

# InterPARES Trust

## Project Report



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## Executive Summary

**Rationale:** The terrain in Africa has changed drastically due to the advent of mobile telephony and the possibilities of joining the digital path for many citizens in different countries. This has an impact on the continuing dialogue within the continent on better governance particularly relating to government accountability to its citizens. The citizenry's expectations of their governments within this environment suggesting that the records professionals graduating from educational institutions require an enhanced set of skills relevant to their career. This study examined the curricula in different educational institutions in Africa and investigate the extent to which they address the changing environment.

**Methodology:** This study explored the technological changes that have taken place in different African countries and the impact this has on the public sector. The study was conducted in three phases. Phase 1 provided a background to the study and Phase 2 was a survey of institutions from different parts of the continent. Phase 3 was a tracer study of graduates from different universities within the continent to see how they are performing within their work environments.

**Final products:**

- Phase 1 resulted in an extensive annotated bibliography as well as a literature review that explored regional and national contexts within which education and institutions in Africa operate.
- Phase 2 resulted in an inventory of education and training institutions in 38 of the 54 countries in Africa.
- Phase 3 resulted in a survey report of 100 respondents from 16 different African countries.

**Title:**

Curriculum Alignments at Institutions of Higher Learning in Africa: Preparing Professionals to Manage Records Created in Networked Environments

**Research team**

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## Background

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 2016) or in the justice system (Maseh and Katu 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; Katu 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 emerged.

Survey's conducted on education and training institutions in Africa demonstrate a plethora of institutions in different nations (Katu 2015 p. 20). However, the most recent Africa-wide study was published in 2009 and only covered 17 countries mostly in Anglophone speaking countries on the continent.

For this reason, Team Africa conceptualized a study that would systematically analyze the curricula in different educational institutions in Africa and the extent to which they address the changing environment in the digital era.

## **Objective**

The objective of the study was 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.

## **Methodology**

This study explored the technological changes that have taken place in different African countries and the impact this has on the public sector. It provided a background to investigating the extent to which educational institutions are preparing records professionals to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The study was conducted in three phases.

- Phase 1 provided a background to the study – this entailed an extensive annotated bibliography as well as a literature review.
- Phase 2 was a survey of institutions from different parts of the continent.
- Phase 3 was a tracer study of graduates from different universities within the continent to see how they are performing within their work environments.

## Findings

The three-phased study produced varied research products as outlined below.

Phase 1 produced in an extensive annotated bibliography constituting 41 publications authored by more than 30 scholars with almost 40% being from the African continent. Topics covered include: development professional associations specific countries, practical challenges in providing records management consultancy services, tracer studies of graduates from different national institutions as well as training of professionals in different education institutions etc. In addition, there is also a literature review that explored regional and national contexts within which education and institutions in Africa operate. This includes issues such as: where these education programmes should be located within institutions, the balance between theoretical and practical training, harmonised vs specialised programmes, as well as the impact of information technology.

Phase 2 produced in an inventory of education and training institutions in 38 of the 54 countries in Africa. This information constituted institutional names, contact information and, whenever available, information about the programmes. However, the team was unable to get even basic information from at least 16 countries and territories can only speculate different reasons. For instance,

- Several countries are fragile states either currently undergoing or just emerging from a period of political and social upheaval.
- A few territories in or near the African continent have complicated sovereignty either not recognized globally or are dependent territories of countries in other continents.
- Other countries may actually have education and training programmes but details have not been published on websites.
- Yet other countries may have published their programmes but either in Arabic, French or Portuguese, languages which none of the researchers were conversant.



Phase 3 constituted a survey conducted in November of 2017 that reached out to more than 800 contacts all over the continent. The survey had three parts: background information, characteristics of education as well as the types of courses and extent covered during the study. A total of 100 individuals responded from 16 different African countries. With regards to the three parts of the survey, the results are as follows

- Background information – while the respondents were from 16 different countries, 76% of the respondents came from either Botswana, Kenya, South Africa or Zimbabwe which are the four countries constituting Team Africa. Amongst the respondents the top three professions were records management, academia (college or university lecturers) and archives management, in that order.
- Characteristics of education:
  - Of the respondents, more than 50% had a masters degree and 17% had a doctoral qualification.
  - For 40% of the respondents the structure of the studies was a fair balance between course work and research and 25% with only course work .
  - 69% of the respondents completed their studies within their home countries in Africa
  - In terms of when they graduated, 46% have graduated within three years or less while another 30% had graduated between 4 and 7 years.
- Types of courses and extent covered – the survey assessed four main subject areas and revealed varied results:
  - An introduction to information technology – about 66% of the respondents had either no coverage or very low coverage of the survey topics for the course. Only 9% had high coverage while the rest had moderate coverage.

- An introduction to legal aspects – about 55% of the respondents had either no coverage or very low coverage of the survey topics for the course. Only 16% had high coverage while the rest had moderate coverage.
- Current records management - about 20% of the respondents had either no coverage or very low coverage of the survey topics for the course. In contrast 59% had high coverage and 19% had moderate coverage.
- Introduction to digital preservation - about 51% of the respondents had either no coverage or very low coverage of the survey topics for the course. Only 18% had high coverage while the rest had moderate coverage.

## Conclusions

For a continent like Africa, this study demonstrated 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 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, Chimamnda 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).

## Products

- Annotated Bibliography (version 3 dated January 2017)
- Literature Review (version 2 dated September 2017)

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