Managing Records in Higher Education Institutions in Uganda: Can Human Resource Policies Salvage the Situation?

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As governance issues take centre stage in the management of Educational Institutions, the management of students' records becomes imperative in the improvement of services offered in Higher Educational Institutions (HEI's) in Uganda. Proper records management underpins policy formulation, decision making, protects interests of organization, and protects rights of employers and students in addition to helping Institutions conduct business and deliver services in a consistent and equitable manner. This study cross sectional in nature investigated the impact of human resource policies on the management of records in HEI's in Uganda. Results confirmed a significant relationship between staff orientation and records disposal and records maintenance. Furthermore recruitment and specifically head hunting were found to have a positive effect on records creation, records maintenance and records disposal. Surprisingly financial & non financial rewards had no significant effect on records management. The study recommends a review of policies on recruitment in order to focus more on head hunting staff with requisite knowledge and experience and to put a lot of emphasis on orientating records staff in order to improve the way records are managed in HEI's in Uganda.

1. Introduction

Every organization needs to document its activities and this can only be achieved by creating records. Records contain information relating to organisations' activities captured in a reproducible form during the organizations' course of administration or execution in functions. Records demonstrate and confirm the decisions taken, the actions carried out and the results of such actions, they support policy formulation and management decision making, protect the interests of the organization, the rights of employers, clients and citizens, and help the organization to conduct its business and deliver its services in consistent and equitable ways (Shepherd 2006) . Beyond the organization that created them, records play many roles in the wider community (Wamukoya 2000).

By providing evidence of the conduct of public administration, records support public accountability and are an essential ingredient in modern democracy (Thurston 1998, Shepherd 2006); as archives, they help transmit today knowledge and experience to future generations and form a valuable part of a cultural heritage. (Wamukoya 2000). Records in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) contain information that is useful in running the education business in an efficient and effective manner, in delivering services consistently, in supporting all management decisions and ensuring continuity of policy implementation (Hare 2004, Nankya & Muhenda 2009; Muhenda

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& Lwanga, 2011). This is in line with Ban & Brown (1998) who observed that records management is a fundamental activity of public administration without which there would be no rule of law and no accountability. However, the way records are managed in HEI's in Uganda is an area of growing concern and justifies investigation.

Despite the value of information to sound administration, records in many developing countries are characterized by poor organization, inefficient filing, poor storage and irregular disposition (Bakkabulindi & Muhenda 2008). This is also true for HEI's because managers are finding it more difficult to retrieve the information they need to manage students' affairs and to formulate, implement and monitor policy on academic affairs. Cases of lost marks, incorrect grades, delays in issuing academic awards have all been too common (New Vision 2010, Daily Monitor 2010). In a study conducted by Muhenda & Lwanga (2011), findings revealed that poor records management was the biggest problem facing Higher Education Institutions in Uganda. This has further been evidenced by inability to graduate students whose marks are misplaced, cancellation of certificates and transcripts due to inaccurate grades, wrongly recorded marks as reported in the country's media. Unless serious steps are taken to ensure that records are created, acquired, maintained and managed in accordance with existing regulations and eventually disposed off in accordance with policies, Higher Education Institutions will continue to suffer the kind of embarrassment that has been witnessed in the recent past.

According to Thurston (2006), failure to maintain records in an appropriate and professional manner may lead to inability on the part of the organisation to prove what decisions and or actions have been carried out or even to prove that policies and procedures were correctly followed. Education Institutions may be unable to defend themselves against inability claims, their products or services or its employee's actions and in absence of adequate students' records, HEI's business operations may be compromised and rights of students impaired (Hare 2004). Against this background, this study will investigate factors that effect records management in Higher Institutions of Learning in Uganda.

2. Literature Review

Records are important because of the information they contain that is essential for every activity carried out in the organization. With out proper information a decision maker is never certain about the outcome of her decision according to Nickerson (2000). And since the operations of an organization are based on a hierarchy of systems, each of which consists of a variety of activities or discussion points, it is imperative that each of these decision points receive appropriate information. Information must therefore flow throughout the organization in such a way that it can be tapped where it is needed and or improved at every decision point. This is possible in the presence of a good records management system.

There are many definitions of records management but the general consensus is that it embraces all the responsibilities that relate to the way in which records once created and managed (Shepherd & Yeo 2003, Piers & Thurston 1998). Managing records in Higher Education Institutions is important because good records that are accurate, comprehensive and authentic store important information needed for administrative, historical and evidential purposes.   This includes applying classification schemes, indexing, interviewing and distributing them for use,

controlling file movement, proper care and storage and ensuring that they are disposed off in an authorized manner (Wamukoya 2000, Nankya & Muhenda 2008).

Organizations' keep records as evidence of some activities accomplished in the course of conducting official business (Thurston 1998, Bakkabulindi & Muhenda 2008). Employers have therefore the responsibility for ensuring that official records are kept for action, that information is up to date, accurate, and that unauthorized people are not given opportunity to access such a great asset. There are several studies that have investigated the importance of records management for example Paler (2000) investigated records management and accountability whereas; Wamukoya (2000) investigated records as a basis for good governance. These studies have mostly treated records management as a predictor variable and not as a criterion variable and hence the justification for this research.

Of late, the trend is mainly on managing e-records but we urge that Higher Education Institutions need to have sound manual records system in order to realize the benefits of a computerized system. In a related study Mnjama & Wamukoya (2007) assessed the readiness for e-records in Sub-Saharan Africa and concluded that organizations must put emphasis on the legal and regulatory framework, the physical infrastructure, policies and procedures, storage and dissemination, staffing issues and training of personnel . Though there are likely to be numerous factors that may affect records and information management in Higher Institutions, this study will look specifically at human resource policies. Human resources policies are systems established by an organization to support administrative personnel functions, performance management, employee relations and planning (Armstrong 2006). The Policies define an organization values or beliefs about how people should be treated.

Human Resource policies like training and development, rewards and recruitment are likely to impact on the way staff manages records in organization. This is true because Human Resources are the most valuable asset of an organization and any policies affecting them are likely to impact on how effectively services are delivered, of which records management is one. Records management being such a vital service, we anticipate that Higher Education Institutions could benefit from good recruitment policies, good training and superior rewards and hence the justification for this study.

2.1 Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment and selection process require the collection of date , estimating skills and competences, analysis of the cultural context attracting candidates and matching people to the job requirements and to the organisation (Armstrong 2006, Cole 2000). The recruitment process that is professionally conducted (Beerdwell & Claydon 2007) could guarantee best candidates to manage records in Higher Education Institution's better. Poor job analysis, failure to attract competent candidates and selection of competent staff is likely to impact on how records are managed as a resource. A recruitment policy that embraces advertisement of vacancies, processing all applications with efficiency and courtesy basing on qualifications, allowing candidates to air their views and demonstrate their expertise (Cole 1997) is vital for any serious organisation.

Training and development is also very important because it enhances staff's absorption capacity. Training according to Armstrong (2006) is a planned process that modifies attitude, knowledge and skills that add value to its resources and helps the organizations achieve its purpose. We considered training under induction, orientation and off the job training in this study. Though some scholars have considered induction and orientation as one aspect, we argue that the two are related though not similar. New employee orientation is the process you use for welcoming a new employee into an organization generally providing information about safety, the work environment, the new job description, benefits and eligibility, organisational culture, history, the organisation chart and anything else relevant to working in the new organization. Whereas employee induction involves spending time doing the jobs in each department to understand the flow of the product or service through the organization some form of hands on experience Shaun & York (2000). It is given to enhance particular skills on the job and may include mentoring and coaching by senior staff (Armstrong 2008).

Marrow (2001) established that employees who are highly trained and whose carrier development is effectively managed show high levels of commitment, are flexible, multi skilled and capable of making remarkable contribution to the services they render in organisations'. Unfortunately, some business shy away from training because they fear that upgrading the skills of the workforce, their employers will be marketable to competitors . Yet training helps employers build more security with their employers and are also likely to work better to improve the image of their organisations. Studies investigating training in Higher Institutions have reported positive significant relationship between training and performance (Muhenda 2008), training and job satisfaction and or performance (Wamala 2010). Few studies have investigated training and promotion of organizational goals (Ragahein 2000); training and improved management practices and hence the justification for this research.

2.2 Rewards

Reward policies aimed at equitable, fair and consistent payment of organizations employers are also investigated in this study. According to Wood (2000) compensation is the most critical issue in attracting and keeping talented staff. Employees may express great commitment to the job and organizations when they feel that their capabilities, efforts and performance are recognized and appreciated (Davies 2001).The study considered both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards and how they impact on records management practices. Extrinsic rewards that are externally derived from the job include salaries, wages, promotion, fringe benefits whereas intrinsic rewards refer to the gains obtained from the job through self initiative like self-actualization, sense of belonging and taking part in decision making of the organization (Nansasi 2004). We considered the total package which emphasizes both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards that are important in fostering motivation and how they impact on the management of records in HEI's in Uganda.

3. Methodology

The study was carried out between January and June 2011 in Higher Education Institutions in Uganda. Higher Education Institutions are grappling with records management related problems which if left unchecked can lead to poor decision making, inefficiency in business processes, non- compliance, inability to deliver
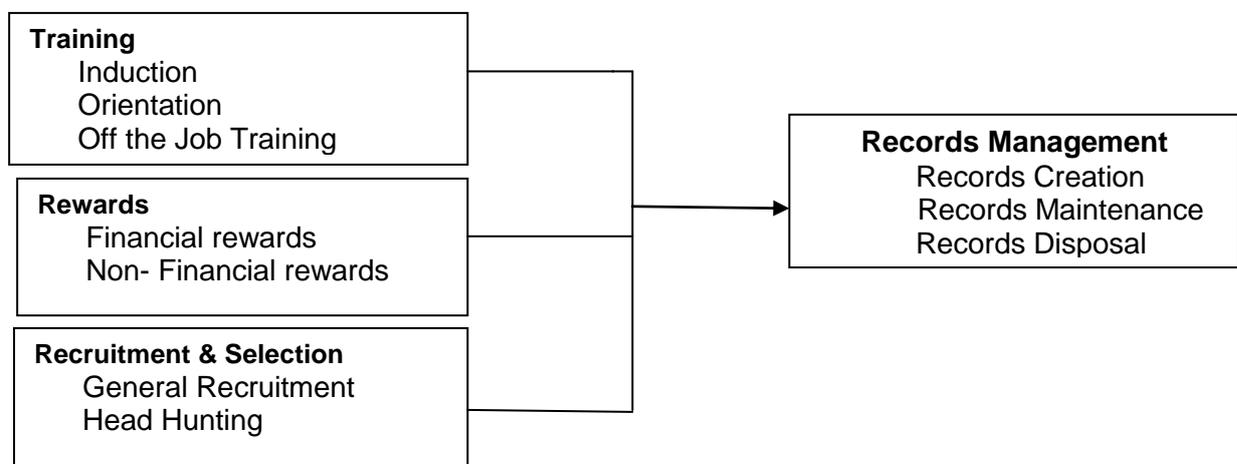
effective services and ultimate economic losses. We urge that human resource policies that include recruitment, training and development and rewarding employees would increase commitment that is vital in motivating records staff to manage records efficiently and effectively. The model adapted from literature on human resource policies is combined with the records management practices to investigate the growing concerns of managing records which area is scarcely researched in Uganda. We hypothesis that when recruitment of records staff has been done proficiently and in the presence of good training and development policies in addition to good rewards, records staff are likely to manage records better. Our conceptualisation is presented in the figure below:-

Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Independent variables   *Dependent Variable*

| Training |
| Induction |
| Orientation |
| Off the Job Training |

| Rewards |
| Financial rewards |
| Non- Financial rewards |

| Recruitment & Selection |
| General Recruitment |
| Head Hunting |

| Records Management |
| Records Creation |
| Records Maintenance |
| Records Disposal |

A total of one hundred twenty three (123) respondents were selected randomly from six Higher Education Institutes, out of which a total of 83 (69%) returned the filled questionnaires. The sample was drawn from staff lists provided by the participating Universities. Ten people purposively selected in accordance with Sekaran, (2003) suggestion that purposive sampling should be confined to specific types of people who can provide required information were selected and interviewed as key informants. These interviewees were selected from the Registrars, Systems Managers offices and from among Supervisors and members of the academia who had knowledge and experience in the management of student records and understood Universities' policies and procedures.

4. Results /Analysis of Data

Reliability analysis and regression results that tested the quality of the instrument and the influence of human resource policies on records management are presented below:

4.1 Reliability Analysis

All items used in the self administered questionnaire were subjected to a reliability test; the table below summarizes the reliability test of the measures used. The cronbach's alphas of the constructs are above .50 which is acceptable in early stages of social research (Nunnally, 1967).

We postulate that all the measures were therefore reliable as indicated in the table below.

Table 1

Reliability of Scales

Construct	Scales	No.of Items	Coefficient Cronbach's Alpha
Training	Induction	2	.70
	Orientation	4	.67
	Off- the Job Training	3	.61
Rewards	Financial Rewards	3	.80
	Non- Financial rewards	2	.60
Recruitment policy	Formal recruitment	4	.90
	Head Hunting	5	.82
Knowledge Transfer	Records Creation	6	.92
	records Maintenance	6	.82
	Records Disposal	7	.93

4.2 Descriptive Analysis of Independent and Dependent Variables

Like other researchers, we are interested to know how frequently certain phenomenon occur and we are also interested in the mean or average score of the data we collected as well as the extent of variability of the dependent and independent variables. To be able to describe the responses on the variables used in this study, we used descriptive statistics.

The table below gives the descriptive statistics of the study variables.

Table 2

Descriptive Analysis of all the study Variables (N=66)

Dimensions of Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Training		
Induction	3.31	.96
Orientation	2.90	.89
Off the Job training	3.35	.85
Rewards		
Financial Rewards	2.97	2.75
Non- Financial Rewards	2.83	1.06
Recruitment policy		
Formal recruitment	3.23	.98
Head hunting	3.59	.87
Records Management		
Records Creation	3.71	.98
Records Maintenance	3.56	.82
Records Disposal	3.10	1.05

Scales: Technological Knowledge Transfer Extent - 1= very low to 5= very high
Scales: Independent Variables- 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree

Respondents felt that there were more opportunities for off the job training in comparison to induction and orientation which registered a mean of 3.31 and 2 .90 respectively. Rewards are a rare occurrence in Higher Education Institutions judging from the means that are substantially below .3. Head hunting on the other hand was more popular according to the respondents whose mean result is 3.59 and slightly low. Among the records management components, respondents singled out records creation as the common practice followed by records maintenance and disposal.

4.3 Summary of Regression Analysis Results

Below we give summary of the hypotheses
H_1. Training is positively and significantly related to records management practices.
H_2. Rewards are positively and significantly related to records management practices.
H_3. Recruitment Policy is positively and significantly related to records management practices.
The results confirmed partially hypothesis 1 and 3 and rejected hypothesis 2as detailed overleaf.

Table 3

Independent Variables	Records Creation	Records Maintenance	Records Disposal
Training			
Induction	-.09	-.16	.-.09
Orientation	-.15	**.23***	**.43****
Off the Job Training	-.15	.73	-.03
Rewards			
Financial rewards	-.02	.-02	.14
Non Financial rewards	.03	.11	-.11
Recruitment policy			
General recruitment	**-.21***	-.02	-.06
Head hunting	**.70*****	**.54*****	**.43****
Model Summary			
R	.70	.65	.60
R Square Change	.42	.42	.36
Adjusted R	.32	.33	.26
F	**4.6*****	**4.6*****	**3.6****

*** Correlation is significant at.01 level (2-tailed), * Correlation is significant at .05 levels (2-*

The model summary shows a correlation coefficient of 0.70 which indicates the strength of the association between human resources policies and records management when all the interrelations among variables are considered. The R square of 0.42 explains the amount of variance that is explained by human resource alone. The results confirm a positive relationship between orientation of records staff and records maintenance at 90% and disposal at 95% level of confidence respectively. This finding is supported by Armstrong (2008) and Souza & Zajas (1995) who observed that induction make new employees' orderly, systematic through observing timelines and high performers. Results also show that head hunting has a positive significant influence on records creation at 99% level of confidence, records maintenance 99 % and disposal at 95% level of confidence. This is an indication that the chances of improvements in records creation, maintenance and disposal are more probable when records staff are head hunted than *when there are recruited in a general manner. This conforms to Bernard (2007) and Wickramasinghe (2007) who confirmed that recruitment and selection methods and the way there are handled affects the quality performance of recruited staff. Surprisingly, financial and non- financial rewards had no positive influence on records management in HEI's contrary to conventional thinking that the more money records staff are paid the better their performance in managing records.

5. Conclusion

The study will provide direction to Higher Education Institutes as regards the creation, maintenance and disposal of records and how these activities are affected by training, rewards, recruitment and selection of staff. Since head hunting was positively and significantly related to managing records in HEI's, it is therefore important that records staff are carefully selected and recruited. HEI's could look for best performers either from within or outside the organisation for the best performing personnel to fill the posts of record managers. This has implications in that HEI's must be willing to pay for better services outside the traditional pay structure. Since results showed a positive significant relationship between staff orientation and records maintenance and disposal, it is also important that HEIs take new interest in orienting their staff especially the new recruits. The time when study was carried coincided with the Higher Education Institutions convocation activities which could have contributed to partial response.

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