

The Role of Tertiary Education Institutions in the Development of the Records and Archives Management Discipline in Zimbabwe

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Abstract: *This work sought to explore the role of tertiary education institutions in the development of the records and archives management discipline in Zimbabwe. The paper assessed the contributions made by the few tertiary institutions offering records management training, the relevance of their curricula in the country and the professional status of records and archives professionals in industry and society as well as the challenges faced by tertiary education institutions in offering the programme. Polytechnic colleges currently offer the National Certificate, National Diploma and Higher National Diploma, while universities offer bachelors' degrees and only one university offers a master's degree. The study made use of the survey research design where data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. It was discovered that more still needed to be done in opening up training opportunities for information professionals as currently only 3 out of 15 universities and 5 out of 7 polytechnic colleges in Zimbabwe offer records management training. Restricted capacity has a negative impact on institutions already offering the programme as well as on would-be trainees.*

Keywords: *Education and training, records management training, tertiary education institutions, Zimbabwe.*

1.0 Introduction

Institutions of higher learning today face intense competitive pressures as they are required to meet increased expectations of different stakeholders. They are facing new challenges as they strive to build their capacity through structural training and development programmes that are tailor-made to meet the current skills requirements. However, they need to identify the characteristics of knowledge and skills required by individuals that enable them to undertake their duties and responsibilities effectively. So in their curriculum, they should cover all aspects of records management performance and balance theory and practice. According to Ngulube (2001) education and training are concerned with the development of knowledge, skills and attributes necessary for individuals to live meaningfully and contribute positively to society.

Training of records and archives personnel in Zimbabwe is aimed at those who want to make a career in the field and is linked to institutions of higher learning, such as polytechnic colleges and universities. Polytechnics and other private colleges offer Higher Education Examination Council (HEXCO) courses from National Certificate (NC), National Diploma (ND) to Higher National Diploma (HND), while universities offer bachelors' and a master's degree. Polytechnic colleges offering records management programmes include Harare, Bulawayo, Gweru, Masvingo and Kwekwe. Only three universities currently offer such training at degree level and these include the National University of Science and Technology (NUST), Midlands State University (MSU) and Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU). Qualifications offered by polytechnic and private colleges equip personnel to work in registries, while universities train records managers and archivists highly needed by the private sector, the National Archives of Zimbabwe and other public bodies.

Chisita (2009) notes that the demand for records management officers was triggered by the government's public service professionalization programme, which gave colleges and universities opportunities to offer training programmes in records management and archives administration.

NUST is targeting students coming from 'Advanced Level with university entry points. ZOU is targeting those already working in registries, records centres and archives with either national certificate, diploma or higher national diploma, in an open and distance learning mode. Before the introduction of the Bachelor of Science Honours in Records and Archives Management, the National Archives of Zimbabwe relied on Bachelor of Arts History graduates from University of Zimbabwe as archivists. These graduates would require further training in records and archives management, forcing the institution to send them outside the country for training, an exercise which was very expensive to the country. The training of records and archives management at certificate and national diploma levels started in the Department of Library and Information Science at Harare Polytechnic in 1998.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Records management is central to the success of contemporary business organizations as it brings forth accountability, transparency and quick and more informed decision making. Such brings competitive advantage in contemporary business circles in an era of cut-throat competition, mass information and great uncertainty. However, the provision of records management education and training is minimal in Zimbabwe. Very few tertiary institutions have taken the lead in offering records management education and training, resulting in training institutions, would-be trainees and professionals in the field facing a number of challenges.

1.3 Aim and objectives of the study

The study aimed to explore the role of training institutions in the development of records and archives management as a discipline in Zimbabwe. This aim was tackled under the following objectives:

- To assess the origins and development of records management education and training in Zimbabwe.
- To analyze the breadth and depth of records management curricula as relevant to the needs and expectations of industry and society.
- To assess the professional status of records and archives management graduates.
- To establish challenges tertiary institutions face in offering records management training in the background of restricted offering capacity and a shrinking economy.

1.4 Significance of the study

This study is set to benefit records management training institutions as it opens the horizons upon which they can base their curricula in line with the expectations of industry and society. Challenges discussed in this study will also help such colleges and universities to tackle day to day operational and administrative issues from a more informed position. Students, would-be-students and professionals in records management will also benefit from the study as the study will entice tertiary institutions to expand their curricula and levels of study and at the same time challenging other tertiary institutions to open up avenues for training in the discipline.

2.0 Literature review

2.1 Historical development of archives and records management education

The archival discipline developed around 1902 as the need for formal training and examination for archivists had been recognized when the report on Local Records recommended that custodians of local archives be trained (Shepherd, 2009). The archives and records management profession requires a complex knowledge base of theory and intellectual technique to underpin its special expertise (Shepherd 2004). According to Wilensky (1964), professional work is technical and based on systematic knowledge and training. Cox (2001) also says that before the formal infrastructure in the mid 1980s, the archival profession focused on short-term training in basic archival work.

Katuu (2009) also notes that training of records and archives professionals within Sub-Sahara Africa has a history of about five decades, whereas in Europe professional development of archivists has been in existence since the 17th century. He further notes that the most significant period in the establishment of archival and records management in sub-Saharan Africa started in the 1970s when the International Council of Archives and UNESCO were involved in

establishing regional training centres to cater for the training needs of archivists in sub-Saharan Africa, one for Francophone countries in Senegal in 1971 and another for Anglophone countries in Ghana in 1975.

2.2 Importance of Records and archives management education and training

According to Yusof and Chell (1998), education and training are fundamental to developing life-long skills and expertise. As Ndenje-Sichalwe (2010) puts it, education is necessary for individuals to live meaningfully and to contribute positively to society. She further argues that while education will introduce the learners to the theory and principles underpinning professional practice in the discipline, training focuses on acquisition of specific skills and competencies necessary in the workplace as specialized knowledge is transmitted in the process. Education and training in records and archives management enables personnel to acquire new skills, knowledge and to gain confidence in their work (Wamukoya, 2000). Ngoepe (2011) holds that it is generally accepted that education plays an important role in updating knowledge and skills. Chaterera (2013) holds that the quality of a records management programme is directly related to the quality of the personnel involved. Katuu (2009) who emphasized the need for developing countries to prioritize the education and training of information management professionals and who lamented the loss of qualified public registry staff to the private sector commented that it was impossible to build real skills without building the basis of thinking and that basis of thinking was grounded in education. Such education can be acquired through workshops, professional seminars and college and university courses.

Higher education institutions are always seen to play a key role in delivering the knowledge requirements for development. Palmer (2013) holds that education in higher institutions of learning shape the world of tomorrow and equips individuals and societies with the skills, perspectives, knowledge and values to live and work in a sustainable manner. Cloete (2011) opines that higher education institutions' unique contribution to development is via knowledge, that is transmitting knowledge to individuals who will go out into the labour market and contribute to society in a variety of ways such as teaching and producing and disseminating knowledge that can lead to innovation or be applied to the problems of society and the economy. Universities and colleges in Zimbabwe as knowledge producing institutions are also expected to make a contribution to research and development.

2.3 Records and archives education and training in the ESARBICA: Selected case studies

Ngulube (2001) opines that education and training of records and archives personnel are the fundamental underpinnings for improving the management of records and archives in Anglophone Africa. He further postulates that no records manager or archivist worth their salt can claim to be professionals without the core knowledge of records and archives management

training. However, Mnjama (1996) notes that most Eastern and Southern African countries have paid little attention to the training of archivists and records managers. In the same vein, Mazikana (1998) noted that it had taken a long time to make provision for the proper management of the records with specifically designated records managers. Mazikana bemoaned a situation where records were managed by lower level staff, for example, by personnel with only four years secondary schooling, a situation that gave the records profession low profile and misguided allocation of resources.

Sturges (2000) argues that poor records management was one of the major causes of inefficiency and the implementation of policies that lacked continuity by many governments in Africa. However, Ngulube (2001) opines that records management practices hinges on records managers having necessary skills and knowledge to deal with the records at every stage of their use in society. He further propounds that in the past, poor records management systems have been blamed for uninformed decision-making processes, dubious policies, poor governance, destruction of corporate and societal documentary memory and failure to verify actions and performance of organizations. In this regard, it is evident that training of records and archives personnel becomes a key to efficiency, effectiveness and continuity in all organizations.

In Botswana, Mnjama (2002) holds that the training of library and information studies professionals began in 1979, while that of archivists and records managers at certificate and diploma levels began in 1995, with the Post-Graduate and Masters programmes coming on board in 2002. Despite this, Mnjama (2002) still feels little attention has been paid to post-graduate records and archival management studies in Africa, a gap that was usually plugged by the University College London and Liverpool University, in universities in Australia and Canada.

In Namibia, where records management used to be in the hands of secondary school leavers, Nengomasha (2006) notes that degree level records education was introduced as information studies programme at the University of Namibia in 1995. In Kenya, training of archivists at certificate and diploma levels in archives and records management dates back to 1979 when the course was first offered at the Kenyan Polytechnic, and later at Sigalagala Polytechnic, the School of Professional Studies in Nairobi and a four-year degree programme is offered at the Faculty of Information Sciences at the Moi University (Mnjama:2005). Ndenje-Sichalwe (2010) notes that in Tanzania, records management training for registry personnel was conducted at the Tanzania Public Service College and the School of Library, Archives and Documentation Studies where certificates and diplomas were awarded. At degree level, the University of Dar es Salaam offers the Masters programme in Information studies where records management is taught as one among other components of the Management of Library, Archives and Information Systems which is a compulsory subject.

Metrofile (2007) notes that there were no formal academic training programme specifically designed for records management in South Africa, resulting in records management modules being taught as part of part of degrees and diplomas in Information Science/Studies. The first formal records qualification was the National Diploma in Archival Science, which was introduced in 1950 (Vos,1992). Abbot (2001) notes that in the 1990s, many South African universities embraced records and archives training at bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree levels, among them being the University of KwaZulu-Natal, University of the Witwatersrand (1999), University of South Africa (2000) and the University of Johannesburg.

3.0 Research methodology

The study made use of the survey research design. This research design was used because with it, large amounts of data can be obtained. Data were collected using questionnaires and interviews. Six Programme Co-ordinators or lecturers-in-charge of records management from 3 universities (Zimbabwe Open University, Midlands State University, National University of Science and Technology) and 5 polytechnic lecturers in Harare, Bulawayo, Kwekwe, Masvingo and Gweru were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. The 3 universities and the 5 Polytechnics were purposively selected as they were the only institutions offering records management courses and modules in records management in the case of Midlands State University. Twenty records management students were randomly selected from the institutions under study. A Snow-ball sampling technique was also used to select 20 records management professionals who are already employed in various sectors of the economy and completed structured questionnaires. Data were analyzed through thematic content analysis. The themes centred on the four objectives that the study sought to examine. Numbers, frequencies and percentages were used to analyze data.

4.0 Findings of the study

4.1 Origins and development of records management training in Zimbabwe

According to one informant, records management came as an off-shoot from the Library and Information Science course at Harare Polytechnic in 1997. From 1997, the likes of Munyengeterwa teamed with archivists from the NAZ, for example, Ngulube, Mhlanga, Chabikwa and Moyo to teach the National Certificate in Records Management and Information Science. Since NAZ archivists worked full time at the NAZ, they therefore taught at Harare Polytechnic on part-time basis in the evenings, between 5 and 7 from Monday to Friday. This marked the beginnings of the professionalization of Records Management in Zimbabwe. Prior to the National Certificate qualification, records officers were regarded as non-professionals, who only received in-house training from Highlands Training Centre, where they were schooled in Registry Procedures, Classifiers, Management Development I and II. From these humble

beginnings, the Records Management curricula was regularized and expanded. Higher qualifications were adopted namely the ND and HND. More polytechnic colleges began to teach Records Management, among them being Bulawayo, Masvingo and Gweru.

According to one informant, Records Management training spread to degree level when NUST introduced the Bachelor of Science degree in Records and Archives Management in 2004, while the MSU introduced the Bachelor of Arts in Archaeology, Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies in 2005 and ZOU the Bachelor of Science in Records and Archives Management in 2009. Another informant added that NUST led the pack in offering Records Management training since it had a post-graduate Records Management qualification in the mould of the Master of Philosophy in Records and Archives Management, and had also made great strides towards introducing the Master of Science in Records and Archives Management. An informant from ZOU also claimed the open distance learning institution had made in-roads into introducing the Master of Science in Records and Knowledge Management.

4.2 Breadth and depth of Records Management training in Zimbabwe

Tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe offer Records Management courses ranging from the Hexco National Certificate to the Master of Philosophy degree. Table 1 below shows the qualifications, the institutions and the thrust of their instruction.

Table 1: Qualifications offered, thrust of instruction and expected outcome

Qualification	Tertiary institution	Thrust of instruction	Expected outcome
National Certificate	Harare, Bulawayo, Gweru, Masvingo, Kwekwe Polytechnics	Appreciation of the records management function Management of current and semi-records Registry procedures and operations	Records Management Assistant Information Assistant
National Diploma	Harare, Bulawayo, Gweru, Masvingo, Kwekwe Polytechnics	Management of current and semi-current records Information management	Records Management Assistant Information Assistant
Higher National Diploma	Harare, Bulawayo, Kwekwe Polytechnics	Management of current, semi and non-current records including e-records Information management	Records management supervisors Information Officers
B.A. Archaeology, Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies	Midlands State University	Archival administration Records management Information management	Archivists Records managers Information managers
BSc Records and Archives	NUST and ZOU	Records management Archival administration	Archivists Records managers

Management		Electronic records management Knowledge management	Information managers Knowledge managers
MPhil. Records and Archives Management	NUST	Research degree on aspects of records, information and knowledge management	Researchers College and university lecturers

While NUST's programme has 28 modules, ZOU's has 25. And MSU has 6 records management modules out of 28 modules offered in their programme. In addition, all the three programmes offer work related learning in their third years. The National Certificate offered by polytechnic colleges comprise of 5 core records management modules, while the diploma and the higher diploma have 6 core modules. The number of core records management modules in the programmes speaks volumes about the seriousness of tertiary institutions in developing records management as a professional discipline in Zimbabwe. Each programme seeks to instill in graduates competencies to operate at different levels, ranging from operative, supervisory, middle and top management levels. The Master of Philosophy offered by NUST equips college and university lecturers with the necessary arsenal to become researchers of repute and at the same time laying the foundations for doctoral studies.

4.3 Professional status of Records Management professionals

Responses obtained from the three groups of respondents showed that records management graduates had varying degrees of professional status ascribed to them. Table 2 shows how university and college lecturers and students viewed the professional status of records management professionals in Zimbabwe.

Table 2: Informants' perceptions about the status of Records Management professionals

Respondents	Perceptions	Frequency
University programme coordinators	Professionals in their own right	4
	Semi-professionals	2
Polytechnic Lecturers' In Charge	Low profile professionals	2
	Professionals of repute	3
Records Management students	Para-professionals	15
	Professionals of repute	5

Four university lecturers (67 %), 3 polytechnic lecturers (60 %) and 5 students (25 %) held that records management graduates were professionals of repute. Most students (75 %) had a negative view of the academic path they are treading. Unlike lecturers, students regarded records

management as a low profile profession owing to limited employment opportunities currently bedeviling the profession in Zimbabwe. Most lecturers dismissed students' perceptions as myopic, arguing that students failed to see that it was not only the records management profession which was under siege on the local job market, but all professions and trades.

4.4 Challenges facing Records Management tertiary institutions

Like any discipline that is offered at local tertiary institutions, records management has its fair share of challenges. These challenges are captured on Table 3 below.

Table 3: Challenges facing records management-offering tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe

Respondents	Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Polytechnic lecturers	Shortage of lecturers	3	27
	Shortage of students enrolling	2	18
	Curricula lacks depth	2	18
	Programme has low profile	3	27
	Lack of post-graduate training	1	9
Students	Programme has low profile	5	25
	Lack of related work placement	6	30
	Shortage of local textbooks	2	10
	Lack of employment opportunities	7	35

Shortage of lecturers was cited by 1 Polytechnic lecturer and 2 university lecturers. At one Polytechnic, there were only 2 lecturers who taught 58 students at NC and ND levels. The same lecturers also taught NC Library and Information Science at NC level. One informant stated that shortage of lecturing staff was the major reason for the continued still-birth of the stand-alone records management bachelor programme at MSU and the masters' programme at ZOU.

Shortage of students who enrolled for the NC and ND programmes at Polytechnics was also a cause for concern. According to one informant, one polytechnic was on the brink of shelving the records management programme due to shortage of students enrolling into the programme. The informant further claimed that the programme suffered an onslaught from the misguided and prejudicial rational that records management was a female domain. Some 25 % of students expressed that the programme was lowly regarded in social circles, both at polytechnics and universities, thus explaining why enrolment figures were sometimes lower than in other disciplines. Other challenges cited were curricula that lacked depth (cited by 2 lecturers from the

MSU), lack of post-graduate training, lack of related work placement and shortage of local textbooks.

5.0 Discussion of findings

Tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe have revolutionized the discipline of records management in a number of ways. Firstly, it has professionalized the discipline as well as its personnel. Prior to the introduction of the NC at Polytechnics, records management was regarded as a para-profession. Realizing the anomaly, the Civil Service Commission of Zimbabwe professionalized records management in 1998 when all administrative and professional offices were to be manned by professionally qualified personnel (Musingafi, 2007). Under the new system, one needed to have at least a diploma in the relevant area to become an assistant or officer and a degree to become an officer or manager.

Secondly, it has armed records and archives personnel with skills necessary to operate at different levels within the organization. Different programmes have different instruction thrusts. However, all the programmes have something in common as they seek to equip records personnel with the necessary skills to manage records. This is supported by Ngulube (2001) who argues that records and archives curricula of many African countries dwell on the foundations, principles, and practices of records management, with special attention focusing on identification and acquisition of records and archives, intellectual control over records and archives, physical control over records and archives and access to records and archives.

Tertiary education institutions play an indispensable role in society. Palmer (2013) holds that education in higher institutions of learning shape the world of tomorrow and equips individuals and societies with the skills, perspectives, knowledge and values to live and work in a sustainable manner. Cloete (2011) opines that higher education institutions' unique contribution to development is via knowledge, that is transmitting knowledge to individuals who will go out into the labour market and contribute to society in a variety of ways such as teaching and producing and disseminating knowledge that can lead to innovation or be applied to the problems of society and the economy.

Findings from this study showed that tertiary education institutions in Zimbabwe lagged their peers in Southern Africa behind in offering records and archives management as an academic programme. This arises from the fact that records management was introduced at NC level in 1998 and at degree level in 2004. However, such lateness is not only unique to Zimbabwe. Mnjama (1996) notes that most Eastern and Southern African countries have paid little attention to the training of archivists and records managers, as they had taken long time to make provision for the proper training of records personnel. This has resulted in Botswana introducing records and archives training at certificate and diploma levels in 1995 and the Post-Graduate and Masters

programmes in 2002 (Mnjama, 2002). Namibia introduced the degree programme at the University of Namibia in 1995 (Nengomasha, 2006), Kenya coming on board in 1979 (Mnjama, 2005) and South Africa at diploma level in 1950 (Vos, 1992) and at degree level in the 1990s (Abbot, 2001). While only 3 out of 15 universities in Zimbabwe offer degree training in records management, only NUST had a post-graduate programme.

The study also revealed that the records management programme continued to fight social prejudice, labeling and stigma even in the post-professionalization era. A situation where the records management programme has been looked down upon in social circles emanate from the history of the profession where lowly-educated personnel were roped in as records managers. Mazikana (1998) notes that earlier on, records staff were personnel at the lower echelons of the organizational strata, for example, personnel who only had four years of secondary school education. Mazikana further opines that such prejudices also affected how resources were allocated in organizations.

6.0 Summary of role played by tertiary institutions

- Turned Records Management from a mere discipline to a professional recognized discipline in Zimbabwe, regionally and internationally.
- Turned records management graduates from para-professionals to full-fledged professionals, as is the case with other professionals in other fields like accounting, engineering and teaching.
- Has produced graduates who operate at all levels within the organization, from the shop-floor to strategic management levels.
- Has changed the face of records management in public and private institutions, enabling organizations to manage records properly and more professionally.
- Has brought competitive advantage to organizations in this age of mass information, globalization and cut-throat competition.
- Has produced academics of repute in tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe and the region.

7.0 Conclusion

The study has shown that tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe have revolutionised the discipline of records and archives management. The institutions have made records personnel renowned and respected professionals. They have also equipped records management personnel with skills necessary to operate at various levels within the organizational hierarchy. Unfortunately, age-old social prejudices, restricted capacity and shortage of resources still haunt tertiary education institutions in the course of teaching records and archives management. Such an anomaly needs urgent redress in order to enable citizens of Zimbabwe to fully benefit from the curricula that has been brought at their disposal.

8.0 Recommendations

The study prescribes the following recommendations:

- More universities need to introduce records and archives management in their curricular.
- There is need to expand post-graduate training in records and archives management, for example, by introducing post-graduate diplomas, taught and research masters' degrees as well as doctorate degrees.
- Society needs to change its perception of records management as a profession and grant the same status onto it as it does to other professions like teaching, engineering and medicine.
- Tertiary institution authorities need to mobilize adequate resources to the records and archives management realm, as is the case with other departments within the institution. These include lecturers, textbooks and tuition for research or further study.

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