A Model to Foster Records Use in Evidence-Based Decision-Making: Neither Restricted by Time nor Space

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Abstract

The study is derived from a doctoral dissertation by Momoti that triangulated the Continuum of Evidence Use and the Records Continuum Models to determine the extent to which records as sources of evidence were used for evidence-based decision-making by senior managers in Western Cape governmental bodies in South Africa. The investigation was descriptive, cross-sectional, and used a mixed-mode survey design. The mixed-mode survey addressed low response challenges encountered during data collection. Data was collected from a stratified random sample of 163 senior managers from 31 Western Cape governmental bodies. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to ensure that an accurate description of the findings was achieved. The study revealed that knowledge of evidence sources is crucial for their use. Senior managers acknowledged the importance of using records for evidence-based decision-making and always used them as sources of evidence to decide on service delivery programmes. The study revealed 83 such service delivery improvement programmes. The study proposed a model to foster the use of records as sources of evidence in decision-making.

Keywords: Continuum Model of Evidence; evidence-based decision-making; Records Continuum Model; Western Cape government; records management

Introduction and Background

Records are considered important assets for decision-making, transparency, and accountability due to their primary and secondary value. Khumalo (2018) and Schellenberg (1965) explain that the primary value of records is to accomplish the purposes which they were created for by the office of origin, such as administrative, accountability, fiscal, legal, and operational purposes. The secondary value is archival; that is, the records are for informational, historical, and evidential use. The primary value of records as sources of evidence within the context of evidence-based decision-making is the focus of this study. Evidence-based decision-making was introduced in the South African government in 2005 to enable the government to make informed decisions for improved service delivery (Boulle et al. 2015). The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2010) explains that evidence-based decision-making (EBDM) requires the use of the best available evidence from research and other sources such as records for well-informed decisions. The following section expands more on records as sources of evidence.

Records as Sources of Evidence

Records bear evidence of organisational activities and are considered the most reliable source of evidence (Cordis and Milyo 2016; Momoti and King 2019). For instance, Cordis and Milyo (2016) discovered that evidence from administrative records in prosecuting corrupt public officials in the United States of America (US) proved to be more reliable than evidence from news articles, journal surveys and research articles. MacNeil (2001), however, finds that authenticity and reliability of records is an archaic way of evaluating their evidential value, which undermines other forms of evidence such as oral history. In the same light, Ngoepe (2020) posits that oral evidence is a source of evidence and when used with written records presents the whole truth, since both are authentic records and complement each other in providing evidence. Yeo (2007) explains that records are not evidence per se; instead, they provide a persistent representation of activities that happened. They are memorialised on a physical carrier or medium and have the capacity to be used beyond the immediate circumstances that led to their creation. Therefore, the evidence they bear is long-lasting.

The South African Government in Brief

The government in South Africa is divided into three spheres: national, provincial, and local. All the spheres have legislative and executive authority (RSA 1996). By 2020, South Africa had nine provinces, namely, the Eastern Cape, the Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, the Northern Cape, North-West and the Western Cape. According to the Constitution (RSA 1996), the provinces have legislative and executive powers concurrent with the national sphere. The local sphere of government is composed of 278 municipalities comprising eight metropolitan, 44 district and 226 local municipalities (RSA 2020). Table 1 presents a breakdown of the South African municipalities.

Table 1: Composition of South African municipalities

Municipalities in South Africa			
Metropolitan	**District**	**Local**	**Total**
8	44	226	278

Of the 278 municipalities, 30 are in the Western Cape, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Composition of Western Cape municipalities

Western Cape municipalities			
Metropolitan	**District**	**Local**	**Total**
1	5	24	30

In addition to the three spheres, the South African government has 169 public entities that together with provincial and local spheres provide public services. Of the 169 public entities, 11 are in the Western Cape province (RSA 2020). During the 2019/2020 financial year, the Western Cape government had 13 departments, 30 municipalities, and 11 public entities. The Western Cape province, therefore, had 54 governmental bodies. During the same period, the Western Cape governmental bodies had 878 senior managers, as presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Number of senior managers of Western Cape governmental bodies in 2019/2020

Senior managers in Western Cape governmental bodies			
Departments	**Municipalities**	**Public entities**	**Total**
440	291	147	878

This study used the Continuum of Evidence Use and the Records Continuum Models to investigate the use of records for decision-making by senior managers in Western Cape governmental bodies.

Research Problem

Records are created and used in organisations as evidence and to provide accountability for decisions (Coetzer 2012). The use of records as evidence is thus an integral part of their existence. Senior managers as decision makers are supposed to consult and use information in records to make decisions. Moreover, EBDM, requires the use of evidence from multiple information sources to make service delivery decisions. However, researchers such as Marutha (2011) and Momoti (2017) have concluded that records are seldom used for decision-making by senior managers in the public sector

due to poor records management. However, the 2018/19 annual report (Western Cape Government 2019) of the Western Cape Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport revealed that records management tools and processes were in place to exercise control and guide the governmental bodies in creating, managing, and accessing authentic, complete, and reliable evidence. The researchers of this article, however, found no systematic investigation to determine the extent to which records as sources of evidence were used for decision-making in Western Cape governmental bodies. The research problem of this study was: To what extent were records used as sources of evidence by senior managers in Western Cape governmental bodies to support service delivery decisions?

Theoretical Framework

The Continuum Model of Evidence Use (CMEU) and the Records Continuum Model (RCM) framed this study. The CMEU is drawn from Nutley, Walter, and Davies (2007), who posit that the use of evidence begins by knowing and being aware that evidence exists, knowing and understanding what counts as evidence, and its access (conceptual stages). To some decision makers, however, the use of evidence refers to its actual application to decisions and successful implementation of a policy or service delivery programme (instrumental stages). Evidence is therefore used in many stages that form a continuum, as shown in Figure 1.
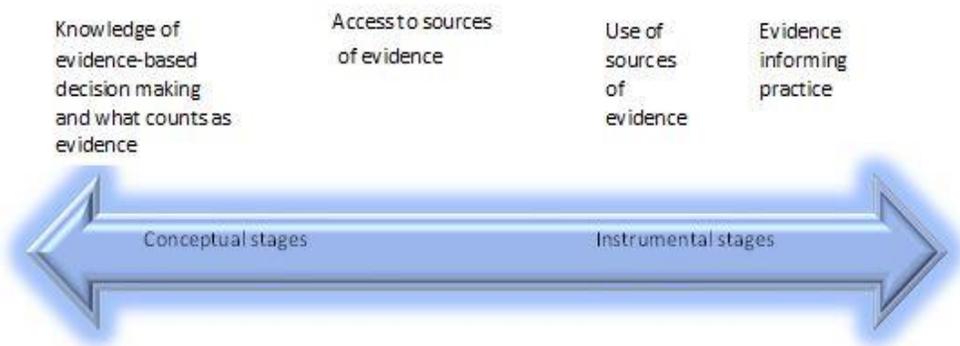
Figure 1: Continuum Model of Evidence Use (adapted from Nutley, Walter, and Davies 2007)

The RCM, a records management model, on the other hand, was chosen for this study since it draws on the evidential nature of records (Acland 1992; McKemmish 2001). Additionally, the RCM supports the continuous use of records regardless of media or form or the purpose they were created for at any point, unlike the Records Life Cycle Model, which states that a record is created and disposed of at a determined stage (Franks 2013).

The Objectives of the Study

The study objectives were derived from constructs of the Continuum Model of Evidence Use and the Records Continuum Models, which were to:

a) Determine senior managers' knowledge of EBDM;

b) Assess whether senior managers used evidence to decide on service delivery programmes;

c) Determine where the evidence was accessed;

d) Evaluate the extent to which senior managers used records for EBDM; and

e) Determine service delivery improvement due to use of records as evidence for EBDM.

Literature Review

The literature review is presented according to the objectives of the study drawn from the Continuum Model of Evidence Use and the Records Continuum Model.

Knowledge of Evidence-Based Decision-Making

Knowledge and understanding of evidence-based decision-making and evidence sources is one of the pillars that facilitates the proper implementation of EBDM. Evidence-based decision-making requires good data, analytical skills, as well as knowledge and understanding for its proper implementation (Banks 2009). However, Head et al. (2014) and Segone (2009) argue that most decision makers lack such knowledge and skills. Training and professional development in the discipline is recommended by Khayri Ba Tall (2009, 123) as well as Marais and Matebesi (2013) who contend that without EBDM knowledge, a strong demand for evidence would be difficult to establish. However, Nutley, Walter and Davies (2007) observe that while some decision makers are well trained and knowledgeable in EBDM, their knowledge is not standardised.

Use of Evidence to Decide on Service Delivery Programmes

Sutcliffe and Court (2005) posit that the use of evidence in policy decisions can help save lives, reduce poverty and improve development performance. In support, Banks (2009) asserts that without evidence, policy makers resort to intuition, ideology, wisdom, and theory, resulting in uninformed decisions. Boulle et al. (2015) revealed the important role of evidence in policymaking and the need for more evidence-based processes to assist in accelerating service delivery and improve the impact of programmes. Marais and Matebesi (2013) as well as Paine Cronin and Sadan (2015) uncovered that that there was a slow uptake of evidence-based processes in some

government departments in South Africa due to a haphazard policy cycle, overlapping roles of politicians and administrators, as well as varying levels of EBDM knowledge and understanding.

Channels to Access Evidence

Maxim et al. (2015) revealed that one's organisation is the most reliable channel to access evidence. The authors advise that organisation-wide environmental scans should be conducted to identify existing information, research, statistics and other valuable data to be accessed and used when the need arises.

The Use of Records for Evidence-Based Decision-Making

The literature review revealed that studies on the use of records for evidence-based decision-making were few. Cordis and Milyo (2016) credited the availability of and access to reliable administrative records as a breakthrough in providing evidence on corruption cases committed by federal officials and politicians in the US. A study by Momoti (2017) shed some light on the use of records for decision-making in a public university. The study revealed that some senior managers preferred to use other sources of evidence for decision-making, such as professional literature, rather than records of the institution.

Service Delivery Improvement Programmes Implemented Due to the Use of Records for EBDM

The literature review revealed a book by Barends, Rousseau and Briner (2014) that explained how evidence from organisational records, such as customer satisfaction surveys, time and financial sheets, saved a regional office from closure. Records proved that closing the regional office would have negatively affected the company and led to loss of clients. Boulle et al. (2015) evaluated an early childhood development programme. The evaluation showed that evidence from organisational records, such as documents related to organisational structure, reports, as well as legislation, can be used as evidence to continue or discontinue programmes.

Methodology

The study used the descriptive quantitative approach as explained in the following sub-sections.

The study data were collected through a telephonic and a web-based survey using the same close-ended questionnaire. Balnaves and Caputi (2001) contend that a survey for data collection can be a questionnaire that is either self-administered by respondents or administered with the assistance of the researcher in person or via telephonic interviews. The latest version of SurveyMonkey Advantage when the study was undertaken was used to design the questionnaire. Although the questionnaire was close-ended, one of the questions was open-ended to allow for the collection of qualitative data. In support

of this method, Bryman (2012) advises that an open question can be included in a close-ended questionnaire to allow necessary information to be provided. The questionnaire link was sent by e-mail to respondents whose e-mail addresses were obtained from the respective governmental bodies' websites. The questionnaire was pre-tested for validity and clarity by sending it to 10 pilot participants before commencement of data collection. All pilot participants responded to the questions within the estimated response time. The target population for the study was all 878 senior managers in all 54 Western Cape governmental bodies. Six hundred and sixty-one (661) senior managers who were responsible for service delivery decision-making were selected as the study population. The sample from the study population was 243 senior managers selected using stratified random sampling. Senior management in Western Cape governmental bodies is composed of various levels such as a director general, municipal managers, chief executive officers, deputy directors general, heads of departments, chief directors, executive directors, and directors. Stratified random sampling considers these levels as strata and ensures representation of the various levels of the population. Ngoepe (2012, 2014) as well as Ngoepe and Ngulube (2013) support the use of stratified random sampling for representativity.

The study sought to describe the findings quantitatively; descriptive analysis, therefore, was considered for data analysis. SurveyMonkey Advantage, which was used for data collection, and Microsoft Excel were used to analyse, code, and present the data. SurveyMonkey has a functionality for storing the returned questionnaires, storing data, providing descriptive data analysis, and presenting the data in text, graphs and charts. Microsoft Excel was useful for in-depth analysis of the data, and for coding and analysing responses to the qualitative question. The latest version of Microsoft Office was used in some instances to present the analysed data in tables for clarity. Responses to the telephonic interviews were manually captured by the researcher onto the questionnaire. To standardise the analysis of data from the two-mode survey, all the returned and usable web questionnaires were printed and assigned code numbers, such as WQ1 for web questionnaires and TQ1 for telephonic questionnaires. The code numbers were written on each questionnaire, which was then manually filed in folders according to the type of governmental body. The code numbers assisted with manually counting the questionnaires per survey mode and determining the study demographics. To show representativity, the analysis of each objective, where applicable, was additionally done by type of governmental body and post level. Sorting the questionnaires by governmental body, therefore, proved to be beneficial. The analysis of the web survey data was automatically calculated by SurveyMonkey. Data from the telephonic survey were manually counted, categorised, and captured on the researcher's study notes. The total numbers from both survey modes were captured on Excel by post level category analysed and were presented in charts and tables. An online percentage calculator was used to calculate percentages where necessary.

Results

The study results are presented according to response rate and study objectives.

Response Rate Analysis

From the stratified sample of 243 respondents, a total of 163 (67%) respondents participated; 31 (57%) of the 54 government bodies participated in the study. The breakdown of the participating governmental bodies was six (19%) departments, 22 (71%) municipalities, and three (10%) public entities. The second question of the survey required respondents to select an applicable post level from a drop-down menu. The findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Post level participation (*n*=163)

Post level	Head of Department	Chief Executive Officer	Executive Director	Municipal Manager	Chief Director	Senior Manager	Deputy Director General	Director	Member	Total
No. respondents in sample (*n*)	4	3	5	10	30	12	7	154	18	243
Actual number of survey respondents	4	3	5	9	24	9	5	99	5	163
Overall percentage participation of post level	2%	2%	3%	5%	15%	6%	3%	61%	3%	100%

Descriptive Data Analysis

Descriptive data analysis is presented according to the objectives of the study as discussed in the following sections.

Senior managers' knowledge of evidence-based decision-making

This objective was to determine senior managers' knowledge of EBDM by asking senior managers whether EBDM goals were achieved in South Africa as well as senior managers' knowledge of the sources of evidence considered important for EBDM. A total of 121 (74%) respondents agreed that EBDM had achieved its goals since its implementation, while 42 (26%) disagreed. To further establish knowledge of EBDM, respondents were requested to select applicable type/s of sources of evidence that they thought were important for EBDM. A total of 161 responses were received. The analysis revealed that performance information was selected as the most important source of evidence by 39 (24%) respondents, followed by research reports (37 respondents [23%]), opinions of experienced employees (31 respondents [19%]), media reports (20 respondents [12%]), and service delivery protests (20 respondents [12%]); 14 respondents (10%) selected all the mentioned sources.

Use of sources of evidence by senior managers to decide on service delivery programmes

The purpose of this objective was to assess whether senior managers used sources of evidence to decide on service delivery programmes. The extent of evidence use was measured by frequency of responses for each source of evidence. The question requested respondents to select all applicable answers. A total of 162 responses were received. The analysis revealed that all 162 (99%) respondents had used performance information to make service delivery decisions; 143 (87%) had used research reports; 69 (41%) indicated that they had used the opinions of experienced staff; 33 (20%) selected service delivery protests; 30 (18%) had used media reports, while 48 (29%) indicated that they had used all the sources from the list.

Channels to access evidence

The purpose of this objective was to determine where the evidence was accessed. Respondents were required to select the applicable access channel/s they had sought evidence from. A total of nine web survey respondents skipped this question; therefore, 154 responses were received. The analysis revealed that 152 (44%) respondents selected their organisation's registry; 149 (43%) selected their organisation's website; 23 (7%) consulted websites of other organisations; 12 (3%) selected university websites, and nine (3%) had used a library.

The use of records for evidence-based decision-making

The purpose of this objective was to determine the extent to which records were used for EBDM. To answer the question, respondents were required to select the frequency with which they used records for EBDM by selecting one answer from the following options: always, seldom, never or sometimes. A total of 161 responses were received of which 116 (72%) indicated that they always consulted records to make decisions; 40 (25%) sometimes used records, and five (3%) seldom used records, as summarised in Figure 2.
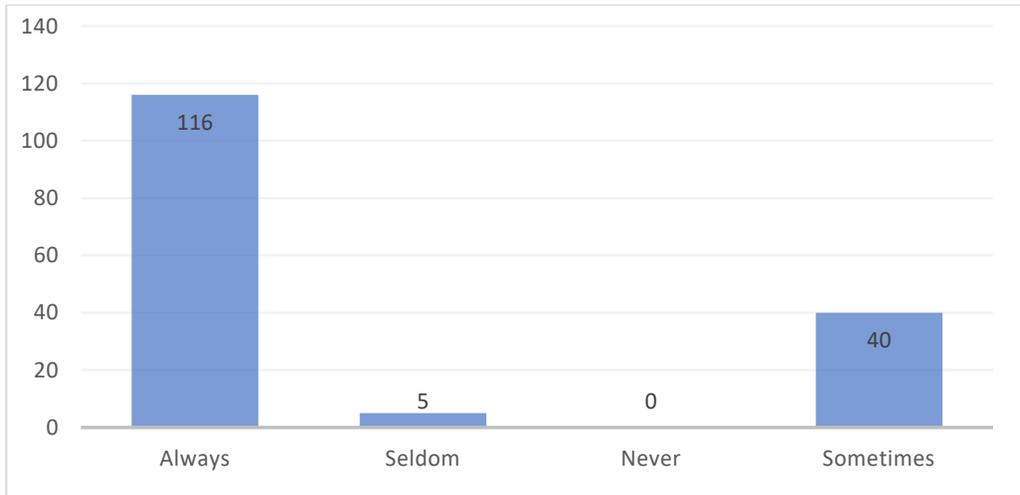
Figure 1: Frequency of the use of records for EBDM (*n*=163)

In addition, the results showed were analysed according to type of governmental body. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Frequency of use of records according to governmental body type (*n*=163)

Frequency	Governmental body type		
	Municipalities	**Government departments**	**Public entities**
Always	45%	48%	7%
Sometimes	55%	35%	10%
Seldom	40%	40%	20%
Never	0%	0%	0%

The next objective was to determine the types of records the respondents had used for decision-making in the previous financial year, that is 2018/19. A total of 160 responses were received. Annual reports were selected by 154 (29%) respondents; annual performance plans were selected by 154 (29%) respondents; internal and external correspondence were selected by 112 (21%) respondents; meeting minutes were selected by 105 (19%), and audio-visual material was selected by 14 (3%) respondents. Figure 3 presents the results.
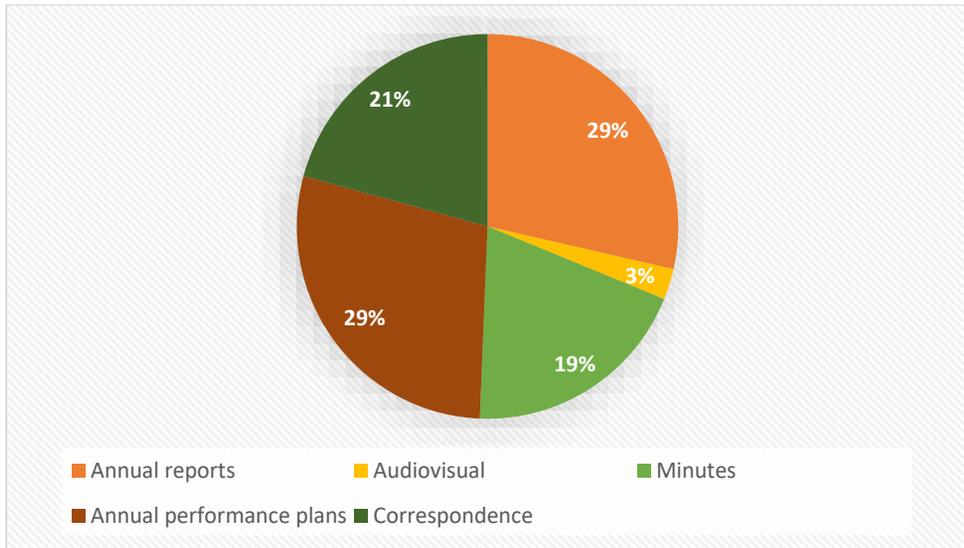
Figure 3: Types of records the respondents used for decision-making in 2018/19 (*n*=163)

In addition, respondents were requested to indicate whether they considered records to be important to make service delivery decisions by selecting one applicable answer from the following options: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor agree, disagree or strongly disagree. A total of 160 responses were received. A total of 134 (84%) respondents strongly agreed that the use of records is important for EBDM, while 26 (16%) agreed with the statement.

Service delivery improvement due to the use of records as evidence for EBDM

The purpose of this objective was to determine how the use of records as sources of evidence contributed to improved service delivery by finding out the number of programmes implemented after using records as sources of evidence for decision-making. A total of 100 (61.3%) usable responses were received, of which 83 noted service delivery improvement programmes. For thematic analysis, the service delivery programmes were grouped according to the 14 outcomes of the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF), which is the national strategic plan of the South African government. However, to protect the anonymity of the organisations and participants, the service delivery programmes are not presented in the study. The intention of the study was to quantify the service delivery improvement programmes; therefore, the numerical data provided was deemed enough. Figure 4 summarises the number of service delivery programmes by type of governmental body.
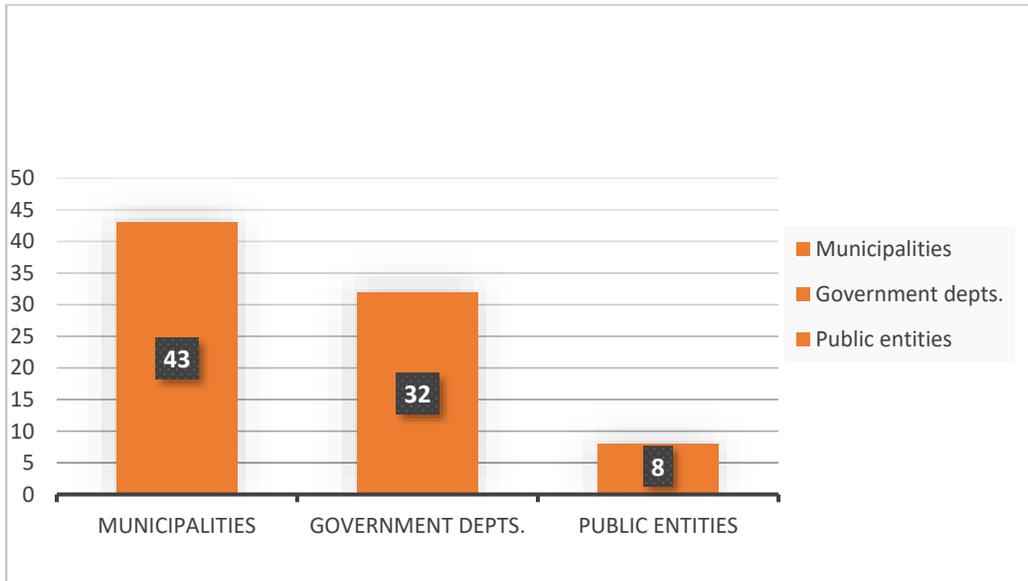
Figure 4: Distribution of service delivery programmes according to governmental body type (*n*=163)

Discussion

This section provides an in-depth discussion of findings from the data collected through the web-based and telephonic surveys. The discussion is presented according to the study objectives.

Senior Managers' Knowledge of EBDM

The Continuum of Evidence Use Model, the theoretical framework of this study, stresses the importance of knowledge of EBDM and sources of evidence for its successful implementation. However, Boulle et al. (2015), Paine Cronin and Sadan (2015), and Marais and Matebesi (2013) revealed that the levels of knowledge and understanding of EBDM were minimal and differed from decision maker to decision maker. The variation in knowledge hampered EBDM implementation and uptake. In contrast, the findings of this study showed that the level of EBDM knowledge in Western Cape governmental bodies was high and that senior managers were aware of its achievements in the South African public sector. In tandem with the other scholars, this study discovered a variation of knowledge in terms of the achievement of EBDM goals. The variation in knowledge may have been due to a lack of EBDM implementation guidelines as discovered by Paine Cronin and Sadan (2015) or the lack of a proper definition and knowledge of evidence (HakemZadeh 2015).

Use of Sources of Evidence by Senior Managers to Decide on Service Delivery Programmes

The use of evidence sources is the substance of EBDM. The findings of this study show that performance information was the most used source of evidence in Western Cape governmental bodies, followed by scientific evidence and knowledge of experienced staff. The study noted that the knowledge of experienced staff was used mostly in municipalities and minimally in government departments and public entities. The findings confirm those of Mkhize (2015) who revealed that knowledge sharing in government departments was not considered effective in improving service delivery.

Channels Where Evidence Was Sought

The findings of this study reveal that various channels were used to access evidence. The respondents mostly used their organisations' registries and websites. The findings confirm Maxim et al.'s (2015) finding that one's organisation is considered the most reliable channel to access evidence. According to the findings, organisational evidence was considered the most important and used source of evidence to decide on service delivery programmes. Notably, other channels were used minimally. The minimal use of other access channels is influenced by various factors such as time, a lack of information-seeking skills and financial constraints (Boulle et al. 2015; Maxim et al. 2015).

The Use of Records for Evidence-Based Decision-Making

The intention of this study was to determine the extent to which records as sources of evidence were used for EBDM by senior managers in Western Cape governmental bodies. The data revealed that senior managers always used records for decision-making. Annual reports and annual performance plans were the most used types of records for evidence-based decision-making. The finding is in tandem with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2010), which asserts that using information on what has worked previously is one of the benefits of implementing EBDM. Performance information is composed of, among others, annual performance reports and annual performance plans. The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) explains that annual performance plans encourage evidence-based policymaking, planning and implementation, while annual reports provide information on the performance of governmental bodies against predetermined objectives and targets set in the annual performance plans (RSA 2019b). The findings of this study confirm that performance information is indeed the basis of EBDM and was mostly used by senior managers in Western Cape governmental bodies for decision-making.

Service Delivery Improvement Programmes Implemented from Using Records as Evidence for Evidence-Based Decision-Making

This study revealed that there were 83 service delivery improvement programmes implemented, which were aligned with the National Development Plan (NDP) as well

as Provincial Strategic Goals (PSGs). Of the 83 service delivery programmes, the majority were implemented by municipalities and government departments. The DPME (RSA 2014, 2) asserts that evidence is needed to determine the effectiveness of service delivery programmes and to make decisions to improve identified shortcomings or to discontinue some programmes. Cox (2000), Momoti (2017) and Ngoepe (2008) add that records are required in service delivery decision-making. Service delivery in the South African public sector is guided by the NDP (RSA 2012), from which the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) was designed to guide policy and programmes during the 2014–2019 period (RSA 2013). During the period of the study, service delivery in the Western Cape Province was guided by the Western Cape Provincial Strategic Plan: 2014–2019, which was closely aligned to the NDP and MTSF. The Provincial Strategic Plan had five interrelated Provincial Strategic Goals (PSGs) to drive integrated and improved performance across the public sector in the Western Cape (RSA 2018).

Recommendations

The recommendations of the study are presented in the following sub-sections.

Standardisation of EBDM Knowledge to Improve Its Implementation

The current study noted inconsistencies in EBDM knowledge among senior managers in Western Cape governmental bodies. In order to address the gaps in skills and build the knowledge capacity of public servants, the study recommends that the National School of Government (NSG) should include EBDM in the curricula of the Certificate for Entry into the Senior Management Service (SMS), Compulsory SMS Induction Programme, In-Service Learning Programmes for SMS as well as the Service Delivery Programmes. The training would include all aspects of EBDM, such as what counts as evidence as well as its implementation. EBDM training would raise awareness of the practice, improve and standardise its knowledge and understanding among senior managers across all spheres of government. In addition, the study recommends that knowledge and information management units should be established in governmental bodies where there are none. The formalisation of knowledge management (KM) would allow for knowledge sharing, including key government programmes such as EBDM, to standardise knowledge among staff. Since this study revealed that knowledge of experienced staff is among the most important sources for EBDM, the researchers recommend that the Department of Public Service and Administration should have programmes in place to monitor and evaluate knowledge management in all spheres of government. Scholars such as Mannie, Van Niekerk and Addendorf (2013) as well as Schutte and Barkhuizen (2015) assert that KM is practised in South African municipalities, but is found lacking in government departments and public entities. Monitoring and evaluating KM implementation would improve its implementation for knowledge sharing of government initiatives.

Fostering the Use of Records for EBDM

From the results of the study, it can be deduced that records as sources of evidence are used for decision-making. The study proposes a model, which is presented in Figure 5. The model addresses access and simplifies the process of incorporating the use of records as one of the sources of evidence in EBDM. The model is built on the DPME's revised National Evaluation Policy Framework (RSA 2019a, 63), the Continuum Model for Evidence Use and the Records Continuum Model. The National Evaluation Policy Framework indicates stages in which evidence is used. The Continuum Model for Evidence Use stresses knowledge of what counts as evidence in service delivery decision-making, while the RCM supports the continuous use of records as sources of evidence. The types of records recommended for each stage of the decision-making process are presented in the model.
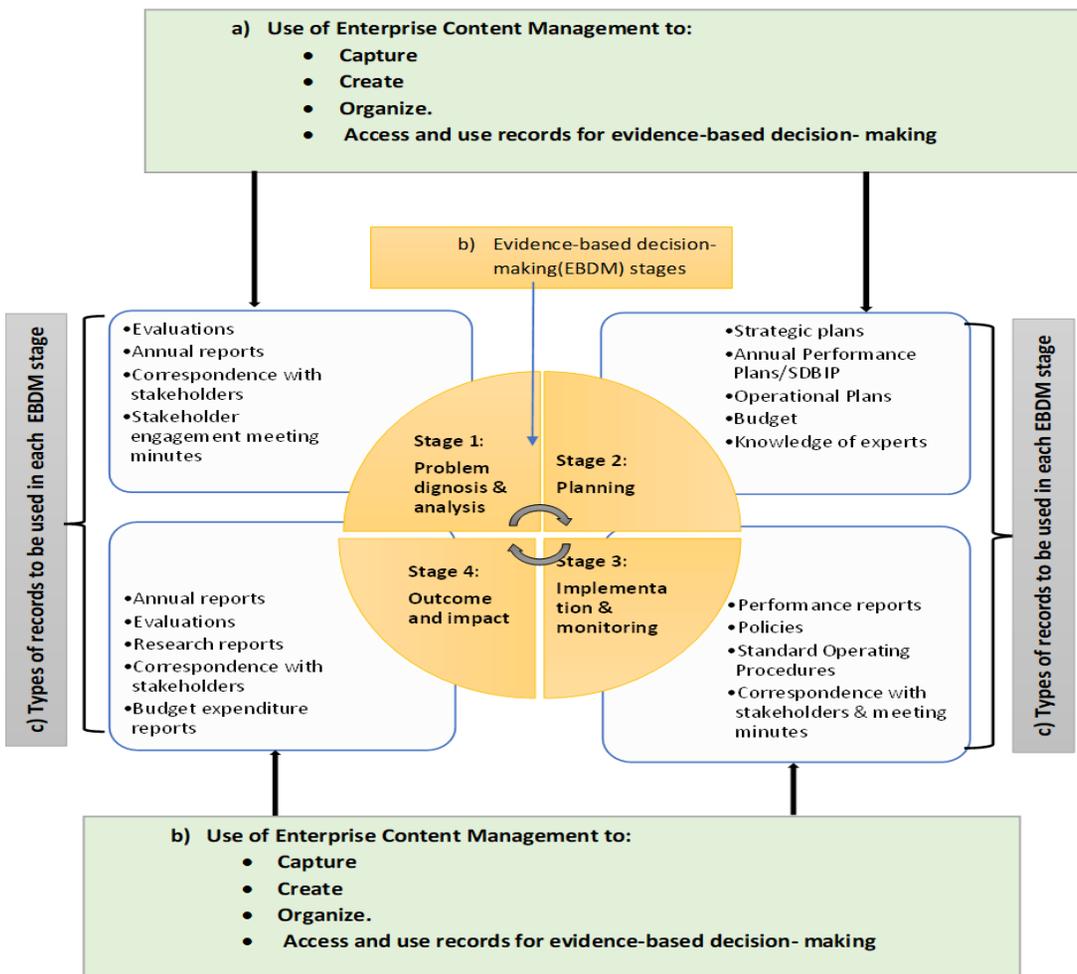
Figure 5: Model to foster the use of records in evidence-based decision-making

The explanation of the model is as follows:

a) Use of enterprise content management systems to facilitate access to records

To facilitate the continuous access and use of records, the model proposes that enterprise content management (ECM) systems should be implemented, adopted and utilised in Western Cape governmental bodies for faster access to organisational records online, rather than physically visiting registries. Alalwan, Thomas and Weistroffer (2014, 3) assert that ECM systems enhance organisational processes by providing operational, strategic and decision support functions. The operational functions include capturing, creating, indexing, organising, searching, accessing, central storage, maintenance of all organisational content regardless of format for cross-departmental collaboration and sharing of content. Salamntu (2016, 79) adds that the central storage of records facilitates easier and faster retrieval of records as well as controlled access to content for security of information. The ECM strategic and decision support capabilities contribute to decision-making improvement in that they allow for increased quantity and quality of information to assist decision makers, faster access to information, the sharing of business processes and information, and preventing the duplication of similar records, thus speeding up the decision-making process (Salamntu 2016).

b) EBDM stages and c) Types of records to be used in each stage

The type of records to be used in evidence-based decision-making stages are explained in the following sections.

Stage 1: Diagnosis and analysis of the problem

Stage 1 involves identifying and analysing a problem or service delivery need in order for decision makers to understand what is needed, where, why, and how to address the problem. Decision makers must evaluate and analyse multiple sources of evidence to decide on programmes to implement. Among the sources of evidence, the following could provide evidence needed to make a decision: records such as annual reports, correspondence with stakeholders in which a problem or need for a service was expressed, minutes of meetings with stakeholders regarding the service delivery need, findings of research commissioned by respective governmental bodies or from journals, expert opinions, and environmental analysis reports.

Stage 2: Planning

This stage involves planning for the implementation of service delivery programmes. Records such as strategic plans, annual reports, annual performance plans, service delivery and budget implementation plans, statistical reports, operational plans, and financial records can assist decision makers with vital planning information such as a situational analysis, available funding, and how services will be implemented. In some

cases, knowledge of internal and external experts is transformed into policies, procedure manuals and documented lessons learnt that can be valuable during the planning stage.

Stage 3: Programme implementation and monitoring

During Stage 3, the service delivery programmes are implemented and monitored. Records such as research reports, policies and standard operating procedure manuals can provide evidence to guide the successful implementation of the programme. Additionally, performance reports, minutes of meetings with stakeholders, programme meeting minutes, correspondence with stakeholders, budget expenditure reports, and evaluation reports would be useful in providing evidence on the progress of the service delivery programme. The records would thus provide evidence to determine the success of the programme, whether interventions are needed, and whether to continue or discontinue a programme.

Stage 4: Outcome and impact

After a service delivery programme has been implemented, decision makers want to know whether it has achieved what it was intended for. Evidence is needed to inform them of the outcomes. Records such as annual reports, evaluation reports, programme close-out reports, programme meeting minutes, research reports, correspondence from stakeholders, minutes of meetings with stakeholders, and budget expenditure reports provide the required evidence during Stage 4. Additionally, if the programme has not achieved the intended outcomes, evidence is needed to inform strategies to help achieve goals and the decision-making cycle resumes.

Limitations of the Study

This study focused on senior managers of Western Cape governmental bodies and excluded other provinces of South Africa. The study additionally excluded senior managers from medical and healthcare facilities because the literature review revealed that evidence-based decision-making in health sciences is implemented differently than in public administration and management (Barends, Rousseau, and Briner 2017). In addition, non-service delivery focused senior managers tasked with corporate responsibilities, such as corporate affairs and human resource management, as well as senior managers from regional offices of national departments, were excluded from the study. The findings, therefore, are representative of the population studied.

Conclusion

The conclusion of the study is that senior managers of Western Cape governmental bodies consider the use of records important for service delivery decisions and always used them for EBDM. The study revealed 83 service delivery improvement programmes aligned to the NDP and PSGs that were implemented by consulting records as sources of evidence. According to the Continuum Model of Evidence Use, EBDM in Western

Cape governmental bodies is at the instrumental stage. To promote the use of records for EBDM, the study proposed a model to foster the use of records as sources of evidence in EBDM. The proposed model would serve as a guide for continuous use of records for EBDM implementation in the public sector. The study thus upholds the continuous use of records as evidence with no restrictions of time or space.

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