

An Evaluation of Records Management Practices at the Parliamentary Service Commission of Kenya (PSC)

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Abstract: Information in any organisation is the most basic and crucial asset. Recorded information requires effective and efficient management practices to ensure ease of access and retrieval. Management of records in public agencies is majorly characterized by poor management practices. This study was conceived to examine records management practices at the parliamentary Service Commission (PSC) and to suggest ways in which these practices can be enhanced to strengthen compliance with records management legislations, regulations, guidelines and procedures. The study adopted a qualitative research method using case study approach. The study population was 360 with a sample size of 279 involving policy makers, policy implementers and operational staff. Data was collected using a combination of pre-designed questionnaires and interview schedules. The study established that 64.5% of the respondents reported that PSC had not developed procedures for capturing, managing and storing electronic and paper records in a proper and secure manner as compared to 35.5% of respondents who did agree. Further, more than half (149 or 53.4%) of the respondents reported that PSC had not issued adequate guidance and procedures on capturing, using and keeping records to the staff. The pattern was similar in all categories of respondents. In light of these findings, it was concluded that there was lack of a framework to create good systems for better records management. The study recommended that the top management should be ready to embrace best record management practices. All levels of staff should be trained on record management skills, policies and procedures to enhance accountability.

Keywords: records management, archives, parliamentary service commission, Kenya

INTRODUCTION

Sound records management, constitutes a vital aspect of ensuring transparency and accountability in governance and effective administration. Government ministries, agencies and commissions in Kenya are required by law to adopt a systematic and organized approach in managing public records. Some of the major legislative instruments enacted for regulating management of public records are; The Public Archives and Documentation Service Act (Cap.19), The Public Procurement and Disposal Act and Regulations, The Records Disposal Act (Cap.14) and Government Financial Regulations and Procedures (Cap.23).

Effective and efficient administration of any organisation is dependent upon sound records management practices that ensure the right records are made available when needed. Records management programme is an integral part of any organisation's standard business operation. It ensures a smooth flow of information within and outside an organisation, leading to effective management that facilitates easy retrieval of readily identifiable and economically managed information. Shepherd [1] contends that records which are managed as part of an appropriate records

management programme help organisations in conducting operations in efficient and accountable manner, while maintaining consistency in service delivery, managerial decision-making and transparency of policy formulation, execution and management.

According to the International Standardization Organisation [2], records management is the field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records, including processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records. It includes activities such as setting policies and standards, assigning responsibilities and authorities, establishing and promulgating procedures and guidelines, providing a range of services relating to the management and use of records, designing, implementing and administering specialised systems for managing records.

From the perspective of the public sector in Kenya, records management is the application of systematic control of all recorded information in an organisation, which entails designing and directing a

programme aimed at achieving economy and efficiency in the creation, use, maintenance and disposal of records [3]. The National Archives and Records Service of South Africa on the other hand [4], states that, records management is a process of ensuring the proper creation, maintenance, use and disposal of records to achieve efficient, transparent and accountable governance.

In Kenya, apart from a few government agencies that have functional records management programmes, most organisations do not have a well-established practice in records management. Professional records management practice has been neglected for a long time. Many organisations have the notion that they can manage their records easily until they reach a point when retrieval and management of the records is no longer an easy task. It is then that they seek the help of professionally trained records management personnel.

Government agencies have faced unique challenges in managing public records in Kenya. Circular OP.39/2A of 14th April 1999 on cases of lost files and documents in the Public Service is a crucial manifestation of laxity and poor records management practices by government agencies. Mnjama [5] identifies some of the major problems that have led to the poor state of records keeping in Kenya. They include failure by top management to establish acceptable records management goals and practices, failure to hire competent personnel, lack of training in the areas of records and archives management; lack of financial and administrative support, lack of implementation of the recommendations on the management of public records and lack of automation of records and archives management systems. There is also lack of a cordial relationship between the Kenya National Archives and Documentation Services (KNADS) and other government agencies.

This study was conceived to analyze challenges facing records management practices at the Parliamentary Service Commission of Kenya. PSC is an independent government Commission established under article 127 of the new constitution of Kenya, 2010 to ensure smooth functioning of the Parliament of Kenya. It is vested with the mandate to provide services and facilities to ensure efficient and effective running of Parliament, constituting offices, appointing and supervising office holders, preparing annual estimates of expenditure, promoting welfare of members and staff and promoting ideals of parliamentary democracy. The Commission produces large amounts of information and consequently greater volumes of records in both paper

and electronic form. It is just realistic that it faces its share of challenges in managing public records. Nonetheless, no study has been conducted to understand and address such challenges.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used qualitative method as the researcher is interested in focusing on a specific issue on enhancing records management practices at the Parliamentary Service Commission. Qualitative research is a highly rewarding activity because it engages the researcher with things that matter. Qualitative research is a process of enquiry that draws data from the context in which the events occur in an attempt to describe the occurrence. Qualitative research method was used because it dealt with the process and not analysis of causal relationships between variables. The study, being qualitative in nature employed a descriptive approach to collect information by interviewing and administering questionnaires to sampled individuals. This is a method that is also recommended for collection of information about people's attitudes, opinions, educational or even social issues Kombo [6]. A qualitative approach was used in this study because it deploys a wide range of interconnected methods endeavouring always to obtain a clear perception of the subject matter.

This study employed a Case study research design. Orodho [7] defines research design as the structure of research. It is the "glue" that holds all elements of a study together. A case study research design allows a researcher to retain the holistic characteristics of real-life events while investigating empirical events. A design is used to structure the research and to show how all major parts of a study work together to address the central research questions.

Population of the Study

Ambira [8] states that study population as the complete set of individuals, cases or objects with some common observable characteristics. The population of this study consisted of: policy makers and implementers and technical personnel of various departments in the Parliamentary Service Commission (PSC) who create or use records in making decisions that affect service delivery at the PSC.

Table 1 below shows the study population, which includes 20 policy makers, 40 policy implementers and 300 technical personnel. Most of these people are creators, users or managers of records in the Parliamentary Service Commission of Kenya.

Table 1: Study Population

Category	Population
Policy Makers	20
Policy Implementers	40
Technical Personnel	300
Total	360

Sample of the Study

Stratified sampling was used in selection of the study sample. The study population was divided into three subcategories; policy makers, policy implementers and technical personnel. The policy makers' subcategory constituted of 20 respondents; policy implementers were 40 while technical personnel wing consisted of 300 respondents. Simple random technique

was employed in selecting a representative sample size from each subcategory. Using the table prepared by Krejcie and Morgan [9] on how to determine a sample size from a given population, the researcher was able to come up with a sample size to be used in the research as indicated in table 2 below.

Table-2: Study sample

Category	Population (N)	Sample(n)	Percentage
Policy Makers	20	19	95%
Policy Implementers	40	36	90%
Technical Personnel	300	169	56.3%
Total	360	224	62.2%

Research Instrument

One questionnaire was developed for the collection of data after reviewing literature and previous researches related to the study. In this study, the instruments for data collection were interview schedules and questionnaires.

Data Gathering Procedure

After pre-testing the questionnaire, the researcher obtained an introductory letter from graduate program coordination office. Later on, the researcher sought the permission to collect data from PSC. Data were collected through personal visit in which the researcher distributed the questionnaires amongst policy makers, implementers and technical staff and subsequently explained the nature and purpose of the study. In addition, an interview schedule was used to the purposively-picked sample of policy makers, policy implementers and technical personnel at the Parliamentary Service Commission of Kenya. The interview schedule for the respondents consisted of both open-ended and closed-ended questions.

Analysis of Data

Data collected was organized, coded, analyzed and summarized accordingly. Different statistical

techniques were employed in analysing data. Frequency distribution tables were used to present quantitative data obtained from questionnaires. The findings were presented through symbolic representations such as bar charts and figures. Tables were used to display numerical and other results. Data of a qualitative nature obtained from the interviews was content analysed, presented in the form of frequency distribution tables and figures.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 55 respondents were interviewed, with 36 respondents (12.9 %) being policy implementers and 19 respondents (6.8%) being policy makers. For the technical staff, questionnaires were dropped and later picked (self-administered), with 224 (80%) of the questionnaires being collected.

Records Management Practices

The researcher sought to know whether the Parliamentary Service Commission has developed procedures to capture, manage and store electronic and paper records in a proper and secure manner. The results are tabulated in table 3 below;

Table 3: Procedures to manage paper and electronic records

Developed Procedures in Place?	Technical Staff		Policy Implementers		Policy Makers		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	68	30.4	13	36.1	7	36.8	99	35.5
No	156	69.6	23	63.9	12	63.2	180	64.5
Total	224	100.0	36	100.0	19	100.0	279	100

A high proportion of respondents, 64.5% reported that the Parliamentary Service Commission had not yet developed procedures to capture, manage and store electronic and paper records in a proper and secure manner as compared to 99 or 35.5% of respondents who did agree. All three categories of respondents showed a similar pattern of saying that the PSC had not developed the procedures.

The researcher further sought to find out whether the Parliamentary Service Commission issued guidelines and procedures on the creation and capture of those records that are necessary to meet operational,

fiscal, legal and other requirements. Majority (64.5%) of the respondents said such procedures and guidelines did not exist while 35.5% of the respondents concurred that the guidelines and procedures were in place. Despite this, there was difference in opinion between technical staff, policy makers and policy implementers. Majority (72.3%) of the technical staff said such procedures and guidelines did not exist as opposed to policy makers and implementers who reported that the procedures and guidelines on the creation and capture of records had been created (66.7% and 68.4% respectively) as shown in below table.

Table 4: Procedures on the creation and capture of records

Procedures on the creation and capture of records?	Technical staff		Policy Implementers		Policy Makers		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	62	27.7	24	66.7	13	68.4	99	35.5
No	162	72.3	12	33.3	6	31.6	180	64.5
Total	224	100.0	36	100.0	19	100.0	279	100

Procedures and guidelines for record management are significant in ensuring conformity with an organisation's set policies. There are many benefits derived from the service offered through record management. The benefits can be attributed to the smoothness in the process of records flow within an organisation and it ensures that much information is available at the right time and place for the required need. However, to realise these benefits, an organisation should have an efficient and effective record management programme. Records management in an

organisation ought to be given an equal measure and weight like that which is given to other resources such as people, money and estate. The author further points out that effective records management necessitate other staff in an organisation to easily and better do their jobs.

Table 5 below shows summary results on whether the commission has issued adequate guidance and procedures to all staff on capturing, using, managing and keeping records created and received in the course of official business.

Table 5: Adequate guidance and procedures on capturing, using, managing and keeping records

Adequate guidance, procedures to all staff	Technical Staff		Policy Implementers		Policy Makers		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	107	47.8	15	41.7	8	42.1	130	46.6
No	117	52.2	21	58.3	11	57.9	149	53.4
Total	224	100.0	36	100.0	19	100.0	279	100.0

Table 5 above indicates that slightly more than half (149 or 53.4%) of the respondents reported that the Commission had not issued adequate guidance and procedures on capturing, using and keeping records to the staff. The pattern was similar in all categories of respondents.

The results exhibit a poor records management practice. One of the best records management practices requires that staff should be issued with adequate

guidance and procedures on capturing, using and keeping records for sound management of records. This is in conformity with the idea espoused Kanzi [10] that sound record management practices require a record manager appointed from among the staff by the authority of an organisation. The higher authority ought to be given the mandate to oversee adherence to created guidelines and procedures governing record management. Kanzi [10] advises that sound records management should ensure continuous adherence of

guidelines and procedures set in conformity to the organisation's policies and further sets a mechanism on how monitoring and evaluation should be effected. In addition, guidelines and procedures to employees help staff in classifying records to ensure easy retrieval and disposal.

The researcher sought to know the professional levels of the users and creators of records at the PSC. The study revealed that just a fraction of the whole PSC personnel has professional skills. By training managers and staff on records management will give them ability to possess aptitudes that will help them carry out their functions properly. Further, study results showed that (68%) of the technical staff had not attended any training related to records management while only 32% of the respondents had a certificate, diploma or degree level of education. In particular, 30% have a certificate qualification, while diploma and degree qualification

were 1% each. ISO 15489 [2] requires organisations to set up programmes for training on record management which can be done in collaboration with external bodies. Such trainings would empower staff with requisite skills for managing records both manually or electronically.

Respondents were asked whether the Parliamentary Service Commission had put in place adequate security measures to protect records from unauthorised access and to prevent unauthorised and accidental loss or destruction of records. Table 6 shows that a high proportion (197 or 70.6%) of the respondents reported that the PSC had not put in place adequate security measures to protect records from unauthorised access and preventing unauthorised and accidental loss or destruction while 82 or 29.4% of the respondents said the security measures were in place.

Table 6: Security Measures on record Management

Security Measures in place	Technical staff		Policy Implementers		Policy Makers		Total	
	n	%	n	%	N	%	n	%
Yes	62	27.7	15	41.7	5	26.3	82	29.4
No	162	72.3	21	58.3	14	73.7	197	70.6
Total	224	100.0	36	100.0	19	100.0	279	100

Access of some of the records which are very sensitive and vital requires permission or authorization from those who have access rights because these records are under a prescribed set of conditions.

The researcher further sought to know whether the PSC had a records management manual in place to guide the management of records. Table 7 below shows

that a high proportion (226 or 81%) of the respondents said there were no such manual. The majority of this category of respondents (212 or 94.7%) was technical staff. However, this was contrary to opinion of policy implementers and policy makers who said that such manual were in place. This is an indication that the technical staffers who are key in record creating were, perhaps, not aware that such a manual existed.

Table 7: Records Management Manual in Place for the Guidance of Managing Records

Manual in place	Technical Staff		Policy Implementers		Policy Makers		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	12	5.4	28	77.8	13	68.4	53	19.0
No	212	94.7	8	22.2	6	31.6	226	81.0
Total	224	100.0	36	100.0	19	100	279	100.0

Respondents who revealed that there were such manuals were asked to state the aspects covered in

their records management manual. Figure 1 below shows the results.

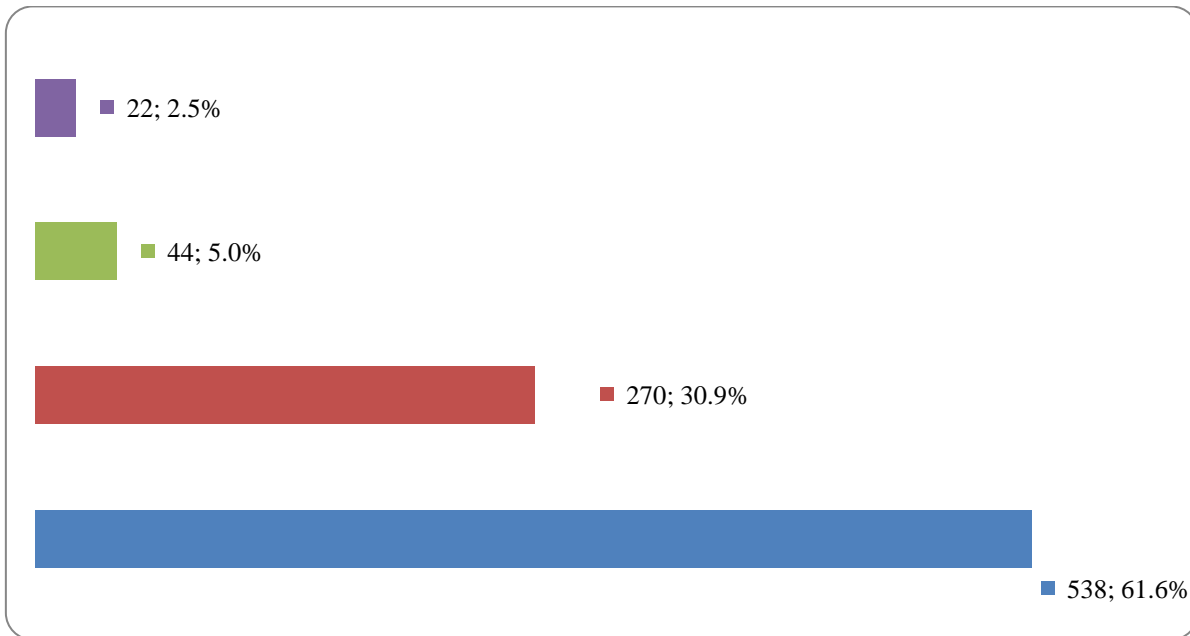


Fig-1: Aspects covered in the record management manual

Most of the respondents (538 or 61.6%) said that records management manual covers best record keeping practices followed by (270 or 30.9%) who indicated reference to record management standards. International Organization for Standardization (ISO 15489) [2] is of the perspective that an approach for making records is increasingly essential. It ought to stipulate the necessities for capturing, registering, classifying, retaining, storing, tracking, accessing and disposing of records. Organisations make and keep records so that assigned users can utilise them as appropriate. Any records management framework that

captures records must have frameworks that permit clients to utilise the records altogether [12].

Records Management Legislation

Respondents were asked to state whether there were pieces of legislation and regulations that guide the management of records at Parliamentary Service Commission of Kenya. Table 8 shows that more than half (159 or 57%) of the respondents said that such regulations existed as opposed to 120 or 43% of the respondents.

Table 8: Legislation and guidelines for record management at P.S.C

Are there Legislation and guidelines	Technical staff		Policy implementers		Policy makers		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	122	54.5	23	63.9	14	73.7	159	57.0
No	102	45.5	13	36.1	5	26.3	120	43.0
Total	224	100.0	36	100.0	19	100.0	279	100.0

A similar pattern was reflected across all categories of respondents where a high proportion of technical staff, policy implementers and policy makers (122 or 54.5%; 23 or 63.9%; 14 or 73.7%, respectively) agreed that requisite legislation or regulations were in place.

The researcher further sought to know whether the legislation clearly covered the management of records in both electronic and paper formats. More than

two-thirds (194 or 69.5%) of the respondents said that existing legislation and guidelines on the management of records did not cover the management of records both in electronic and paper formats while 85 or 30.5% of the respondents had contrary opinion. This is an indication that although there are pieces of legislation on record management, the same are inadequate or insufficient to be applied in record management practice.

Table 9: Coverage of Legislation on Management of Records

Legislation Cover management of record	Technical staff		Policy implementers		Policy makers		Total	
	n	%	n	%	N	%	n	%
Yes	69	30.8	11	30.6	5	26.3	85	30.5
No	155	69.2	25	69.4	14	73.7	194	69.5
Total	224	100.0	36	100.0	19	100.0	279	100.0

In relation to management of government records, Parer [16] terms government records as most essential. Therefore, poor records management translates into ineffective, non-transparent government that cannot be accountable to its citizens. The author observes that the rights of citizens can be well taken care of having sound records management practices in place. Therefore, the Commission needs to have a good plan for records management in order to safeguard government records. Further, it is crucial to ensure appropriate legislation for managing and preserving government records and archives for accountability are enacted. Records and archives legislation are an essential component of the wider legislative framework for an accountable and effective government. They entrench the requisite framework that enables a national records and archives service to operate with the authority in its dealings with other agencies of the State. Such legislation should establish oversight of record

management practices and functions by independent agencies or actors.

Suggestions on Enhancing Records Management Practices

When respondents were asked to state some of the suggestions that should be effected to enhance records management practices, most of them (150 or 28.8%) stated that there was need for proper planning followed by regular maintenance and proper security for records to safeguard information (95 or 18.1%) as shown in Table 10. The table shows other suggestions such as making sure that users are equipped with proper skills, involving all staff in records management process, training, allocation and assigning highly qualified ICT RMO personnel to monitor and manage records, purchase of modern equipment and software and sufficient budget and funding, among other suggestions.

Table 10: Respondents' suggestions on enhancing records management practices

Suggestions	Frequency	Percentage
Proper planning	150	28.6
Regular maintenance and proper security for records to safeguard information	95	18.1
Making sure that users are equipped with proper skills	63	12.0
Involving all staff in record management process	51	9.7
Training	49	9.4
Allocation and assigning highly qualified ICT&RMO personnel to monitor and manage.	47	9.0
Purchase of the current hardware and software and provision of good ICT infrastructure	43	8.2
Sufficient budget and funding	26	5.0

CONCLUSION

Poor records management practices have negative consequences on an organisation's performance. Records and information are the lifeblood of any organisation. Poor records management hinders good governance leading to poor management, corruption, fraud, bad decision-making, wastage of resources, among others challenges. Good records management practices are therefore crucial in any organisation. There is dire need to have a records management system approved by top management of an organisation and which must be implemented in accordance with best practice in the profession. Its elements such as policies, guidelines and procedures must be clearly stated and understood by all users of the

records in the organisation and those managing those records. The system must be effective for both paper and electronic records management and must include disaster management plan that includes handling of vital records. The system or programme must clearly outline responsibilities of each records management staff, required skills and competencies for every records management position. The primary function of the programme must be to facilitate the free flow of information and to ensure that information is available where and when it is needed. Any weaknesses in government record keeping have the effect of lowering of the general standard of service offered to clients and the public in general.

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