

The Effect of Records Creation on Service Delivery Among Private Higher Institutions of Learning

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ABSTRACT: *The paper examines the effect of records creation on service delivery among private higher institutions of learning. Although a number of studies have been carried out, most of them specifically focused on records management systems and the associated challenges and little attention is given to records management practices and its effect on service delivery with special reference to private higher institutions of learning. A cross sectional study design was adopted where both qualitative and quantitative approaches of data collection and analysis were used. A sample size of 83 respondents was used. Data was collected using both questionnaire survey and interview methods. Findings of the study revealed that records creation has a positive and significant influence on service delivery ($p < 0.01$). The study concludes that service delivery does not rely solely on records creation implying that there are other factors that influence service delivery.*

KEY WORDS: Records creation, service delivery, private, management practices

INTRODUCTION

Decision making based on right information might prolong an organization's survival since records are a backbone of any organization's performance and service delivery, Senabulya (2013). He further asserts that records creation is the way records are received, recorded and distributed and so the way they are created greatly affects service delivery. Continuity of any organization largely depends on reliably created records of the past, present and future activities and programs. Akufo & Musah (2016) further noted that if records are well created, they ensure the whole process is cost effective.

Saffady (2021) states that records management is concerned with systematic analysis and control of recorded information which includes any information created, received, maintained or used by an organization and its mission, operations and activities. In addition, Mojapelo & Ngoepe (2021) affirm that records ensure effective and efficient updates to organizations if properly managed, organized and monitored which translate to service delivery. Records

creation is guided by a records management policy which clarifies activities for which records are created and instructions specifying the number of copies to be made (Makerere University Records Policy, 2012). This helps to avoid creation of unnecessary records and also ensures that important activities of records management are not overlooked in the creation of records (Records Management and Retention Policy University of Bristol, 2018).

Records are created because they serve several organizational purposes ranging from informing functions, policies, decisions, procedures in organizations to being essential for organizational transactions (Harvard University, 2016). Also, records provide necessary information to protect financial rights of the institution, legal and persons directly affected by the unit's activities (US Government, 2016). Norris (2012) strongly asserts that records management programs often help to manage records creation well and if records management is not effective during the time of creation, it can lead to redundant records, lack of clearly identified official copies and insufficient records for audit and litigation.

Based on the literature reviewed, most previous studies on records management practices and service delivery have largely focused on records management systems and the associated challenges in higher institutions (Mohammed & Ahmed, 2018). Other studies on records management practices with particular reference to records creation and service delivery focused on the public higher education institutions and less attention on the private institutions (Mampe Kemoni & Ngulube, 2018). Additionally, most of other studies also focused on other developing countries like Kenya, South Africa other than on Uganda's context (Luthuli 2017). As such, there is insufficient evidence on the effect of records management practices with reference to records creation on service delivery, particularly on Uganda's context and private higher institutions. This study therefore intended to bridge the said knowledge gap of records management practices with special attention to records creation and service delivery in private higher institutions of learning.

Statement of the Problem

Globally, improved service delivery is recognized as a pre requisite for effective institutional management by all stakeholders. Anim & Mensah (2015) adds that managers of higher institutions consider service delivery as an essential strategy for success in today's competitive educational environment. Better service delivery boosts the Organization's loyalty, increases student's enrollment, employee satisfaction as well as high performance levels all of which enhances the level of effectiveness, efficiency, transparency and accountability in an organization (Musembe, 2016; Ng & Priyono, 2018).

According to Ngoepe (2018), better service delivery always begins with better records management practices. This is based on the fact that institutions can only take appropriate actions and make correct decisions if they have reliable and sufficient information. In an attempt to enhance service delivery, higher institutions of learning both public and private have come with a number of strategies aimed ensuring better records management. These strategies include; Student management information systems, integrated educational management system and financial management systems among others.

Despite the efforts put to ensure better service delivery through improved record management practices, there still exists a gap characterized by delayed release of students' results, delayed transcript processing (36th senate meeting minutes, 2019) in addition to too much inconvenience in accessing financial statements with the finance office characterized by long queues (Students Quality assurance evaluation report, 2018). It was against this background that the study aimed at finding out the relationship between records management practices and service delivery, with special reference to the effect of records creation on service delivery among private higher institutions of learning.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to find out the relationship between records creation and service delivery among private higher institutions of learning. This was intended to improve service delivery through proper records management.

Specific objective of the study

This study aimed at assessing the effect of records creation on service delivery among private higher institutions of learning.

Research hypothesis

The study hypothesized that; "Records creation has a significant effect on service delivery among private higher institutions of learning".

RELATED EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

Records creation and service delivery.

Records creation is a process of producing information and records in a wide variety of formats using different equipment and technologies according to Records Management Compliance (2015). Records in the electronic environment are not tangible objects for example as in the case of paper-based records. They are both hardware and software dependent and both can quickly become obsolete. The process of records creation and management requires a designated record owner who will be responsible for any written, photographic, or machine-readable information created or received by or on behalf of the agency documenting activities in the conduct of business (University of Cape Town, 2012). In a university context, records creation should be conducted in such a way that only records needed by the system are created and entered into the system, London University College, (2019).

Records are created because they serve several organizational purposes ranging from informing functions, policies, decisions, procedures in organizations to being essential for organizational transactions (Harvard University, 2016). Also, records provide necessary information to protect financial rights of the institution, legal and persons directly affected by the unit's activities (US Government, 2016). Norris (2012) strongly asserts that records management programs often help to manage records creation well and if records management

is not effective during the time of creation, it can lead to redundant records, lack of clearly identified official copies and insufficient records for audit and litigation.

A records management program is the one that ensures that all records created are needed and records not essential are not captured. Effective records creation entails ensuring that records are sufficient for audits, unneeded records and copies are reduced, records are available for litigation, records management standards, laws and procedures and other professional standards are used in records creation. Records creation is guided by a records management policy which clarifies activities for which records are created and instructions specifying the number of copies to be made (Makerere University Records Policy, 2012). This helps to avoid creation of unnecessary records and also ensures that important activities of records management are not overlooked in the creation of records (Records Management and Retention Policy University of Bristol, 2018).

In developed countries such as those in Europe and US, universities largely use ICTs and the Internet in record creation (Kalusopa, 2016). Students in such countries can easily access their records at any time; for example, they get their certificates on graduation day (Kuczera & Field, 2013), which is not the case in most universities in Uganda. This is not possible in Uganda where records creation in universities is still paper based to a large extent. For this reason, service delivery remains needy for universities in Uganda because it is costly in terms of time to retrieve information from paper-based records. According to (Ngulube, 2011), 75 percent of information in organization's cost relates to records creation. Therefore, creation of records should be managed since it is where they enter the records system (Cayman Island National Archive, 2010). As reported by (Mäkinen, 2013), while studying records management in mobile work with an intention of exploring the challenges of organizational records management in the framework of changing information technology, it was reported that records creation influences the process of records management. Most previous studies reviewed have shown the value of records creation but a few have explored their influence on service delivery (Mbabazi, 2017). This study attempted to fill the existing knowledge gap on the effect of records creation and service delivery.

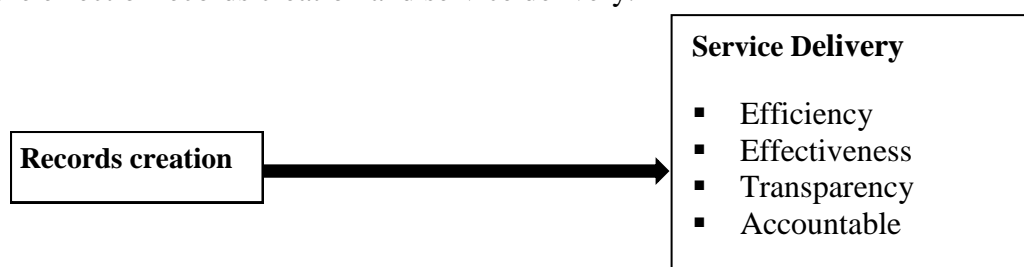


Figure 1: Conceptual framework: *Linking records creation and service delivery*

Source: *Adopted from Frank Upwards (1990)*

The framework shows the relationship between records creation and service delivery. Therefore, the records created and received in the course of institution's activities should be properly managed to allow easy access and retrieval whenever they are needed. It is thus

conceptualized that proper records creation translate into better service delivery in form of efficiency at which timely and reliable information and records are accessed and retrieved from files. Additionally, effective keeping of records enables compliance with accountability and transparency requirements in the delivery of institutional services since records can easily be accessed when the process is transparent.

METHODOLOGY

The study was undertaken among private universities, and Bishop Stuart University was considered for the investigation. A cross sectional design was adopted for this study because it helped the researcher to obtain useful information in a relatively short period of time (Bordens, 2011). The design was preferred because it facilitates the collection of data within the limited period of time since data is collected one point in time. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches of data collection and analysis were used. The study population was 102 participants who included; top management, records officers, student's leaders, heads of departments, academic staff, and administrative assistants. The target population was selected because they deal with records, understand policies and procedures and they generally create, use or store records used in making decisions that affect service delivery in the university. Quantitative data was entered and coded in SPSS version 21.0 and descriptive statistics was used to generate frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation. Additionally, inferential statistics was employed with the help of Pearson's correlation co-efficient and regression analysis and qualitative data collected from key informants and relevant documents were analyzed thematically by editing, coding and tabulating the data. Summary statements with representative codes were developed and used to examine identified themes across respondents.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

In our findings, we hypothesized a relationship between records creation and service delivery and proceeded to test the relationship. The results obtained are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Showing the pairwise correlation results of records creation and Service delivery

		Records creation	Service delivery
Records creation	Pearson Correlation	1	.870**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	71	71
Service delivery	Pearson Correlation	.870**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	71	71

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Primary data, 2019

The results from the pairwise correlation matrix (Table 1) indicate a positive significant relationship between records creation and service delivery ($r = .870^{**}$, $p < .01$). This means that any positive change in the elements of records creation such as content, context and structure will result into a positive change in service delivery. The study therefore rejects the null hypothesis and uphold the alternative which asserts that there is a positive significant effect between records creation and service delivery among private higher institutions of learning.

In order to determine the effect of records creation on service delivery a hierarchical regression model was also used. It was preferred since it confirms the relationship between the independent variables to the dependent variable.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.870 ^a	.756	.756	.20799	.756	213.888	1	69	.000

Predictor: (Constant), Records creation

Table 2: Model Summary.

Results in the model indicate that records creation explain 75.6% (Adjusted R) of the variations in service delivery holding other factors constant. This implies that the remaining 24.4% of the variations in service delivery is explained by other factors not considered in this study (Table 2).

In relation to the above model, the quantitative findings revealed the great role played by records creation as far as service delivery in Private higher institutions of learning is concerned. However, during the key informant's interviews, one of the key informants echoed that "*we do not have a policy, but just guidelines*" (Interview October 2019). This could point at the absence of a formal policy passed at Council level. Findings further revealed that guidelines to direct the officers about records creation existed drawn by probably the concerned department. Hence there is need for a policy about records creation and management.

The study also investigated whether there is accuracy, reliability and completeness in records created. In regard to this, one of the key informants was quoted saying;

"...there is accuracy, reliability and completeness of records created but we take long on registration because we make long lines for a long time waiting for our files to be created as almost all documents are paper-based electronic records are still in infancy stages and a challenge on file classification which still needs to be addressed..." (Interview October 2019).

Although the findings revealed limited use of digital ways to create records for better service delivery, it was evident that records created use a file classification plan for both paper and

electron records this. This could mean that the officers in charge of records can easily get access to any record since files are well arranged and properly labeled and this positively impacts on creation of files.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study indicate a positive and significant effect of records creation on service delivery at BSU ($\beta = 0.738$, $P < 0.01$). This means that improvement on records creation has a significant effect on service delivery among private institutions of higher learning. Similar findings were put out by (Moemi & Rotich, 2015) who noted that records creation form the foundation of good governance, effective and efficient administration, transparency, accountability and delivery of quality services to the citizens. Similarly, same findings were in line with (Akor & Udensi, 2013) who concurred that proper records management could help universities to manage their information, efficiently fulfill their mandate, protect them from litigation, preserve their corporate memory, and foster accountability and good governance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the study findings, one can make a strong assertion that records creation is key in improving service delivery among private institutions of higher learning. Records creation is significant and information created is the life blood of any organization and therefore information should be well managed for any organization whether public or private to achieve its objectives.

Recommendations

Since records creation was found to be significant in influencing service delivery, the study recommends that the university stakeholders, council, management, senate and different user departments should ensure that departmental file plans are developed, created and indexes maintained to enable easy access of records created.

There is need to develop and implement tracking systems and security of records by providing security procedures for both paper and electronic records. This will safeguard records from theft, deletion, mutilation, fire, water, direct light, dust and rodents among others.

Also, there is need for sensitization of staff and the entire users on records creation and management, departmental meetings, trainings and even during induction of new staff so as to appreciate what effective and efficient records creation entails and the benefits it holds towards service delivery.

Last but not least, records surveys should be introduced in order to identify all the records created in the departments for proper control of existing records and their proper management environment. This will further help to categorize the functions of the created records,

appreciate what these records are used for and by whom, identify where the records are kept and who maintains them, and to establish their retention and disposal period.

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Competing Interests

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