

SASA Conference - Unisa



**THE IMPORTANCE OF THE QUALITY OF
ELECTRONIC RECORDS MANAGEMENT IN
ENHANCING ACCOUNTABILITY IN SA
PUBLIC SERVICE:
A CASE OF A NATIONAL DEPARTMENT**

**JONATHAN MUKWEVHO
AND
DR LORETTE JACOBS**

Overview of Contents



- Introduction
- The Importance of quality electronic records
- Problem Investigated
- South African Statistical Quality Assessment Framework
- Properties of quality electronic records
- Overview of electronic records management in SA
- Research methodology
- Key findings
- Recommendations

Introduction



- **Purpose of the presentation** is to share the findings of research conducted on the importance of the quality of electronic records management in enhancing accountability in South African public service.
- **Motivation for the study** is based on the requirement for accurate information for financial and non-financial auditing purposes as stipulated in the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA)(1999).
- The **concern** is that national departments provide information of poor quality that is not useful and reliable for auditing, performance evaluation, budgeting, planning and decision-making purposes.
- It is **envisaged** that findings of this research will help to facilitate the application of standards to ensure the creation and preservation of quality electronic records in South African public service.

Importance of Quality Electronic Records Management



- Comply with legislation and regulation
- To assess the performance of government programmes
- To inform planning
- Improve / support decision making
- Cut / reduce cost
- Preserve corporate memory
- Increase productivity
- Protect the rights of stakeholders
- Provide evidence for transparency and accountability

Clarification of Concepts



- Electronic records are seen as digitally coded electronic data which serve as **evidence of organisational activities** and are generally the computerised versions of traditional paper records.
- Accountability as described by Reitz (2004), is a process whereby organisations are required to present **an account of their activities** and the way in which they determine performance quality of assigned duties.

Problem Investigated



- The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act.No.108 of 1996) states that public administration should be governed by democratic values and principles (i.e. accountable public administration).
- Findings of the 2010-11 Auditor-General General Reports on the National Audit indicated that 28 (72%) of national departments submitted financial and non-financial performance records of a poor quality (inaccurate) for auditing.
- An overall opinion of the AG was a general lack of adequate evidence to support information reported on in annual performance reports.
- Research to investigate required standards that records should comply with is imperative to ensure future accountability and effective future planning, budgeting and resource allocation.

SASQAF



SASQAF was developed (in terms of The Statistics Act, 1999 (Act No. 6 of 1999) to assess data quality.

- Used successfully on sample surveys and administrative records data in national department
- Can be used for self-assessment of electronic records system
- Defining of data quality in terms of fitness for use
- Prerequisites of quality (human, financial, technological resources, privacy and confidentiality)

SASQAF cont...



Dimensions of quality include among others:

- Relevance (data meets the real needs of clients)
- Accuracy (output correctly describes the phenomena designed to measure)
- Timeliness (frequency and punctuality, influence relevance)
- Methodological soundness (application of international, national standards, guidelines and practices)
- Each dimension consist of a number of quality indicators together with standards

Properties of Quality Electronic Records



- **Authenticity**
-what records purports to be and had been created by the organisation with which it is identified.
- **Reliability**
-contents can be trusted as full and accurate representation of activities and to provide a true reflection of occurrences.

Properties of Quality of Electronic Records cont...



- **Integrity**
 - records is complete and unaltered
 - provide an audit trail pertaining to contents, contexts and structure.
- **Usability**
 - records can be located, retrieved, presented and interpreted;
 - providing contextual linkages
 - and can be accessed over time irrespective of technical changes.

Overview of E-Records Management in SA



- Effective and efficient electronic records management are supported by the legislative framework and various e-government initiatives.
- The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996)
- Public Finance Management Act (1999).
- The Promotion of Access to Information Act (2000)
- The Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (2000)
- Electronic Communications and Transactions Act (2000)

Overview of E-Records Management cont...



- The South African government over the last decade recognised the importance of IT and, more recently, e-government.
- E-government means the use of information and communication technologies in the public service to improve its internal functioning and to render services to the public (Public Service Amendment Act 30 of 2007).
- The function of e-government is located within the Ministry of Public Service and Administration.

ERM principles subscribed by NARSA



- Principles highlight the importance of using subject file plan
- Establish a proper appraisal schedule and disposal procedures
- Migration strategy
- The use of metadata
- The use of version control
- The use of an audit trail
- A back-up and disaster recovery plan

Research Methodology



- Used quantitative approach as the objectives, design, sample and the questions that a researcher plans to ask respondents are predetermined.
- Used cross-sectional survey as the study was conducted at one time and findings generalised to the sampled population only at the time of the survey.
- Survey population consists of the staff of Knowledge, Information and Records Management and Information System units.
- Used emailed questionnaire
- An extensive literature review

Key Findings



- On a question pertaining to the application of SASQAF, 92,3% of the respondents indicated that the national department does not apply criteria in order to evaluate the quality of their electronic information system. Because no follow-up question was asked, the reason for the lack of applying the SASQAF could not be determined.
- 46% of participants indicated that the system of rules guiding timely delivery of electronic records exists, but is not well known or well implemented. The remainder of respondents were unsure about the existence of such a system. Lack of timely accessibility of electronic resources may be one of the crucial factors that negatively impacts on accountability and decision-making.

Key findings cont...



- In terms of availability of resources, 53,8% of respondents indicated that staffing was inadequate.
- Only 46,2% of participants reported that financial resources were adequate. This clearly state that inequalities exist in terms of allocation of various resources to support electronic resources management.
- Only 38,5% of respondents are aware of the application of appropriate appraisal schedules and disposal procedure. In contrast, 38,5% participants indicated that the national department does not apply appraisal and disposal procedures, whilst 23% were unaware of such procedure. One may wonder whether important records are not destroyed due to lack of application of such procedures.

Recommendations

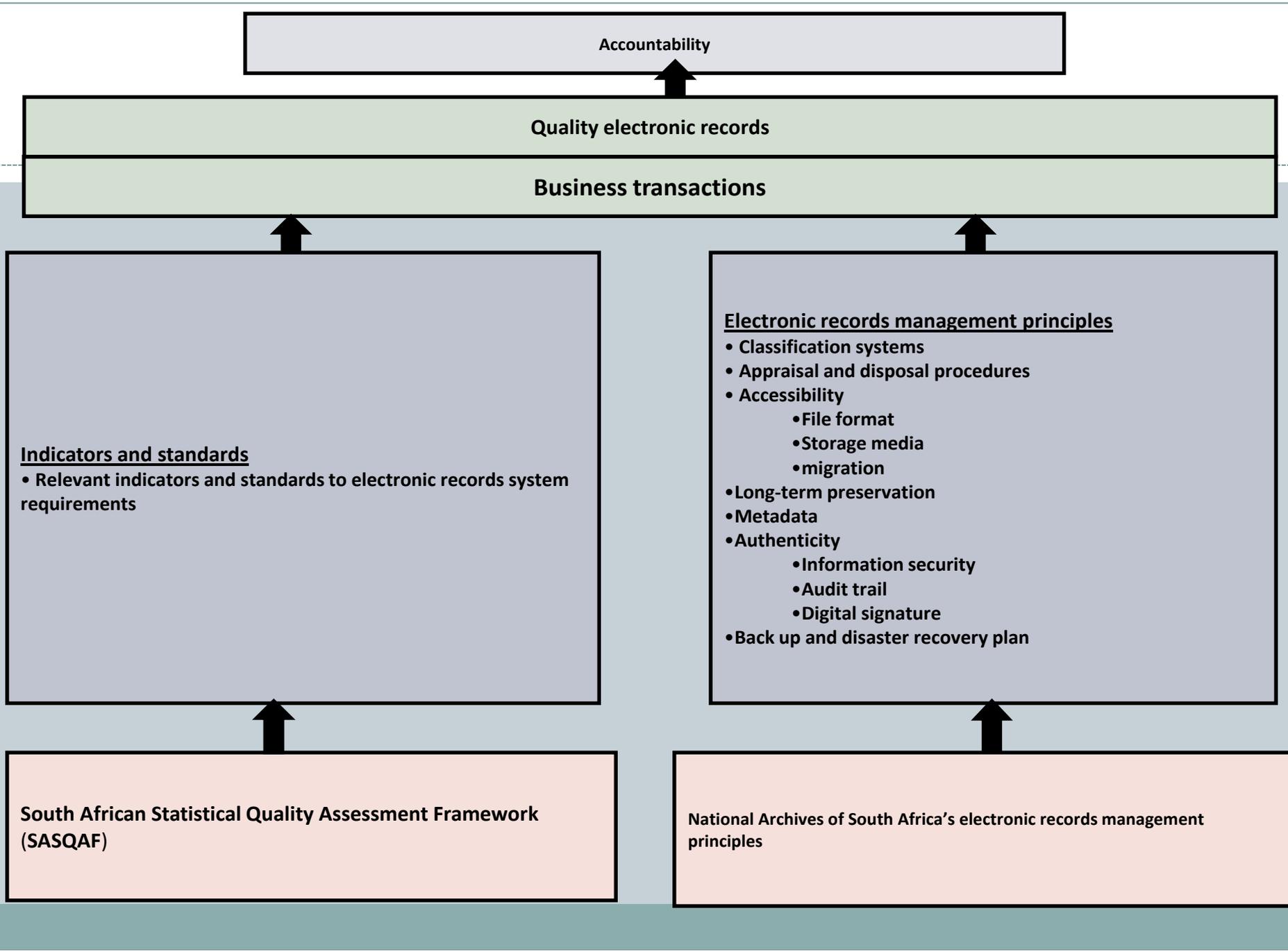


- The national department embraces the SASQAF.
- Select standards and indicators relevant to their product (e.g. EDRMS).
- Apply the NARSA ERM principles.

Recommendations cont...



- Working group be established to determine minimum resource requirements to ensure effective records and archival management practices can be implemented.
- A standard of rules on timely delivery of electronic records should be developed and adhered to.
- Training and communication to improve awareness on records management function.



Accountability

Quality electronic records

Business transactions

Indicators and standards

- Relevant indicators and standards to electronic records system requirements

Electronic records management principles

- Classification systems
- Appraisal and disposal procedures
- Accessibility
 - File format
 - Storage media
 - migration
- Long-term preservation
- Metadata
- Authenticity
 - Information security
 - Audit trail
 - Digital signature
- Back up and disaster recovery plan

South African Statistical Quality Assessment Framework (SASQAF)

National Archives of South Africa's electronic records management principles

Implementation of the Framework



- The National Department could request Stats SA for technical support in the application of SASQAF
- The Stats SA will produce quality assessment report
- Quality statement on their system
- Quality improvement plan

Implementation cont...



- Discussion with the ICT staff and users or records creators (representative from various sections)
- The users are drivers in ensuring the effective creation, management and uses of electronic records
- Training of the users and creators of records

Conclusion



To conclude:

The adoption and proper implementation of proposed electronic records management framework could go a long way in changing the whole dimension for good, hence inspire trust and confidence in SA public service.

NDO LIVHUWA!!!