



Western Cape
Government

BETTER TOGETHER.

USE OF RECORDS FOR EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

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WESTERN CAPE ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

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Presentation outline

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*“WHAT CAN BE ASSERTED WITHOUT
EVIDENCE CAN BE DISMISSED WITHOUT
EVIDENCE “ Christopher Hitchens*



Definitions

- Evidence is a fact, organized body of information, or observation, which is presented to support or justify beliefs or (Oxford dictionary)
- Evidence is contained in the records of any government's own transactions and actions (Zussman 2003: 2).

Definitions

- Records are sources of information created or received during the conduct of business and contain information and evidence of organizational activities
- EBDM is making decisions through conscientious, explicit and judicious use of the best available evidence from multiple sources to increase the likelihood of a favourable outcome. (Barends et al 2014:2)

Background and rationale

- Public sector information has been recognised to have various purposes such as contributing to good governance, which can improve the government decision-making processes (Cerrillo-i-Martinez 2012: 771; Dowding and Thompson 2009: 40).
- Some government information is in the form of records, which are information resources important for gaining more knowledge about the institution, for planning, decision making, problem solving, interpret situations, accountability and good governance (Momoti 2017: 62).

Background and rationale

- Records by definition are a source of evidence hence managers and decision makers cannot do their jobs well without consulting them (Shillabeer; Buss and Rousseau (eds.) 2011).
- Governmental bodies in South Africa have begun to employ EBDM to achieve better results (Kavanagh and Levinson 2016:17).

Background and rationale

- EBDM is a process informed by experiential, contextual and research evidence necessary for decision making, therefore public sector managers incorporate it into planning and budgeting (Kavanagh and Levinson 2016: 49; Maxim et al 2015: 4).
- EBDM improves public management and policy making by grounding decision making in evidence (Buss and Shillabeer 2011:3).

Problem statement

- EBDM has been introduced in SA. It is a practice grounded in using evidence from multiple sources to make decisions to improve service delivery.
- Records are created and used in organizations as evidence and to provide accountability for decisions. They support decision-making, organize documents, provide evidence of policies, decisions, transactions and activities (Coetzer 2012: 7).

Problem statement

- There has been a consensus that organizational records are not considered a strategic resource and therefore seldom consulted during the decision making process (Galt and Hase 2011: 37; Loadman 2001: 60)
- Use of records however, is an integral part of their existence, they are not created to lie dormant in a registry, records centre or electronic records management system.

Problem statement

- Moreover EBDM, a process introduced to improve delivery of services in public bodies, is grounded in using evidence from multiple sources to make decisions to improve service delivery.
- Senior managers are therefore supposed to consult and use records to make decisions.

Aim of the study

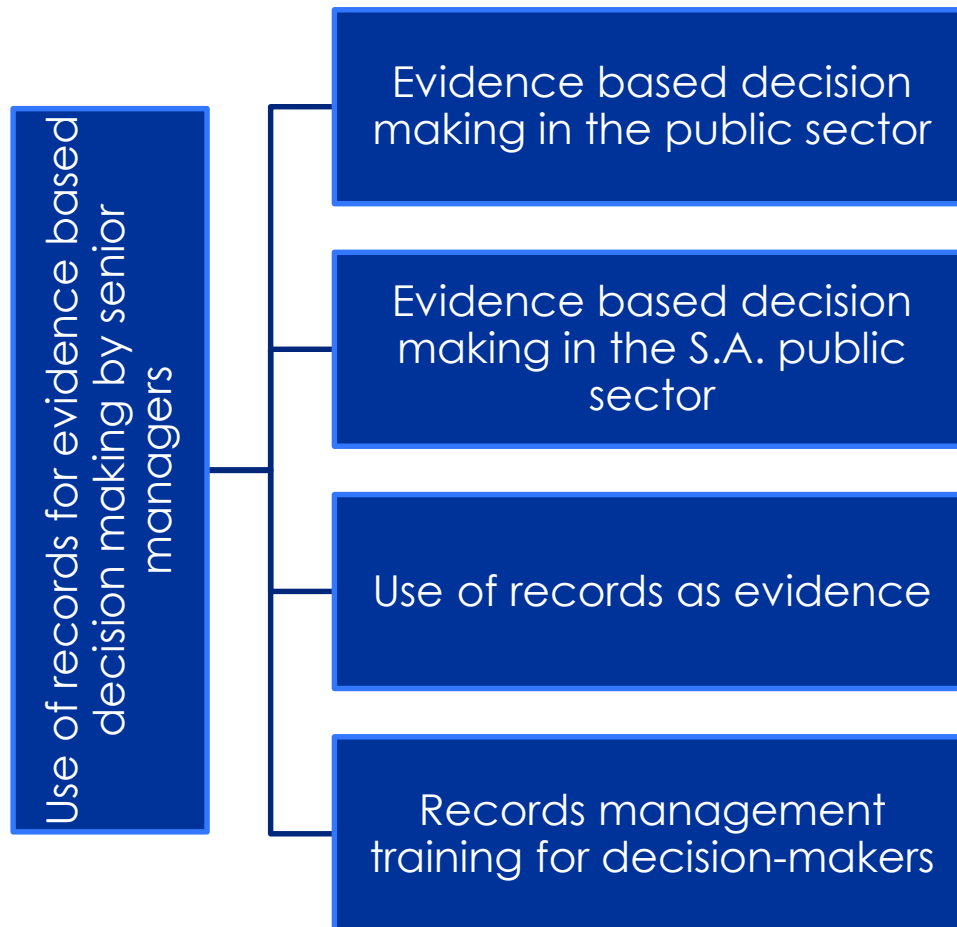
Investigate whether public sector senior managers use records for evidence based decision making.

● Literature review

Cresswell (2014: 30) states that both qualitative and quantitative research includes a substantial amount of literature to introduce the study, provide direction for the research question or hypothesis and compare findings.

Literature review

Literature review themes



Literature reviewed

- Primary sources, e.g. strategy and working documents, National Development plan
- Secondary sources, such as books, articles, theses, dissertations and reports.

- Decision making is the primary function of top level management (Baba and HakemZadeh 2012: 832; Mulgan 2011: vii and Ramsunder 2013: 8).
- In EBDM, decisions are made through the use of the best available evidence from multiple sources of information (Barends et al 2014: 2).

EBDM in the public sector

- The art of decision making often involves knowing which information is important to a particular stakeholder at the right time (Brownson, Fielding and Maylahn).
- Evidence-based concepts emerged out of evidence-based medicine in the 1970s and now used in other disciplines, such as management, policy making, social care, education, criminology and many other disciplines (Hoffman, Bennett and Del Mar 2010: 7; Buss and Shillabeer 2011: 6).

- There is a significant amount of conceptual literature on EBDM in public health but that of its real world application in decision-making is very scarce. (Sosnowy et al 2013: 763; Baba and HakemZadeh 2012: 832 .

EBDM in the S.A. public sector

- The South African government developed an interest in evidence-based processes in 2005 with the introduction of the National Monitoring and Evaluation System aimed at improving government performance.
- This was followed in 2010 with the establishment of a Department for Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) in the Office of Presidency, and the adoption of a National Evaluation Policy Framework in 2011 (Boulle et al 2015: 3).

EBDM in the S.A. public sector

- The DPME developed several performance monitoring and evaluation tools which have contributed to a major increase in the availability of evidence for policy and decision making (Goldman et al 2012: 1)
- Studies on EBDM in South Africa were not found.

EBDM in the S.A. public sector

- An EBDM related study by Schellnack-Kelly (2013) investigated the role of records management in governance-based evidence, service delivery and development in South African communities.
- The study focused on compliance and observation of recognised records management best practices by municipalities in order to attain Millenium Development Goals.

EBDM in the S.A. public sector

- Schellnack-Kelly analysed the roles of the public archivists and records managers in managing information required to demonstrate evidence of governance, examined the availability of information as evidence.
- The study investigated circumstances hindering records managers and public archivists from providing effective access to information.

EBDM in the S.A. public sector

- The study revealed that “poor record keeping in the local government sector and disinterest from the public archivists and records managers to intervene, results in unreliable information to provide evidence of accountability and transparency”.
- The study recommends that public archivists and records managers should contribute to a government that is accountable by promoting reliable record keeping.

Use of records as evidence

- Without adequate records, organisations may have difficulty providing evidence of actions and decisions (Ngoepe 2012: 80).
- Records provide evidence of and information about the actions of individuals, organizations, communities and environments in which those actions occurred (Franks 2013: 57; Millar 2010: 5 and Yeo 2010: 3).

Use of records as evidence

- The use of the record as evidence was advocated by Sir Hilary Jenkinson, one of the early archivists. He focused on the specific archival practices that ensured the record was maintained as an authentic, reliable, and usable record of evidence in order to preserve its long-term ability to function (Gauld 2010: 10).
- Evidence comes in different forms and from a variety of sources such as statistical data from surveys, censuses and the administrative data (Boulle et al 2015: 4).
- The use of records is a process within the records management discipline as described by Asogwa (2012: 2018); Saffady (2016: 1) and Penn et al (1989: 5).

Use of records as evidence

- Zussman (2003) discusses Canada's experience with evidence-based policy making. He shares three examples of current policy discussions in Canada that illustrate the challenges and problems involved in trying to integrate evidence into the decision-making process. The author highlights that records are a valuable source of evidence.
- Various modern scholars concur on the evidential use of records, for example, Cox (2000: 25, 127); Force (2013: 1); Klareld (2017: 1); Marutha (2011: 27); Schellnack-Kelly (2013: 12, 147) and Wamukoya (2000: 24).
- These studies however focus more on management and care of the record.

Use of records as evidence

- The use of records has gained less attention. (Sundqvist 2015: 2)
- Judging from the literature, the evidential importance of records is clear but records management researchers lament the lack of their use for what they were created for.

Records management training for decision-makers

- Rousseau and McCarthy (2007), quoted by Baba and HakemZadeh suggest that if management education is focused on evidence, managerial decision making will improve and organizations will achieve better outcomes.
- it is generally accepted that education plays an important role in updating knowledge and skills (Ngoepe 2008: 73).
- Much can be achieved through proper education and regular training to provide awareness to records management (Kyobe, Molai and Salie 2009: 13)

Records management training for decision-makers

- Governments can support effective implementation by offering—or partnering with organizations that offer— training, technical assistance, and other services.
- Records management training in organizations is usually for all staff (Momoti 2017: 69) but studies on records management training for senior managers were not found.
- Most studies focus on training of records management, administrative and registry staff (Asogwa 2012; Marutha 2011; Momoti 2017; Ngoepe 2008).

Findings from the literature review

- The literature review reveals quite a few studies on EBDM in public administration compared to the extensive body of knowledge of EBDM in the health professions. The latter is however excluded in the review because the type and volume of evidence differs from that of public administration.
- Literature on the actual use of records as evidence is sparse
- Cases of the use of records as evidence are few, and there are none on use of records in evidence based decision making in public administration.

Findings from the literature review

- There is limited knowledge and familiarity to EBDM in the public sector.
- Scholars recommend ongoing training, and placement of high organizational value on EBDM
- Scholars recommend promotion of a culture of EBDM
- A proper definition of evidence, and an agreed on theory and framework of evidence is needed

Recommendations

- Because of scarcity of cases of actual implementation of EBDM are scarce, research in this avenue is recommended.
- Records management training for senior managers and EBDM is recommended.
- As practitioners we can not rest on our laurels, more especially that an opportunity has presented itself in the form of EBDM in South Africa.
- This study has laid a conceptual foundation for a Doctoral empirical study which will investigate whether senior managers in Western Cape governmental bodies use records for EBDM.
- I'm challenging colleagues nationally and internationally to do the same.

Thank you

Contact Us



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