



Understanding records management practices in Tanzania: the application of qualitative and quantitative methods

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Introduction



- Records fulfill important functions in society by providing evidence of and information about the transactions of individuals and organizations.
- They serve as an instrument of accountability by providing the essential evidence governments and citizens require to account for their decisions and activities and to respond to the requirements of laws and policies.
- The success of a public service reform programme depends on many factors, the most important of which is the proper and organized method of managing the records and information systems.



Introduction

- Government cannot deliver services effectively in the absence good records.
- PSRP recognized that records management is a cornerstone for the success of its objectives.
- This paper explores the use of qualitative and quantitative methods in investigating the records management practices in the government ministries of Tanzania.

Methodology



- The study employed mixed methods research design, with quantitative research paradigm as the dominant design, while qualitative research paradigm was used as the less dominant design.
- The quantitative data were collected through open-ended and closed questions.
- Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews and observation.

Methodology



- Data was collected through:
 - Copies of a questionnaire administered to 120 (67%) registry personnel from government ministries,
 - Interviews with 26 (65%) senior ministerial officials,
 - Five (100%) National Archives personnel from the Records and Archives Management Department (RAMD).

Methodology



- An observation checklist was further used to verify data obtained from the questionnaire and interview schedules.
- Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed separately, and then they were combined to compare and validate the findings.
- Other data of a qualitative nature obtained from the interviews and observation were content analyzed.
- Some of the qualitative data was also quantified in order to provide detailed assessment of patterns of responses and a deep understanding of survey responses.

Methodology



- Reliability and validity addresses issues concerning the quality of the data and appropriateness of the methods used in carrying out a research project.
- In the study the issues of validity and reliability were dealt with in cognizance of the variations in which these issues are considered in both qualitative and quantitative designs.
- An appropriate balance was then established so as to suit the combined research methods that this study adopted.

Combined methods in theoretical framework



- Quantitative studies use theory deductively and place it towards the beginning of the plan for study.
- In this study, quantitative research is performed within the context of a theoretical framework, that is when previous theory is used as a basis for generating predictions that can be tested through empirical research, the findings may have a broader significance and utility.
- The objective is the testing or verifying of a theory rather than developing it.
- The researcher advances a theory, collects data to test it, and reflects on the confirmation or disconfirmation of the theory by the results.

Combined methods in theoretical framework



- Qualitative inquiries use theory as an inductive process of building from the data to broad themes to a generalized model or theory
- In this research, theories are found at the beginning sections as orienting lenses that shape the types of questions asked; who participates in the study; how data are collected, and the implications made from the study.
- This study used a mixed methods approach where quantitative method was the dominant method and qualitative as the less dominant model.
- The theoretical framework was used to provide a broad explanation and as a theoretical perspective that guided the study.

Combined methods in theoretical framework



- The records life cycle model was used to provide the general understanding of the records management practices in Tanzania.
- The records life cycle model is popularly used as a framework for the management of public sector records.
- The records life cycle model is the model which is currently used in the management of public records in Tanzania.
- Majority of records in the government ministries in Tanzania have been created and maintained in paper format.

Combined methods in theoretical framework



- Thus, employing this model provides a full picture of the current records management practices from creation to their final disposition.
- The effective management of records at each stage of the life cycle is a key to fostering accountability in reforming the public service.
- Without it, vast quantities of records clog up office space, and it is virtually impossible to retrieve important administrative, financial and legal information.

Findings and interpretive discussions



- This section presents and discusses the study findings on the records management practices in the government ministries of Tanzania.

The state of registry funding

- Funding is key to formulating and implementing effective and efficient records and archival services.
- The officials were asked to state if the registry department was allocated its own budget.

The state of registry funding



Senior officials indicated that:

- The registry is just a section not a department.
- There was no separate budget for the registry section;
- The registry section worked under the budget of the directorate of administration and personnel;
- Funding of the registry depended on the budget/money received as a sub-vote;
- Funding of registry depended on the budget for the administration department;
- Allocation of the budget depended on the activities performed in the ministry; and
- Registries were funded from the administration department.



The state of registry funding

- Four (15.4%) senior ministerial officials cited that the funding was adequate, while 22 (84.6%) said no.
- Four (15.4%) respondents further indicated that the funding had increased over the last five years, while 22 (85%) indicated that the finding had not increased.
- 20 (76.9%) cited status quo remained the same.
- 25 (96.2%) senior ministerial officials stated that the problems faced due to the current state of registry funding.



The state of registry funding

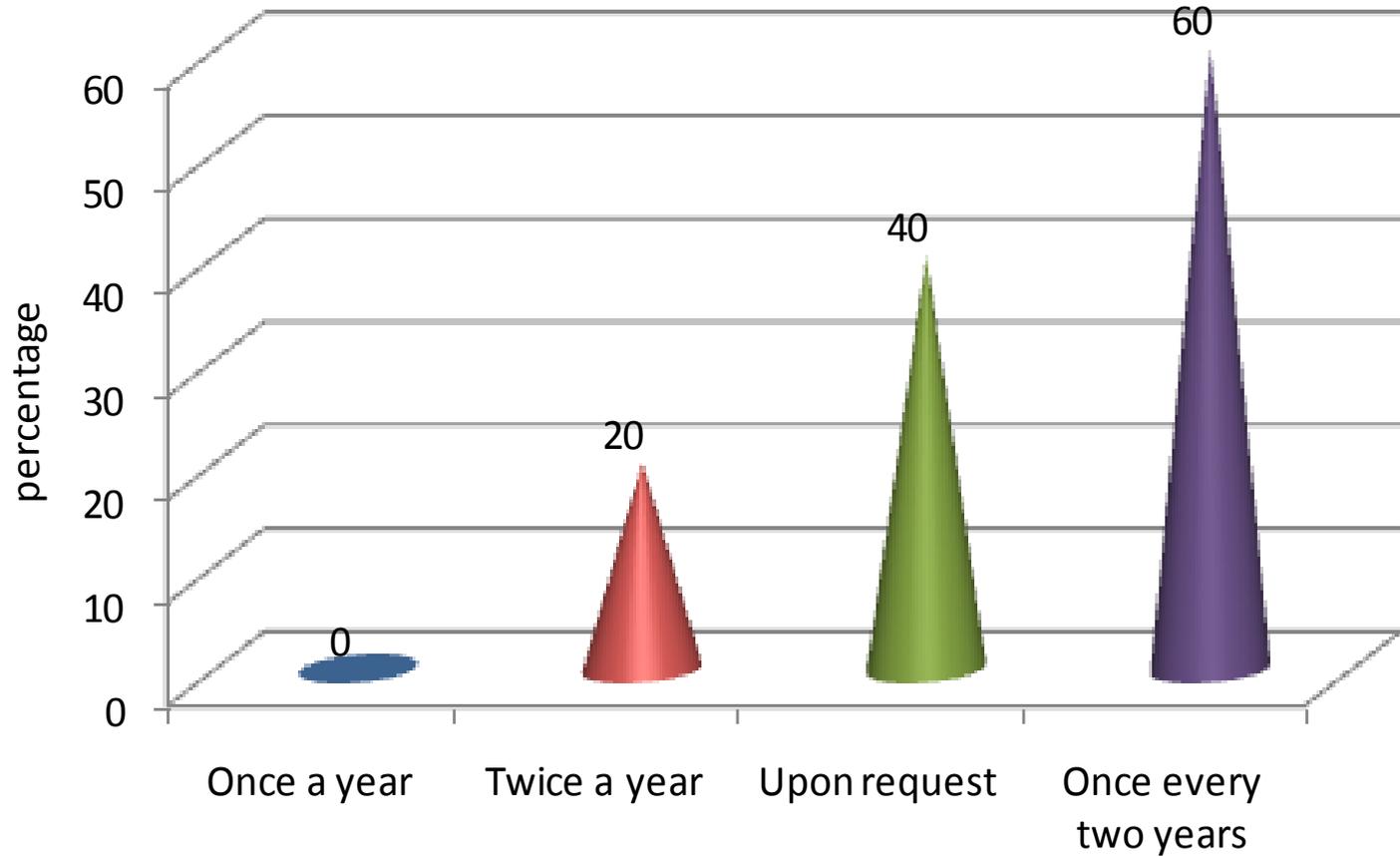
- The absence of specific budgets allocated to registries suggested that records management activities in the government ministries were given a low priority.
- Without the appropriate funding to undertake various records management activities, there would likely not be any appropriate changes to the current records management practices in the public sector.



Records surveys

- The National Archives Personnel stated that they conducted records surveys.
- Issues covered by the records surveys include:
 - quantity of records;
 - storage facilities;
 - media used for records storage;
 - study of the existing recordkeeping systems;
 - security of records;
 - incidence of lost files;
 - retrieval systems;
 - pending letters;
 - filing accuracy assessment;
 - registry physical state assessment; and
 - registry control tools assessment.

Frequency of conducting records surveys





Records surveys

- The varied responses from the National Archives staff suggested that the records surveys are conducted irregularly in the government registries.
- Conducting records surveys irregularly would bring about records management problems, as it would be difficult to monitor and evaluate various records management activities in the government ministries and hence brought about negative implications in reforming the public service.

Records retention and disposition schedules



- The 74 (61.7%) respondents stated that they had a records disposition programme.
- On the nature of records disposition programme,
 - the 67 (55.8%) cited transfer to archives,
 - 52 (43.3%) indicated physical destruction of records; and
 - 22 (18.3%) stated conversion to another medium.

Records retention and disposition schedules



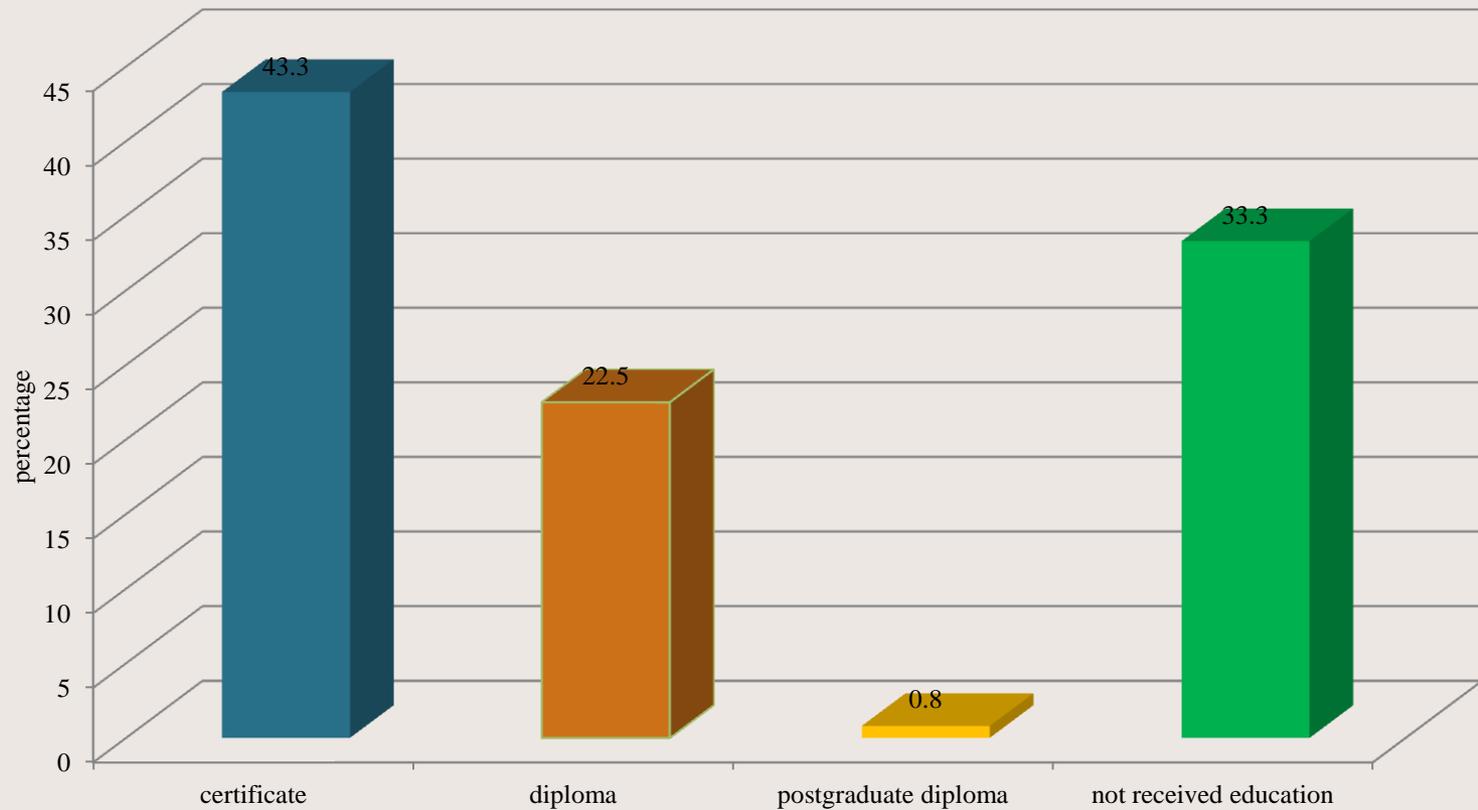
- A follow up observation revealed that records retention and disposal were not undertaken in the government registries leading to congestion of records in most ministries.
- The absence of records retention and disposal suggested that the poor management of current records due to congestion of records.
- This would adversely affect the government operations and reforming the public service.



Levels of skills and training of registry staff

- TPSC provided training in records management for registry personnel
- The findings showed that
 - 80 (66.7%) – had received training
 - 40 (33.3%) - had not received training in records management.
- 55 (45.8%) – had attended short courses in records management, 65 (54.2%) had not.

Levels of skills and training



PSRP and the current records management practices



- The 67 (55.8%) registry personnel acknowledged that the introduction of PSRP influenced the recordkeeping practices.
- The 53 (44.2%) did not influence the recordkeeping practices.
- The 67 (55.8%) registry indicated that PSRP had influenced recordkeeping practices:
 - facilitated decongestion of records;
 - introduced the new keyword filing system;
 - facilitated the introduction of records management course at certificate and diploma levels.



Conclusion

- A combined quantitative and qualitative methods that was adopted in this study provided a better understanding of the research problem than either of the approach used alone.
- The use of mixed methods approach increased the scope and comprehensiveness of the overall findings of the study, by showing how the quantitative data corroborated with qualitative data.



Conclusion

- The combination of methods helped the researcher to:
 - obtain a variety of information on the same issue;
 - use the strengths of each method to overcome the deficiencies of the other;
 - achieve a higher degree of validity and reliability of the results; and
 - overcome the deficiencies of single method,



Recommendation

- It is therefore essential for records management researchers to use the qualitative and quantitative methods in order to understand how records are managed at every stage of their life cycle, so that the information contained can provide evidence of transactions and facilitate the effective provision of services to the public.



*Thank you for your
attention!*

