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)
Public sector information
   – contributes to good governance = improves decision-making processes

Some government information is in the form of records,

Records 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).
Records are a source of evidence
- 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 evidence provide accountability for decisions.
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)
Aim of the study

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

Literature review themes

- Use of records for evidence based decision making by senior managers
  - Evidence based decision making in the public sector
  - Evidence based decision making in the S.A. public sector
  - Use of records as evidence
  - Records management training for decision-makers
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

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.)
The South African government developed an interest in evidence-based processes in 2005 with the introduction of the National Monitoring and Evaluation System.

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).
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.
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.
The study investigated circumstances hindering records managers and public archivists from providing effective access to information.
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).
Use of records as evidence

- 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.

- Focus is more on management and care of the record.
LCM maintains that a record has an active, semi-active and inactive stage, thus may not be of use at a certain point of its life.
Provides a shift from records as physical artefacts to continuous evidential value.
Records management training for decision-makers

- If management education is focused on evidence, managerial decision making will improve and organizations will achieve better outcomes.

- 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.

- 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

- There is limited knowledge and familiarity to EBDM in the public sector.

- Records management focuses more on the physical care of records than the actual use of records.

- There are no studies that focus on whether records are used for EBDM.
Recommendations

- Because of scarcity of cases of actual implementation of EBDM are scarce, research in this avenue is recommended.

- Ongoing training, and placement of high organizational value on EBDM and use of records.

- Promotion of a culture of EBDM in organizations, e.g. policy, strategies.

- A proper definition of evidence, and an agreed on theory and framework of evidence is needed.
Thank you
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