

Examination of the Record Management Policies for Creation and Management of Personnel Records in Uasin Gishu County Government of Kenya

Miriam Chepkosgei Mutai^{1*}, Emily Bosire², Andrew Chege³

^{1,2,3}Department of Lib, Rec. Mgt. & Inf. Studies, Kenya

*Corresponding author

Miriam Chepkosgei Mutai

Article History

Received: 05.11.2017

Accepted: 10.11.2017

Published: 30.11.2017

DOI:

10.36347/sjebm.2017.v04i11.003



Abstract: This paper is an analysis of personnel records in human resource management at Uasin Gishu County Government. It seeks to answer the question: what policies are in existence for the creation and management of personnel records? Personnel records are the most essential tools in the management of human resources in an organization, they form the basis of accountability of funds and skills required to perform tasks. The study was motivated by the need to improve on the management of personnel records, to ensure that information about employees is available to take decisions and protect their rights. The aim of the study was to analyze the use of personnel records in human resource management and to propose appropriate ways in which human resource management can be enhanced. The objective of the study is to establish what records management policies exist in creation and management of personnel records. The findings of the study revealed that record keeping practices in Uasin Gishu County Government are not adequately supported by a record keeping infrastructure, which is made up of a policy and regulatory framework, a programme structure, resources and people. The Recommendations from the study is that the government develops and implements effective systems and procedures constituting policies and regulatory framework for personnel records management.

Keywords: Record Management Policies, Creation and Management of Personnel Records.

INTRODUCTION

The County creates personnel records when an individual has been granted employment. Records pertaining to these employee provides essential information about the employee and must be must be filed appropriately in the right file. Unless there is a well-defined infrastructure and well, managed systems, it is easy for the County to lose control of its personnel records. The County government of Uasin Gishu has 10 different departments equipped with the human resource who perform tasks and duties in these departments. In order to effectively manage all Uasin Gishu county government staff, the county registry is charged with the responsibility opening personnel file for each employee. Personnel files mainly will contain accumulation of all records pertaining to an employee of the County government.

All county Personnel records are kept and maintained in both central and confidential registry. These records are helpful to human resource managers in decision-making areas because they document complete details about all employees for example; name, date of birth, marital status, academic qualifications, professional qualifications, and previous

employment details among other key information, which helps in human resource management.

According to the 2016 statistics kept by the registry department of Uasin Gishu county government, the county has a total of three thousands two hundred personnel records. This is related to the total number of staff working in the county government. The registry system mainly runs in a manual system as most of records are in paper-based form. A preliminary investigation by the researcher showed that record keeping practices in the Uasin Gishu County government are not guided by any policies, rules and procedures as a result of undocumented records management programme. The lack of clear roles for staff in the registry department as far as record keeping is concerned, implies that records are not being properly managed from their creation, which is a key stage in relation to the life cycle management of records [1].

METHODOLOGY

The study was based on the Records Continuum and Diffusion of Innovation Models. The study population was staff of the Uasin Gishu County Government Headquarters that comprised of 92. The study sample size was 45 respondents whom they were

selected and interviewed, using non-probability sampling method where purposive sampling technique was applied. A qualitative research approach was adopted in this study using a case study research design. Interview and observation were used as data collection method to elicit data from the respondents. Semi-structured interview schedule and observation guide were prepared and used as data collection instruments. The collected data was organized based on various thematic areas and the relationship between categories established. Therefore, the collected data was analyzed thematically in line with the objectives and research questions of the study. Quantitative research was used in the presentation where tables and percentages were dominantly used to reveal the relationships between various variables.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Policies and Legal Framework for Personnel Records Management

According to Williams [2], a policy is a set of coherent decisions with a common long-term aim(s) that relate to a specific organizational purpose. In short, policies inform users on what is expected of them and through policies staff members are given guidance regarding the boundaries of their service [3]. Dunlop [4] affirms that all organizations should have a formally agreed policy for the management of their records. The goal of the policy should be the creation and management of authentic, reliable and useable records capable of supporting business functions and activities for as long as they are required. The policy should be adopted and endorsed at the highest decision making level and promulgated throughout the organization. This policy becomes the official charter for all record keeping activities.

The legal framework in which human resource records are created, used and maintained will vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, but it is the norm that some form of employment legislation, such as an Employment Act or Civil Service Act [5], governs the terms and conditions of public service. Legislation generally defines the rights and obligations of employers and employees and establishes various mechanisms for resolving disputes (including grievances) between management and staff. According to the IRMT study [6], These and other acts may also prescribe the establishment of employing authorities, such as a Public Service Commission or Civil Service Department, and outline mechanisms relating to compensation, entitlements and pensions. Regulations, codes and statutory instruments that further define personnel structures and outline policies and procedures may support the laws themselves. Both HR managers and records professionals responsible for personnel records must be fully aware of the record-keeping implications of all relevant laws, regulations, standing orders and codes.

Certain records will need to be created and kept specifically to ensure that ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) can demonstrate compliance with these laws and regulations.

Wamukoya [7] argues that there is other legislation, which may also be relevant to the management of personnel records, including public records and archives legislation and laws related to public access and the protection of privacy. Many governments and central agencies with responsibility for HR functions follow written rules and procedures for human resource management. These documents are often printed and issued in compendium editions and are updated regularly. Typically, the rules and procedures address issues such as: general conditions of service, appointments, examinations, discipline, promotions, transfers, performance appraisal, specify the content and structure of forms used to execute HR processes. With the introduction of computerized systems, there has been a tendency not to keep printed rules and procedures up to date but to rely instead on business rules built into the systems. However, up-to-date online or printed manuals are still essential to guide users through procedures.

Kane and Crawford [8], opines that the laws, policies, regulations and procedures, which govern human resource management, are also subject to revision as government organization and functions evolve. It is important, therefore, to keep track of the development of new or revised employment-related legislation, policies and procedures and to ensure that recordkeeping practices and reporting requirements continue to support current HR practices. In addition, legislation may need to be updated to allow electronic records to be considered acceptable evidence in a court of law.

Legal Frameworks for Records Management in Kenya

The management of public records in Kenya is guided by the following legal regulations:

ISO 15489 - Documentation and records management

ISO 15489, the international standard for information and documentation-records management, provides guidance on managing records. An organization seeking to conform to ISO 15489 needs to have the following in place:

- (a) A records management policy whose objective is the creation, maintenance and management of authentic, reliable and accurate records that is capable of supporting business functions and activities. The policy should be endorsed and adopted at the highest decision making level, and

should be implemented throughout the organization;

- (b) Lead records management responsibility and accountability should be defined and assigned to a person with appropriate responsibility.
- (c) Organizations need to create and maintain authentic and reliable records, and to protect the integrity of those records for as long as required. This will include:
 - (i) Ensuring that reliable records are created- a reliable record is one whose contents can be trusted as full and accurate representation of transactions and activities captured on the records;
 - (ii) Assessing the risks that would result from failure to maintain authoritative records;
 - (iii) Preserving records and making them accessible over time in order to meet business requirements;
 - (iv) Complying with legal and regulatory requirements and organizational policy;
 - (v) Ensuring that records are maintained in a safe and secure environment;
 - (vi) Safeguarding the integrity of records - this refers to their being complete and unaltered;
 - (vii) Compliance – records should be managed in accordance with the legal and regulatory environment;
 - (viii) Providing an appropriate storage environment and media that afford records adequate protection; and
 - (ix) Records systems should provide timely and efficient access to and retrieval of records needed for business and accountability requirements.

Personnel Records Management

Management is the process of efficiently achieving organization objects with and through people. To achieve its objective, management typically requires the coordination of several vital components that are referred to as functions. The primary function of management are planning, organizing, coordinating, directing and controlling [9]. IRMT [10] argues that, good personnel records are necessary to allow the best use of available staff and promote efficiency in the organizations. The record helps the organizations to make good use of scarce resources and provide accurate source of data, which it is used in other systems throughout the organizations. According to World Bank, [11]; Cain, [12], Personnel files should have information necessary for decisions about suitability for promotions, transfer, disciplinary procedures, educational training, health, safety and welfare that explain authorized changes to payrolls pertaining individuals, including supporting documentation.

Most importantly, the records provide the authority for determining pension entitlement for the employees; hence, they must be trustworthy in terms of their accuracy, completeness and verifiability. Although filing is in the heart of personnel records, few office managers place any importance on the work. Most government institutions have their records and information management in a chaotic situation. There are problems of misfiling and incomplete personnel files, which create information gaps. It also takes too long for records staff to retrieve files, which leads to frustration in carrying out their work hence administrators are forced to take decisions on an ad hoc basis. Citizens suffer from inadequate services with long delays and their rights are not protected [13].

Furthermore, Mnjama and Wamukoya [14], point out that records are valuable assets that need to be managed and protected. Besides providing essential evidence of organizational activities, transactions and decisions, records also support business functions and are critical for the assessment of organizational performance. Without reliable records, governments cannot effectively manage state resources, civil service, delivery of services such as education and health care. Moreover, without accurate and reliable records, and effective systems to manage them, governments cannot be held accountable for their decisions and actions, and the rights and entitlements of citizens and corporate bodies cannot be upheld.

Personnel records play a vital role in providing the information needed by organization to manage and pay their staff members, plan their workforce requirement and monitor staff performance. Ultimately, any organization's development and sustainability depends on sound and effective human resource management and approaches it chooses to follow will be derived in part from an analysis of the information contained in personnel records, [15].

The management of personnel records is an issue that affects every ministry, department and agency in the public service as well as every employee. It underpins efforts made to ensure the accuracy of the public service payrolls database. The implementation of the human resource management reforms as expressed in the public reforms programme. The implementation of government public service management and employment policy, especially the introduction of performance related promotions and compensation and the ability of the government to respect pension entitlements of public servants public service employers will need improved access to employee's records especially concerning present and past performance. Above all the effective management of personnel records will reduce delays in processing pension's claims [16].

The lack of common standard practices underlines specifying which categories of documents should be classified and filed as confidential. If confidential and open files must be maintained, an option is to keep the two files in the same registry, side by side, so that personnel information about each individual is located in the same place and can be subject to high level of security.

In most countries, the majority of personnel records are routinely treated as confidential because of personnel nature of their contents. With the exception of few categories, it is assumed that only a very restricted number of staff based on the principle that only those staff job requires them to see the records should have access should see all personnel records.

RESULTS

Policies, Systems, Standards and Procedures that guide the Management of Personnel Records

In this aspect, the researcher asked questions intended to gauge the respondents’ awareness of the existing policies, systems, standards, and procedures that regulate the management of personnel records in the Uasin Gishu county government. The responses are presented as follows.

Existence of records management policies/programs

The respondents were asked whether any records management policies, program(s), procedures or guidelines have been formulated to guide records management activities. Most of the respondents

reported that there was no such program or guidelines in the Uasin Gishu county government. However, the six (100%) top management respondents together with the nine (100%) senior administrative officers said that it was possible that the registry may have developed guidelines for the management of their own records but added that if such guidelines existed, they had not received formal approval by Management.

All respondents from the two categories pointed to the ISO Procedures Manual as the only existing tool at present for attaining intellectual control over records in the organization. Clearly therefore, there was no formally approved policy guiding the management of records in Uasin Gishu County government. They further noted that lack of a coordinated policy, had a negative impact on the management of personnel records as experience rather than laid down policy specifications were used to manage records.

Likewise, on the issue of policy, all the other respondents such as heads of departments, ICT staff, registry staff and secretaries said that there was no overall policy, which governed the management and use of records at Uasin Gishu County government. Respondents from the registry added that because of not having documented records management policy, they had no clear understanding of what documents should be kept in open files and those that should be kept in confidential files.

Table 1: Policies, Standards, Systems and procedures that Guide the Management of Personnel Records

Remarks	Top Mngnt (N=6)	Senior Adm Officers (n=9)	HODs (N=7)	Registry Staff (N=9)	ICT staff (N=8)	Secretaries (N=6)
	Freq%	Freq %	Freq %	Freq %	Freq %	Freq %
There was no policy in the U-G County for managing personnel records.	100	100	100	100	100	100
No policy on computerization of personnel records.	100	100	100	-	-	-
Personnel records used in day-to-day activities are managed in manual system.	100	100	100	100	100	100
No standards and procedures	3	-	4	-		
Standards and procedures were still in draft form.	2	-	-	-		
No retention guidelines	-	-	4	-		

Existence of Records Management System

The researcher asked on the current system being used in managing records at the Uasin - Gishu county government. Respondents from all categories stated that all records activities were managed in a manual system it was seen that most of the records were

in paper-based form. They cited experienced challenge like delays in accessing required record sand incidences of missing or lost records. When asked about policy on computerization of personnel records in the county again all respondents said it did not exist. The ICT staff respondents also commented that there was no policy

on the application of computers though there were some back up records in electronic system- namely the Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS) which were managed by the human resource department of the county.

Nine (100%) registry personnel All six (100%) secretaries responded that in most departments there were transition from manual to electronic record systems was underway, they reported that the electronic records management system was beneficial to their daily operations in the following main ways:

- (i) Increased the ability of organization to share information within and outside their offices;
- (ii) Enhanced maximum utilization of the available space;
- (iii) Quick and ease in retrieval and access of records;
- (iv) Greater security and records storage and;
- (v) Enhanced service delivery and efficiency by the organization”.

Existence of Records Management Standards

The study further sought to find out whether there were standards and procedures for managing personnel records. In response to this question three of four top management respondents said standards and procedures were yet to be used for they were still in draft form while the other three said there were no standards and procedures in the Uasin Gishu county government and added that experience rather than laid down procedures were used.

Existence of Records Management Procedures

Registry staff was asked about the procedures used in ordering and delivering personnel records from registries. The nine (100%) respondents explained about the same procedures, they said, it was done through sending requests to the registry. The procedure went thus; file request was sent to the registry, control book is signed upon file charge out and signed again upon return of the file to the registry. Similarly the registry staff were asked about the procedures that should be followed when personnel record are required by action officers. All the nine registry staff also responded that a file was first located, retrieved and registered in an outgoing register. It was then sent to where it was required. They also added that the registry operates in a manual systems and that no electronic system for records management existed.

Knowledge of Existing Guidelines on Records Management

When asked if they were aware of any formal document that stipulates guidelines on RM in the institution, six (100%) top management and nine (100%) senior administrative officers’ respondents said they were conversant with the ISO procedures on records management, apparently because they were the

management staff thus they were expected to be conversant with all County policies and programs.

What are the Policies, Systems, Standards and Procedures that regulate the Management of Personnel Records?

The study showed that various strategies were used to enhance the management of personnel records. These include digitization of personnel records, decongestion and introduction of HCMIS. However, no policy existed for managing personnel records. This had a negative impact on the management of personnel records and general records management. In the absence of policy, staff relied on their experience to manage personnel records and the standards provided the ISO. Another consequence was that registry staff was found to have poor understanding as to which documents were supposed to be kept in open and those to be kept in confidential files. Worse still, computerization of personnel records was not guided by any policy. Personnel records were requested for delivery by sending a request to the registry and signing a delivery book. There was no overall policy governing the management of personnel records. Upon retrieval of a file, the file was registered in the outgoing register and sent to where it was requested.

The staff also outlined the strategies adopted to enhance the management of personnel records, which include decongestion, digitization to provide back-up records, conforming of HCMIS to capture data relating to education and family history. These strategies have facilitated resolutions of complaints by staff and have made availability of resources possible. Besides, these measures have confirmed that the government will work towards the improvement of records management as a vehicle towards the enhancement of service delivery in the public. Yet in spite of these measures, the study noted some weakness with these strategies. They include resistance to change, widening digital divide, poor computer infrastructure and unreliable power supply. The study showed the challenges were caused by the absence of a policy on personnel records management and the records were managed haphazardly resulting in the current chaotic situation in registry.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study have confirmed the growing quest in public servants of various cadres to improve personnel management. Yet without policies, standards, laid down procedures and guidelines this objective cannot be achieved. Besides what is suggested above, mechanism should be put in place to see to it that each public servant abides by these regulations and those severe disciplinary actions taken against those who fail to comply.

It is undeniable truth that every organization employs staff and creates personnel records. In addition, the staff is among an organization's most important, and usually most valuable assets and like any other assets, the staff are a resource that must be deployed to maximum advantage. Therefore, proper management of personnel records can make a significant contribution to the objective of creating personnel records by ensuring that information is available to take decisions and to protect the right of both the county and individuals. Meanwhile, a personnel records system should run effectively whether it is in a purely paper-based environment or in an electronic environment.

Indeed, personnel records management aims at ensuring that a complete and comprehensive employment history of each public servant is readily available whenever it is required, and that the information contained in personnel records supports the management, deployment, supervision and development of employees. There is need to review the County's strategic plan so that personnel records and human resource management components are clearly entrenched in it. By incorporating these elements in the strategic plan of the County, their profile will be raised and a formal communication will be passed to all members of the County government concerning the expected records management practices. This will largely contribute to the achievement of County goals and objectives.

A record keeping policy is the basis of all record keeping authority. It provides the framework within which functions are performed and contributes to the success of the organization as a whole. The County needs to formulate a comprehensive and up-to-date policy. The policy should encompass elements such as the precise definition of records covering all media, formats, assign primary responsibility for managing records throughout their life cycle, and the roles of all key officers and records staff defined. A records office procedural manual, disposal schedules and guidance materials should also be developed under the authority of the policy.

Policies, standards, guidelines and procedures should be developed and implemented by the Uasin Gishu county government to improve the management of personnel records in the county registry. The officers in charge of records sections in the various units of the institution should work together with the head of Central Registry to develop policies, which specifically address different types of records such as personnel medical, financial, architectural records, etc. The purpose of such policies will be to establish the principles, responsibilities and requirements for the management of those particular record types. This will

aid in addressing issues that have not been adequately addressed by the records management program.

REFERENCES

1. Shepherd E, Yeo G. 'Managing Records: A Handbook of Principles and Practice', Facet, London p.22. 2003. Print.
2. Walliam N, Baiche B. Social Research. London, Sage Publications. 2001. Print.
3. Dunlop J. Policies and services in the reading room. ESARBICA Journal. 2009; 28: 222-223.
4. Dunlop J. 2009. See note 2.
5. IRMT. Understanding the Context of Electronic Records Management. Available at <http://www.irmt.org/documents/educ>. [Accessed on 9th October 2015]. 2009.
6. IRMT. Managing Personnel Records in an Electronic Environment: TERM Project. IRMT, London [online] available at www.irmt.org [accessed 14 June 2015.] 2009.
7. Wamukoya J. Records Management and Administrative Reforms Programmes in Kenya. PhD Thesis, University College, London. 1988. Print.
8. Kane B, Crawford J. Barriers to Effective Human Resource Management. 1994. International Journal of Manpower, 20(8).
9. DeCenzo DA, Robbins S. Fundamentals of Human Resources Management (8th ed).Replika Press Pvt. Ltd, India. 2005. Print.
10. International Records Management Trust-IRMT. The Management of Public Sector Records: Principles and Context, Organizing and Controlling Records. 1999. Available at <http://64.233.183.104/search?q=catche:HOxs2Lkj:www.irmt.org/download/DOCUME>. [Accessed on 07th May 2015].
11. World Bank Group. Managing Records as the basis for effective service delivery and Public Accountability in development: An introduction to core principles for staff of the World Bank and its partners. 2000. Available at: [http:// web.worldbank.org/](http://web.worldbank.org/). [Accessed on 22nd July 2015].
12. Cain P, Thurston A. Personnel Records: A Strategic Resource for public Sector Management. A Research Report Submitted to ODA ESCOR. & IRMT, London. 1997. Print.
13. World Bank Group. 2000. See note 11.
14. Mnjama N. Records and Information: the neglected resource. Paper presented at Information management services Annual Records Management Conference, Kruger National Park, SA. 2004. Print.
15. IRMT. 2009. See note 5.
16. Griffin A, Mazikana P. Fostering Trust and Transparency in Governance: Investigating and Addressing the Requirements for Building Integrity in Public Sector Information System in the ICT Environment. IRMT, London. 2007. Available

http://www.irmt.org/documents/building_integrity/case_studies/IRMT_Case_Study_Tanzania.pdf [24th November, 2015]