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Education and Training of Archives and Records Management Professionals in Africa

by Shadrack Katuu and Mpho Ngoepe

Effective management of records is fundamental to the efficient running of bureaucracies. Recent studies in the management of records within the public sector in Africa reveal various challenges, including accountability in the auditing process (Ngoepe and Ngulube 2016), the provision of quality health services (Katu 2016b) or in the justice system (Maseh and Katuu 2017; Ngoepe and Makhubela 2015). The advent of digital records offers the opportunities of multiple access, instant transmission and efficient retrieval using multiple search criteria, but such records have not always been managed effectively. Among the reasons often cited by scholars include the lack of skills and poor infrastructure. Archival institutions in Africa do not have the necessary legal and technical infrastructure to ingest archival records into custody (Katu and Ngoepe 2015b; Ngoepe and Saurombe 2016). In addition there are very few universities that offer archives and records management qualifications. For instance, South Africa has 25 universities with 10 offering library and information science programmes and only three offering qualifications in archives and records management (Ngoepe, Maluleka et al. 2014). Unfortunately the curricula of these universities do not comprehensively cover the management of digital records. The situation is similar in Kenya, Namibia, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe where education, research and training in archives and records management have been given little attention, resulting in a shortage of appropriately skilled professionals (Chaterera 2016; Katuu and Ngoepe 2015a; Khayundi 2011; Nengomasha 2013; Thurston 1996).

There have been efforts to address the challenges of lack of education in the field of archives and records management in the continent. In the mid-1960s the International Council on Archives (ICA), with support from the Society of American Archivists (SAA) and UNESCO, conceptualised regional centres that would be attached to universities and offer archival training (Evans 1988; Smith 1976). Two such centres were created, one for Anglophone and the other for Francophone countries. However, due to various financial and logistical challenges, these efforts did not last more than a decade, and since their demise national education and training programmes have emerged. Table 1 shows a list of programmes that existed in a select number of African countries in 2001 compared to 2009 (Katu 2015 p. 20)

Table 1: Educational institutions in Africa offering archives and records management qualifications

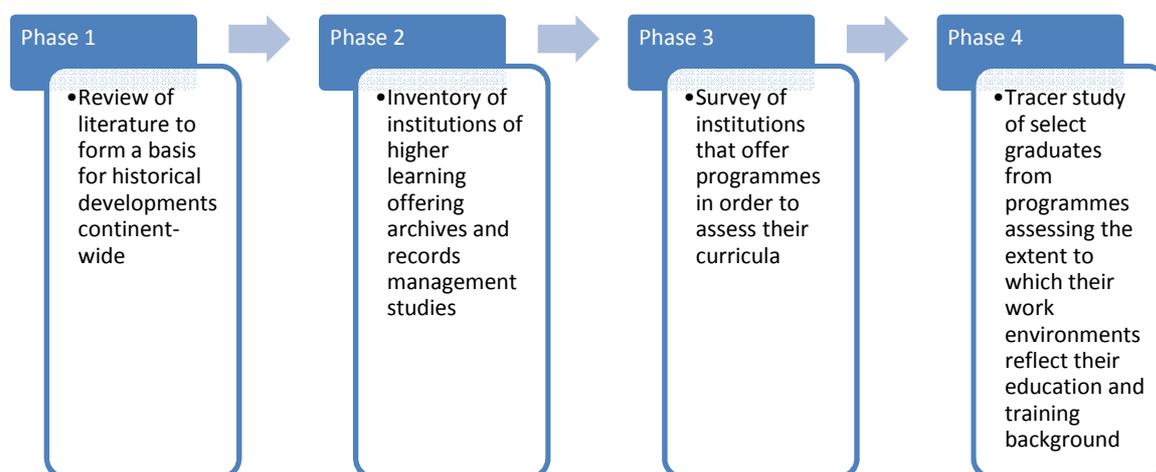
Country	2001	2009
Botswana	University of Botswana (C, D)	Institute of Development Management (C); University of Botswana (C, D)
Ghana	University of Ghana (D, B, M)	African Regional Training Centre for Archivists (C, PGD); University of Ghana (D, B, M)
Kenya	Kenya Polytechnic (C); Kenyatta University (M); Moi University (B)	Eldoret Polytechnic (C); Kenya Polytechnic (C, D, HD); Kenya School of Professional Studies (C, D); Kenyatta University (B, M, Phd); Moi University (B, M)
Lesotho	Institute of Public and Administration Management (C)	Institute of Development Management (C)
Malawi	-	Mzuzu University (D, B)
Mozambique	-	Arquivo Historica de Mocambique (C); Centre for Professional Training (C)
Namibia	University of Namibia (D, B)	University of Namibia (B)
Nigeria	University of Ibadan (M)	University of Ibadan (M)
Senegal	-	Universite Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar (B, PGD)
Sierra Leone	University of Sierra Leone (D)	-
South Africa	Rand Afrikaans University (B); Technikon South Africa (NC, NHC, PD, Btech); University of Natal (B, PGD); University of South Africa (B); University of Witwatersrand (M)	University of Johannesburg (B, PGD, M, PhD); University of KwaZulu Natal (B, PGD, M, PhD); University of South Africa (PDC, C, HC, D,B, M, PhD); University of Witwatersrand (PGD, PhD)
Sudan	University of Omdurman (D, B)	University of Omdurman (B)
Swaziland	Institute of Development Management (C)	Institute of Development Management (C)
Tanzania	Bagamoyo School (D) ; University of Dar es Salaam (M)	Bagamoyo School (D) ; University of Dar es Salaam (M)
Uganda	Makerere University (D, B, M)	-
Zambia	Chalimba Evelyne Hone (C, D); University of Zambia (B, M)	University of Zambia (D,B)
Zimbabwe	Harare Polytechnic (NC, ND); University of Science and Technology (B)	Harare Polytechnic (C, D); National University of Science and Technology (C, D)

Legend: B – Bachelor degree, Btech – Bachelor of Technology degree, C – Certificate, D – Diploma, HD – Higher Diploma, M – Masters, NC – National Certificate, ND – National Diploma, NHC – National Higher Certificate, PD – Post-diploma Diploma, PGD – Post-graduate Diploma, PhD – Doctor of Philosophy

While this information may look comprehensive, it is plagued by a number of weaknesses. First, there are instances where information on a particular country or covering a programme may be incomplete. For instance, the University of Botswana had been offering Masters-level qualifications earlier than 2009 and the Tanzania Public Service College had also been offering certificate and diploma qualifications since the early 2000s. Such information would have to be gleaned from disparate sources rather than any existing survey or compendium of national or continental programmes. Second, the table only shows information from 17 countries that are less than one third of all the countries in sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, many of the countries in the table were formerly colonised by the British and, therefore, cannot be considered adequately representative of the continent's socio-political diversity. Third, the information is drawn from two sources that were published almost a decade apart, yet they show only slight changes in the number of institutions in each of the countries and the types of qualifications they provide. This illustrates the dire need for more recent research on developments in individual African countries. For instance, between 2000 and 2010 South Africa saw an extensive restructuring of the post-secondary education sector with the previous 36 institutions being reduced to 25 institutions (Mouton, Louw et al. 2013). Additionally, we need to bear in mind the nuances that make the experiences in the continent unique. For instance, the continent has a colonial and post-colonial experience that makes the realities in different countries unique. In addition, this continent is the second largest in the world and the geographical expanse, as well as the populations of each country, needs to be considered. It means that just because countries had similar colonial experiences, for instance, having the same colonial master does not mean they have similar post-colonial experiences, e.g. Uganda and Zambia were colonised by the British, but their post-colonial experiences are very different. Additionally, just because countries have similar geographical sizes it does not translate into similar populations, e.g. Botswana and Kenya are both 580,000 square km. Botswana has a population of just over two million people and Kenya of just over 41 million people. This demonstrates that any proposed solution needs to consider these nuances.

In this regard, since 2013 the Department of Information Science at the University of South Africa has been coordinating the contributions of Team Africa that is part of the InterPARES Trust research project. Overall InterPARES Trust is exploring issues concerning digital records and data entrusted to the Internet with the goal of generating theoretical and methodological frameworks to develop a variety of instruments that ensure “public trust grounded on evidence of good governance, a strong digital economy, and a persistent digital memory” (Katuu 2016a). One of the case studies undertaken by Team Africa is entitled *AF01: Curriculum Alignments at Institutions of Higher Learning in Africa: Preparing Professionals to Manage Records Created in Networked Environments*. This is a systematic analysis of the curricula in different educational institutions in Africa and the extent to which they address the changing environment in the digital era. It is being carried out in four phases as illustrated below.

Figure 1: Phases of the Team Africa research project on education and training in Africa



The objective of the research project is to identify the gaps that exist and suggest ways of filling those gaps, cognizant of the fact that different nations require specific interventions rather than the usual one-size-fit-all approach. For a continent like Africa, this study demonstrates several complexities, including the fact that there are 54 countries, each with its unique set of socio-cultural and political history and development. The human temptation is to try and identify trends and patterns in order to understand complexities. However, there is a high risk that such trends and patterns are from inadequate source information and pedestrian analysis. The trends and patterns could end up being so general that they result in “a single story”. As novelist, Chimamanda Adichie (2009) would attest, we risk critical misunderstanding when we forget that everyone’s lives and identities are composed of many overlapping stories. “The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete” (Adichie 2009 p. 5). This research effort is to bring out the complex and overlapping stories that constitute education and training of professionals in Africa. Ultimately this has an impact on the growth and the development of the archives and records management profession within the continent (Ngoepe and Jiyane 2015).

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