

Chapter 10

Knowledge Management and Electronic Records Management in the Realm of E-Government: Case of Botswana

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ABSTRACT

The recent past has seen many interventions aimed at merging traditional records management approaches with emerging trends such as electronic records (e-Records), electronic government (e-Government) and Knowledge Management (KM). This has largely cascaded from the belief that appropriate records management practices may positively contribute to transparency, accountability, efficiency and increased productivity both in the public and private sector business value chains. However, realization of the full potential of records management in the realm of e-Government cannot be achieved if multi-disciplinary factors impacting on records management are ignored when drawing implementation strategies and roadmaps. This chapter utilizes extensive literature reviews to probe the best ways of implementing records management with KM in the public sector in the context of e-Government. The chapter posits that the application of KM is still in its infancy as the concept had yet to take root in the public sector.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of e-Records has paved the way for records management (RM) to be looked at beyond its traditional lens. The definition and nature of records has now been widened and the

study of records management (its design and implementation) is now multi-dimensional. This has further raised the role of records within and beyond organizational boundaries. Before presenting formal definitions of what a record is, it is important to mention that the need for records

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management in organizations in an electronic environment starts from basic aspects such as poor e-mail usage and etiquette. Ryan (2010) has provided a comprehensive discussion on the essence of record management in as far as efficiency and accountability is concerned.

The implementation of e-Records and Knowledge Management (KM) in a given environment is not a very straight-forward agenda because of the complexity brought about by the emerging technology platforms. Although future Records Management will be done in paperless environment in the form of e-Records, it is important to understand traditional concepts of Records Management Systems design (Gunnlaugsdottir, 2012). Another issue that needs to be addressed is the need to understand how to position records management within the Venn diagram with information technology, legal perspective, and business goals and how to synergize with IT Officers who are the custodians of records and Records Managers (Ryan, 2010). In order to understand how these issues need to be addressed, there is need to understand how records management can be implemented in the context of KM in an organizational setup and how this contributes to overall competitiveness.

KM is slowly becoming a buzz word even in the public sector environments in the developing world. Although this is the case, there are very few studies that have been devoted to understanding it and therefore no tested conceptual frameworks or reference models are available on how best to implement it especially in resource-constrained areas such as Africa. This being the case, this chapter aims to interrogate the role of a hybrid approach to records management in promoting a healthy KM growth strategy in the public sector organizations in Africa, with Botswana at the setting of the study. The understanding is that a record is the basic unit of any KM endeavor as it presents a tangible resource for both explicit and tacit knowledge. It can be arguably stated that an

organization which has a legal framework and proper monitoring mechanisms recognizing a record as a basic unit of knowledge will promote a culture of knowledge transformation thereby providing a platform where tacit knowledge can easily be managed as an organizational resource. This is logically coherent because, *mutatis mutandis*, effective organization of institutional resources (especially tacit knowledge) will place the organization at a competitive edge.

It is worth mentioning that Knowledge Management is a multi-dimensional phenomenon and therefore its strategies should also follow a multi-faceted approach with emphasis on the characteristics of the local context. Thus, it suffices to mention that despite having a myriad of factors that impact on the development of KM, effective management of records, especially in public sector organizations, is a beacon to a robust KM environment. Knowledge Management coupled with robust records management approaches can assist employees with their pursuit to increase efficiency and effectiveness in their daily work (Davenport *et al.*, 1998; Gore & Gore, 1999; Salisbury, 2003). A record can be used as a basis for analyzing the efficiency through which organization resources are put to use, the effectiveness of organizational business processes, as legal evidence, as a tool for accountability, transparency and sharing of knowledge and experience. Given that the major motivation for implementing e-Government have largely been centered on increasing efficiency and effectiveness in the public service delivery channels and therefore mitigating corruption and increasing transparency, it is important that the e-Government and KM be logically linked with records management.

Deploying E-Government, through the use of ICTs in public service delivery platforms, provides opportunities for reducing the costs of delivering public services. Reduction in the cost can only be achieved if the decisions at each stage of the public service delivery process where decisions

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