail (International Records Management Trust, 2011). It is therefore imperative that appropriate ICT systems for storage and retrieval of records are adopted in the course of service delivery. This is to ensure that there is efficiency in the services being offered. Unlike manual systems that could consume much time in their handling and processing, the use of ICT systems ensures that records services are only at a click of a button.

The Ministry of Public Service (2006) in Uganda in its survey noted that there was under developed records management a system. The records weren't being captured and neither being stored in an orderly manner that would be easy to retrieve. It was noted that even though there was recognition that efficient a records management system is critical for efficient service delivery, much attention had not been paid to ICT systems adoption. Muzaki and Okello-Obura (2015) conducted a study in Uganda to examine the records management practices as well as the adoption of ICTs management of records. The study adopted a survey research technique. The study established that the small and medium enterprise sector in Uganda had not adequately embraced the use of technology in the records management functions. As a result, the sector was experiencing inefficient service delivery. Inefficient services with regard to records in this era are a situation that ought to have been overtaken by time given the advancement in technology. Rexwhite, Doreen, and Akpovoka (2013) investigated the use of databases in records storage and retrieval in selected banks in Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was adopted and the data collected using questionnaire. The study established that parent bodies of the banks were the main source of funding for the use of databases in records management functions. The adoption of databases by the banks was due to the need to improve efficiency as the use of manual systems was costly. It was also found in the study that there were

adequate and skilled ICT staff who rendered services through the storage and retrieval of information. This means that with adoption of ICTs for records management to improve service delivery, there has to be personnel with requisite skills and knowledge. It will be interesting to find out the skills and knowledge of the personnel in the county government. The study also noted that there has to be upgrading of the databases for new innovations and technologies.

Records Management Policies and Procedures for Proper Records Management

Efficient and effective records management for service delivery requires that there be policies and procedures in place to achieve this. Policies and procedures provide the basis for performing records management work in achieving accountability in an organization (Shepherd, 2006). Complying with the established policies and best practices will be a pointer that an organization is being accountable in its operations. Accountability is a vital concept in ensuring service delivery in any institution whether public or private. According to Nolvuyoyo (2010), adherence to records management policies and procedures should be continuously monitored. In addition, the researcher also notes that these policies and procedures have to be reviewed annually (Nolvuyoyo, 2010). The procedures according to Nolvuyoyo (2010) should be simplified in order to easily guide the personnel of an organization on acceptable records management practices. Adoption of functional records management and policies according to Sebina (2006) promotes good governance. Good governance entails characteristics which include transparency among others. Good governance exists when citizens are engaged in meaningful ways during decision-making process and they have the privilege to information. This essentially means that all functions that citizens are entitled to should consider their unique role of participation in formulation of necessary procedures.

Sustaining good governance requires that good records management programs are introduced and practiced (Noluvuyo, 2010). To achieve this, citizens must be anchored in formulation of these services. Good governance is also an imperative aspect in service delivery.

Muemi and Rotich (2015) conducted a study on the influence of records management on service delivery in Lands Department, Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development in Kenya. The study sought to establish the influence of records management process on service delivery. The study noted that there were bureaucratic and long processes, practices and procedures that negatively on service delivery. This was despite the fact that there were ministry records policy and procedures that are guide the personnel in service delivery. Besides, the ministry records policy and procedures, there are government set standards for public service delivery. This situation can be attributed to lack of compliance to the standard procedures and policies. The researchers subsequently recommended that the records management processes in the department should be audited for compliance to the set policies and standard procedures. Absence of audit of the records management processes based on the policies and procedures is a possible cause of the poor service delivery in the lands department.

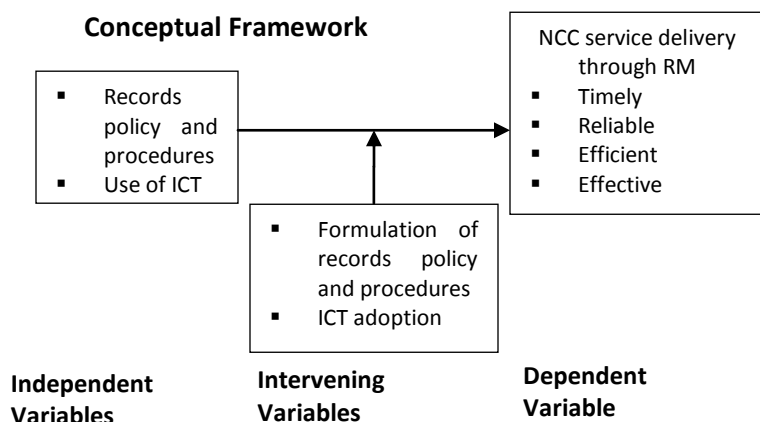


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

This research design entailed dealing with conditions, practices, structures or processes that apparently depict the patterns and trends that exist or sentiments held by people (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2009). This study adopted the use of descriptive research design because the data collection instruments generated data that could be analyzed using descriptive explanations. Records management is a phenomenon that requires description particularly with regard to its influence on service delivery. The researcher intended to explore, through a description of the views and attitudes of Nairobi City County staff, what exists pertaining to records management and in particular service delivery. Both quantitative and qualitative techniques were adopted in the study. Quantitative data was collected through the use of structured questions in the questionnaire whereas qualitative data were obtained from open ended questions and the interview schedule.

FINDINGS

Use of ICTs in Facilitating Storage and Retrieval of Records

The first objective of the study was to examine the use of ICTs in facilitating storage and retrieval of records at N.C.C. The respondents were asked whether there were records and information being captured, stored and retrieved through the use of ICTs in their departments. In their response, all the respondents indicated that there were records being captured, stored and retrieved through the use of ICTs. This was also confirmed by the records manager through the interview that was conducted. The fact that there were records in both the manual and electronic formats means that there were records that were being captured and being stored in electronic systems. Records and information can emanate from emails, Microsoft Office documents and databases that are in use in the various departments at N.C.C.

This finding implied that by virtue of records being captured and retrieved through the use of ICTs, there could be improved service delivery due to the effectiveness of ICTs. In as much as majority of the records were paper-based, there were those captured and retrieved through technological tools. The finding also meant that N.C.C could not be having advanced technological tools to help it manage majority of the records through ICTs. These findings concurred with that of Popoola (2003) in Nigeria who notes even though majority of records were being

captured manually, there were traces that were being managed electronically.

Services Offered to Clients through Use of ICTs

The researcher sought to know whether there services related to records management that were being offered through the use of ICTs. This was necessary because the offer of services through the use of ICTs was one of the ways through which service delivery could be improved. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Offer of Services to Clients through the Use of ICTs

Statement	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	13	59.09
No	2	9.09
Not Sure	7	31.82
Total	22	100

Table 1 showed that 13 (59.09%) of the respondents cited that there were services offered to clients through the use of ICTs whereas 2 (9.09%) cited that there were no services that were offered to clients through use of ICTs. In addition, 7 (31.82%) cited that they were not sure of whether there were services offered to clients through the use of ICTs. Through interview with the records manager, it was established that not all the departments at N.C.C were offering services through the use of ICTs. This therefore meant that in the departments where services were not being offered electronically, the clients had to seek them manually. Some of the basic services which in the view of the clients feel can be offered electronically means that they would consider the service delivery as inefficient.

adequately embraced the use of technology in service delivery and hence services were considered inefficient.

Top Management Support on the Use of ICTs for Records Management

The researcher sought to find out from the respondents on how they perceived the top management support on the use of ICTs for records management. This question was determined through the use of mean on a scale of 1-5 where 1 referred to very poor whereas 5 referred to excellent. The mean was calculated in a manner that a mean of below 2.5 would have meant poor whereas a mean above 2.5 would have meant good. The findings were presented in Table 2.

This finding concurs with that of the Ministry of Public Service (2006) in Uganda whose survey noted that there were underdeveloped records management systems and hence services through ICTs were limited. Similarly, Muzaki and Okello-Obura(2015) have their findings concurring with the present study where they noted that Ugandan SMEs had not

Table 2: Respondents' view on top management Support on the use of ICTs

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Top management support on use of ICTs	22	1.00	4.00	2.3182	.94548
Valid N	22				

Table 2 showed the mean as 2.3182. This meant that the top management on the use of ICTs was poor. It was evident that the top management support of N.C.C did not have the good will in supporting the management of records functions through the use of ICTs. It had to be noted that change comes about first from the good will of the top management. Whenever, the top management feels that a cause is not worthy the change then this derails any transformative agenda in an organization. This finding meant that for as long as the top management is not yet committed to making it possible for the records personnel to manage records through the use of ICTs, then the manual option would be available for a longer period. The interview with the records manager also confirmed that there was reluctance from the top management support to support the management of records through the use of ICTs. This finding was in agreement with that of Shepherd and Yeo (2003) who established that management commitment and support to the management of records through the use of ICTs was weak.

Records Management Policies and Procedures

The second objective of the study was to examine records management policies and policies applied for proper records management in N.C.C. The researcher sought to establish whether there was a records management policy at N.C.C. This was necessary because a records management policy is core to any records management functions. 15 (68.18%) of the respondents cited that there was a records management policy at N.C.C whereas 7 (31.82%) indicated that there was no records management policy. Through the interview with the records manager, it was noted that there was a records

management policy. This meant that some of the personnel were essentially not aware of the availability of the records management policy at N.C.C. Policies and procedures provide the basis for performing records management work in achieving accountability in an organization. The finding of this study was not in agreement with that of Ondieki (2014) who established that Kisii County has not implemented a records management program/policy. The availability of the records management policy implies that the personnel have a basis of doing standardized work and hence help in achieving accountability. Accountability in any service forms part of service delivery in an institution or organization.

The researcher sought to find out the frequency of the respondents' compliance with records management policies. This was to be answered by the respondents who indicated that there was a records management policy at N.C.C. The findings showed that 9 (60%) of the respondents rarely comply with the records management policy whereas 5 (33.33%) cited that they sometimes comply with the policy. In addition, 1 (6.67%) of the respondents indicated always complying with the records management policy. Through the interview with the records manager, it was revealed that N.C.C was yet to establish a mechanism through which compliance with records management policy could be monitored. Efficient service delivery demands total compliance to the records management policies as they set the performance standards. The finding therefore meant that the personnel could be missing bits of standards from the policy that could enhance service delivery. The finding also implied that adherence to the

records management policy was not continuously monitored.

This finding was in agreement with that of Noluvuyo (2010) who established that there was minimal monitoring of compliance to records management policy. Essentially, the findings meant that good governance which is an offshoot of functional records management policy would not be achieved. This is because transparency in the duties and responsibilities of the personnel would not be obvious. Good governance and transparency are ingredients pertinent to good service delivery in any institution.

The researcher sought to establish after how long N.C.C was taking to review the records management policy. This was necessary because regular review of records management policy was necessary to incorporate any new changes. This question was to be answered by the respondents who had indicated that there was a records management policy at N.C.C. All the respondents indicated that they were not sure after how long the records management policy was reviewed. Through the interview with the records manager, it was revealed that N.C.C had not yet reviewed the records management policy in place since the establishment of the county governance systems. A records management policy sets the practices when dealing with records and absence of review of the policy means that some of the practices could be overtaken by time. Noluvuyo (2010) suggests that records management policy should be reviewed annually.

Suggestions for Improving Service Delivery

The last objective of the study was to seek suggestions from the respondents on how Nairobi City County can improve public service delivery through records management. This was important as it would help form part of the recommendations for this study. This was an open ended question and the respondents were to give their own opinion. One

respondent stated that the top management should have the good will to appreciate change in the management of records by being committed and supporting the initiative. This was particularly with the efforts to digitize the management of the records at N.C.C. The researcher noted that the respondents needed a facilitated annual training on records management. This is as a way of enhancing capacity development.

Two respondents suggested that the public should be involved in some of the activities that take place at N.C.C. The public should be anchored in these activities or services provided by setting the standards. This suggestion was also supported by the Records Manager through the interview carried out in which training as well as commitment and support from the top management of N.C.C is required.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following were conclusions drawn. Based on the use of ICTs in facilitating storage and retrieval of records at N.C.C, the study concluded that the top management of N.C.C did not have the good will to facilitate full adoption of ICTs in the records management functions. Although few services were offered through technology, a huge chunk of the work was through paper work that was technically inefficient. The study also concluded the availability of records management without its compliance served no use since it was aimed at standardizing the practices of the records management work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommended that the top management of N.C.C should have the good will, commitment and support to ensure that digitization and automation of records management activities. In addition, the study recommended that the records manager should establish a mechanism through which the records management policy can be complied with by the personnel.

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