PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVING RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES OF TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN GA MOLEPO, SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The way in which an institution treats its records is crucial for its survival in a rapidly changing society. The purpose of the study was to investigate the records management practices and challenges faced by traditional institutions of leadership and governance in Ga Molepo, Limpopo, South Africa. The researcher employed a cross-sectional survey in order to quantitatively examine the challenges faced by members of traditional councils. A researcher-administered questionnaire was used as a data collection tool to study a stratified sample of 35 members from an estimated population of 350. The findings revealed patterns and trends of non-compliance with records management standards and guidelines. Although there were sporadic cases of record keeping, a greater number of respondents revealed that traditional institutions lack the facilities, equipment, education and trained/skilled personnel to apply correct records management procedures in their daily administration of their traditional communities. The main value of the study is to create awareness of records management as one of the neglected areas in traditional institutions – which are by current legislative arrangement, the closest form of leadership and governance for rural communities in light of their relationship with local municipalities and the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs.

Keywords: accountability; governance; records management; traditional institutions

INTRODUCTION

Traditional institutions in modern day Africa, just like elsewhere in the world, have been in existence since the precolonial era. Crook (2005, 1) defines traditional institutions as all those forms of social and political authority which have their historical origin in the precolonial states and societies. Traditional institutions in Ga Molepo, Limpopo, South Africa, have existed since the precolonial era and are still in existence today. The researcher thought it would be valuable and worthwhile to investigate the records management practices of traditional institutions in Ga Molepo since most of them still use the more traditional ways of managing records. According to Motsi (2004, 63), clay tablets, stone carvings, stone drawings, leather, parchment and vellum, cloth and tree bark are some of the traditional ways of managing records in Africa. Although most of the records management methods used within traditional institutions in Ga Molepo are unconventional, there has been some transformation since the passing of the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act (No. 41 of 2003) (RSA 2003), as amended by the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Amendment Act (No. 23 of 2009) (RSA 2010). The aim of the Act is to, inter alia, provide for the recognition of traditional councils which are often made up of members of royal families consisting of senior leadership, headmen/women as well as regents, who, according to the Act, are required to perform administrative tasks such as record-keeping within their respective traditional communities. On the one hand, for unconventional records, traditional institutions in Ga Molepo use beads and various soil colours as paint on mud huts walls. On the other hand, they use modern stationery such as exercise and notebooks (in some cases without carbon copies), and ballpoint pens to create documents and these are the records that need to be managed. In most cases, administrative tasks, including records management, are delegated to members of traditional councils, who are also referred to as "secretaries". As a result, there are many challenges relating to records management.

Often, residents complain about the amount of time and money it takes to access official documents such as proof of residence from traditional institutions – some of which do not even issue receipts for transactions involving residents' money. In trying to find out what the records management practices of traditional institutions are, the study highlighted records management in traditional institutions to be one critical area that has not been given the attention it deserves since the ushering in of a democratic dispensation in 1994. Such a neglect of a critical functional area in respect of records management can be felt in the rapid loss of societal memory on important customs and crucial past events, especially within rural traditional communities led by traditional institutions of leadership and governance. Records management is not only a tool for interpreting the past, but is also a vital component for predicting the future (Mnjama 2004, 33).

The issue of records management has become a serious one to the extent that many residents are beginning to question the ability of traditional institutions to govern and lead in a democratic society that is battling with accountability and transparency issues.

After all, records are said to be a pre-condition for living in or exercising a democratic regime (Mihiotis 2012, 123). Residents are questioning the relevance of traditional institutions, complaining about their lack of transparency and accountability as well as the loss of historical records.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Traditional institutions of leadership and governance are struggling to survive in a rapidly changing democratic South African society. In order to stay relevant within the changing political landscape, traditional institutions need to exercise transparency in their records management practices in order to be accountable to their respective communities. Failure to do so will result in a loss of communal memory, possible social unrest and lack of trust on the part of traditional rural communities. While most of the focus on records management is at government level, very little has been researched on the records practices of traditional institutions.

The aim of the study was to conduct an investigation into the records management practices and the challenges faced by traditional institutions in Ga Molepo. The article reports on the results obtained from the following objectives:

- to investigate the records management practices of senior leadership and headmen/ women in traditional council offices;
- to determine the standards and guidelines used for records management in traditional council offices;
- to determine the information culture in traditional council offices;
- to establish the types of methods used to manage records in traditional council offices;
- to make recommendations for improvements in record-keeping practices in traditional institutions in Ga Molepo, Limpopo, South Africa.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of the literature review was to investigate the findings of other researchers on records management. All the findings were reviewed to determine to what extent records management practices in traditional institutions have been investigated and specifically to identify challenges. At the time of the investigation no specific literature sources pertaining to records management in traditional institutions could be traced and this constitutes a research gap. Very few studies have been conducted on this topic. The researcher is only aware of a study conducted by Adams (2010) in Ghana entitled: "The management of district assembly records for development planning; implications for good governance". This was a PhD study and the findings are yet to be published. The

literature review therefore focussed on aspects of records management practices and challenges that could potentially also impact traditional institutions.

Ancient Ways of Documenting Information

According to Kolyva (2008 in Mihiotis 2012, 124), "the oldest ways of preserving memory were not in writing, thus, one could claim that recordkeeping precedes writing as we know it". Leaves, skins, tree bark, stones, clay, rocks and string are some of the traditional ways in which information was documented (Motsi 2004, 62). The question is whether those ancient ways can pass the academic test of being referred to as records management within the context of traditional communities. The researcher perceives records management within this context as the preservation of traditional records mostly found within traditional communities as led by traditional institutions. Ngulube's (2001, 155) definition of records management reveals that the ancient ways referred to above may not necessarily be records management in the conventional sense. As evidenced in the studies by Ngoepe and Van der Walt (2010), Kemoni (1998), Mensah and Adams (2014) and others, most of the research on records management stops with local government at a departmental level. Therefore, the study illuminated certain aspects of records management in traditional institutions which have not been researched.

Modern Records Management

Apart from the more ancient ways of records management in Africa, Motsi (2004, 63) indicates that there are also modern formats of records, such as micro-graphics (in the form of microfilm, microfiche and photographic film), video, audiocassettes, films and electronic (digital) media. It is important to consider modern records management in traditional institutions since they have been linked to state organs through the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, which engages in modern records management. According to the World Bank (2000, 15), modern records management

> arises from actual happenings; they are a snapshot of an action or event, they offer a picture of something that happened. To serve their purpose in providing reliable evidence, records in both paper and electronic form must be accurate, complete, and comprehensive.

The researcher wanted to investigate if there were any traces of modern records management in traditional institutions. Thus, the question to ask was: Do traditional institutions use modern formats of records management as Motsi (2004) asserts they do?

What is Records Management?

According to the *South African Oxford Pocket Dictionary* (2006), "a record is a permanent account of something that is kept for evidence or information". In most

traditional institutions, a piece of paper hand-written with a pen can be considered a record in the conventional sense of the word in addition to the ancient ways indicated by Motsi (2004). A more conventional explanation offered by Ngulube (2001, 155) is that records management, with its concern for the creation, organisation, storage, retrieval, distribution, retirement and final disposal of records, irrespective of their format and media, to a great extent, hinges on records managers with the necessary skills and knowledge to deal with the records at every stage of their use by society. In light of the explanation the question is: What are the literacy levels of members of traditional councils including those responsible for records?

Who Sets the Standards and Guidelines for Records Management?

Ngulube (2001, 158) indicates that most guidelines in Anglophone Africa are limited to institutions of higher learning. Anglophone refers to those countries which were colonised by native English-speaking nations of Europe and America and therefore use English as the preferred language of communication. That said, national archival institutions have been at the forefront in Africa with the support of institutions such as the World Bank and the International Records Management Trust, International Council on Archives, in setting up standards and guidelines on records management (refer to Section 3.2). Although the support that has been given to national archival institutions by the World Bank and the International Records Management Trust has been instrumental in determining standards and guidelines for records management, the effects have not trickled down to the grassroots level where traditional institutions are located. The question is: Where does this leave the definition and practice of "records management" in traditional institutions?

The Role of Information Professionals

Nengomasha's (2013, 8) view that professionals in records and archives should become more of doers than recommenders is a serious indictment on the part of information professionals. The researcher agrees with the notion of information professionals being "doers" rather than "recommenders", that is, offering pro bono or paid-for consulting services in the areas of records management. This could help generate a new body of knowledge on aspects of records management which have not been researched before.

The Political Environment and Records Management

Political power, as can be derived from the role played by political organisations, determines how a society functions and maintains its collective memory. As has always been the trend in Africa and elsewhere in the world, governments come and go. With the

coming in of a new political power in government some sources of memory are erased (Muchefa 2012, 128). Political power, driven greatly by the ruling elite of the present, determines the way in which society remembers its past. One of the biggest obstacles to this process of transition from an old government to a new one, as Muchefa (2012) has observed in the case of Zimbabwe, is that memory is often politicised. Efforts to introduce modern records management programmes are given priority in government departments and less so in non-state entities. Hence, very little is known about records management practices in traditional institutions.

Records Management: An Area of Neglect

As Muchefa (2012) highlights, in South Africa, the discriminate pattern (refer to Section 3.6), could be observed in the manner in which the present government as led by the African National Congress (ANC) works with traditional institutions of government and leadership. Could it be true that lack of awareness and political will on the importance of records management amongst African leaders, as Motsi (2004, 63) notes, could be linked to the records management challenges faced by traditional institutions in Ga Molepo?

In a study that explored a gap in research regarding the relationship between records management and the identification of risks, Ngoepe (2014, 1–8) revealed that most governmental bodies in South Africa lack records management and risk mitigating frameworks or strategy. The researcher recommends a strong records management regime that can be one of an organisation's primary tools in identifying risks and implementing proper risk management. Such a regime could help traditional institutions to deal with the risk of losing records to natural hazards such as mould, fire and floods, just to mention a few.

The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs

Instability and the priorities of government appear to contribute to the challenges traditional institutions face. The neglect of records management in traditional institutions could be attributed to the fact that most efforts to implement effective records management often stops with organs of state such as the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs. Cooperation is one thing, and implementation is another. The study by Ngoepe and Van der Walt (2010, 84) investigated the records management programme used by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs and paints a grim picture of such inconsistencies where the department has a records management programme for municipalities, yet does very little in terms of guidelines and financial support to ensure effective records management in traditional institutions.

Effective Records Management Versus Access to Information

According to Mihiotis (2012, 123), records are a precondition for living in or exercising in a democratic regime. Svard (2014, 5) asserts that the way information flows and is managed has consequences for service delivery. Without the essential elements of modern records management as highlighted by Leahy (1949) (see Section 3.2), access to records created in traditional institutions would remain a pipedream and no lessons would be learned from the information that comes with the creation and maintenance of records.

Access to Information and Classification

The attempt by governments in Africa, and specifically South Africa, to classify information, links very well with the finding by Muchefa (2012, 128) of the politicisation of collective memory: the end result of which causes the deliberate erosion or neglect of records management practices in traditional institutions in favour of those deemed relevant within organs of state such as government departments.

Records Centres, Facilities and Equipment

In a study on the impact of records centres on the management of public sector records in Kenya, Kemoni (1998, 55–65) found that the availability of records centres can help with storage and making information available. How then, can the use of a combination of physical and virtual storage facilities solve the challenges of records management as well as access to information in traditional institutions in Ga Molepo?

Information Culture

In undertaking the current study, the researcher also investigated the information culture in most government departments, in particular, the current model where the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs has delegated the responsibility of record-keeping in traditional council offices to people often referred to as "secretaries". "There is an assumption in some organizations that since we are all document creators, we are equally good records managers" (Svard 2014, 6). In contrast, and as indicated in Section 3.3, anyone with average information literacy such as reading and writing skills is allowed to create and manage records, hence the prevalence of people referred to as "secretaries" in most traditional institutions.

The Future for Traditional Institutions

The researcher holds, in tandem with Mensah and Adams (2014, 33), that it is a fruitless exercise to name a government department, like the Department of Cooperative

Governance and Traditional Affairs, as such if there is no culture of corporate governance amongst employees of the state and in related institutions such as traditional councils. According to Mensah and Adams (2014, 33):

> Corporate governance is the process of directing and managing business affairs towards enhancing business prosperity and corporate accountability with the ultimate goal of realizing organizational objectives and long term stakeholder value ... this implies that the management of information and the keeping of records is one of the cornerstones of effective corporate governance.

The King III Corporate Governance Principles have been officially introduced to guide South African organisations with corporate governance (IoDSA 2012). If applied correctly, the King III principles can assist in introducing ethical guidelines and principles in the creation, storage, use and dissemination of records in traditional institutions.

The Role of Traditional Leaders in Post-Apartheid South Africa

Section 211(1) of the Constitution of South Africa (No. 108 of 1996) (RSA 1996) states that the institution, status and role of traditional leadership are according to customary law, recognised subject to the Constitution. Phago and Netswera (2011, 1023) highlight that Section 211(1) remains a challenge since it does not clearly specify what role traditional leaders should play in a developmental state such as South Africa. The authors further find the activities of traditional leadership are reduced to culture preservation and are not developmental. This begs the question: Are traditional institutions still relevant today given the challenge of accessibility to the records they create on a daily basis?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Approach

Thomas (2013, 173) asserts that cross-sectional studies involve the study of a group or groups of people with the same characteristics at the same time. The researcher quantitatively studied the records management challenges faced by traditional institutions in Ga Molepo using a cross-sectional survey due to the limitations of time and financial constraints in undertaking a larger study. Traditional councils in Ga Molepo are made up royal family members led by a headman/woman and a senior chief. One of the characteristics is that they all ascend the throne through inheritance and not a democratic elective process. According to Bless and Higson-Smith (1995, 43), a survey is a collection of information on a wide range of cases, with each case being investigated only on the particular aspect under consideration.

Study Population and Sampling

In Ga Molepo, traditional councils consist of at least 10 members per village and the whole community is made up of 35 villages. Thus, from a population of 350 members, 35 (10%), were selected as a sample. The researcher believes the sample was representative enough to generalise the findings to the entire population. Another characteristic shared by traditional councils is a strong adherence to customary law. Stratified sampling was used to select every tenth of an element in the targeted population. All elements in the sample were assigned identification numbers. According to Babbie (2007, 206), "stratified sampling ensures the proper representation of the stratification variables, this in turn, enhances the representation of other variables".

Data Collection Instrument and Data Analysis

A researcher-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from the sample. The questionnaire consisted of open- and closed-ended questions set prior to the study using nominal and ordinal scales of measurement. The questions included topics on traditional council membership; form of traditional council; alliance to community organisations; view on partnership with government; relevance of traditional institutions; relationship with municipalities; visits by senior leadership to headmen/women; administrators in traditional councils; corporate governance; offices, equipment and virtual storage facilities; ways used to administer the community; records management; government's provision of resources; community contribution; and self-sufficiency. In order to deal with language barriers, the researcher verbally translated the questionnaire from English to Northern Sotho in order to help the respondents understand the questions asked. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software was used to analyse the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The following findings were obtained from the respondents.

Membership

An overwhelming majority of the respondents were of royal family descent, and mostly men who belong to a council under a headman/woman as well as a senior chief. This implies that the guidelines set out in Chapter 2, Section 3 (1, 2 and 3) on the establishment of traditional councils of the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Amendment Act (RSA 2010) have either not been implemented or are being transgressed. No form of tangible record, such as a founding statement, exists

to confirm membership and the conditions thereof. Of the 35 respondents, 7.1 per cent were members of a traditional council in their village, while only 2.9 per cent were not.

Form of Traditional Council

The findings revealed that headmen/women made up the majority of members of the cabinet headed by a Senior Chief at the headquarters of the Molepo Chieftainship at Boshega; 14.3 per cent indicated that they belong to Senior Leadership; while 85.7 per cent said they belong to councils headed by headmen/women. This implies that traditional councils led by headmen/women are the most neglected with regard to records management and the lack of equipment and virtual storage facilities used to administer the community indicated in sections 5.10 and 5.12, respectively, makes the situation worse.

Community Organisations

Apart from being members of traditional councils in their different forms, 34.3 per cent of the respondents said they do not belong to any community organisation; 22.9 per cent said they belong to burial societies; a meagre 2.9 per cent said they belong to a cooperative; while a staggering 40 per cent said they belong to the ANC, that is, the parent body, youth league and women's league, respectively. There was no evidence to suggest each traditional council has records of, for instance, the number of community organisations active in their respective villages.
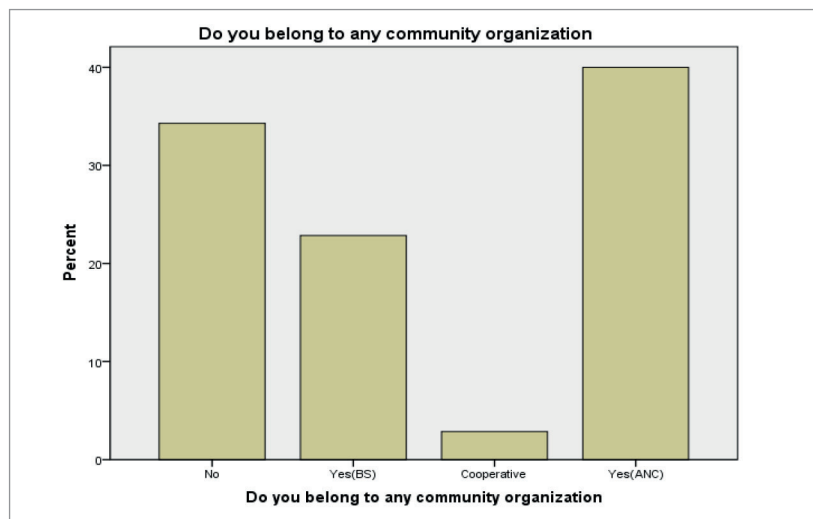

Figure 1:   Respondents' affiliation to community organisations

Partnership with Government

The respondents' dominant view was that both government and traditional institutions should work together in the country's law-making processes. The information in Figure 1 indicates that most members of traditional councils are affiliated to the ANC in one way or the other. The researcher also found that 8.6 per cent of the respondents think traditional institutions should play a bigger role in law-making processes, while 91.4 per cent said they prefer both: that government continue to be the sole law maker and that traditional institutions play a bigger role. This implies that any plans to introduce a records management programme by government in traditional councils would have to start with consultation and active involvement of traditional institutions during implementation.

Relevance of Traditional Institutions

The general belief in the surveyed area is that traditional institutions are still relevant today and this answers the question posed in Section 3.14: Are traditional institutions still relevant today given the challenge of accessibility to the records they create on a daily basis? When asked if traditional institutions are still relevant today, given the current political climate, 57.1 per cent of the respondents replied they are, while 42.9 per cent said they are no longer relevant. This finding is problematic because 42.9 per cent asserted that traditional institutions are no longer relevant when compared to local government offices in terms of the turnaround time in creating and dispatching essential records such as official letters used to open bank accounts.
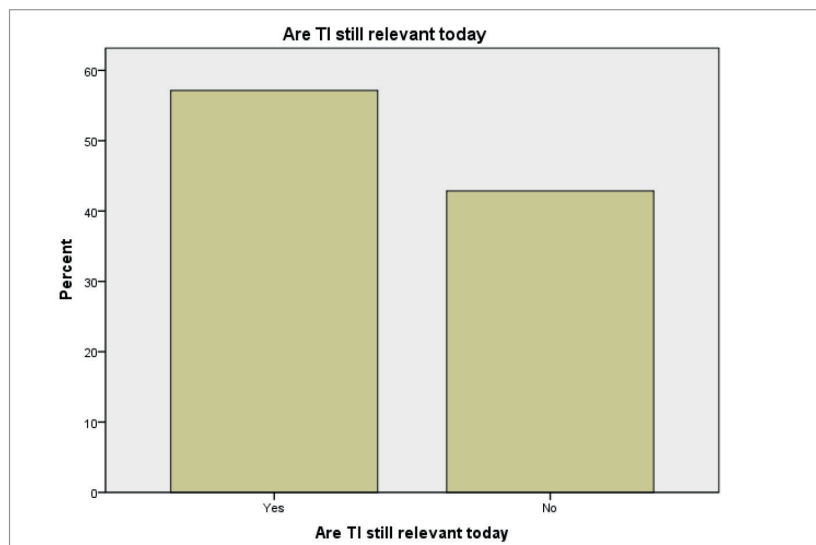

Figure 2:   Respondents' views regarding the relevance of traditional institutions

Relationship between Municipalities and Traditional Councils

The respondents indicated that traditional councils believe there is a lack of political will on the part of local government and such a less corporative relationship could mean government is not willing to encourage traditional institutions to upgrade from outdated records management ways to modern ones. While Chapter 2, Section 4 (Subsections 1–4) of the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Amendment Act (RSA 2010) outlines the functions of traditional institutions, there is little detail regarding standards and guidelines for record-keeping. Of the 35 respondents, 48.6 per cent strongly disagreed with the statement: "There is a good relationship between municipalities and traditional institutions", while 31.1 per cent disagreed and only 14.3 per cent agreed. Figure 3 highlights that the relationship between government and traditional institutions at a local level is not healthy.
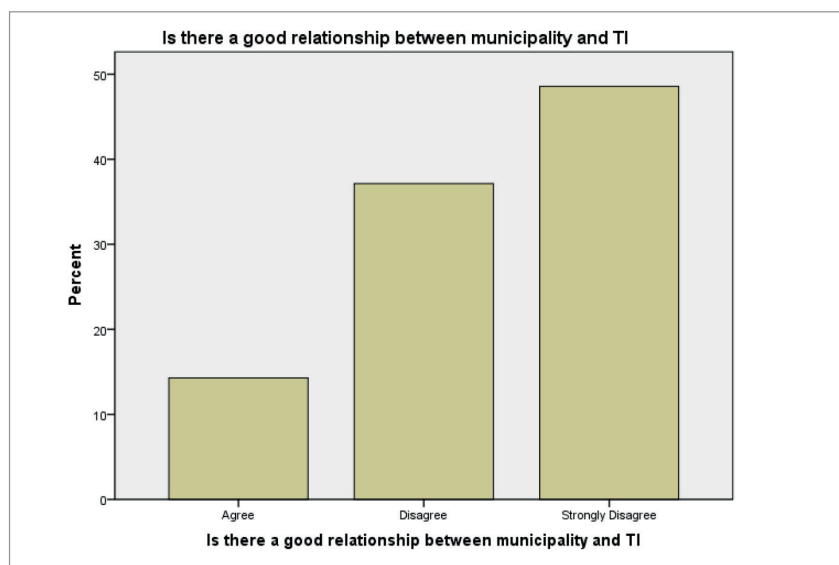

Figure 3:   Relationship between traditional institutions and municipalities

Visits by Senior Leadership

The researcher determined whether senior leadership at Boshega visits headmen/women and all of them responded no. Senior leadership at Boshega does not visit headmen/women to find out about their administrative duties in their respective communities. Instead, headmen/women make constant visits to the royal kraal every Tuesday of the week. *Kgoro* (a Northern Sotho word for an executive gathering between members of traditional councils and members of the community) is the main platform for executive

meetings and mass communication. This suggests there is little oversight by senior leadership over records management practices of headmen/women and their respective councils.
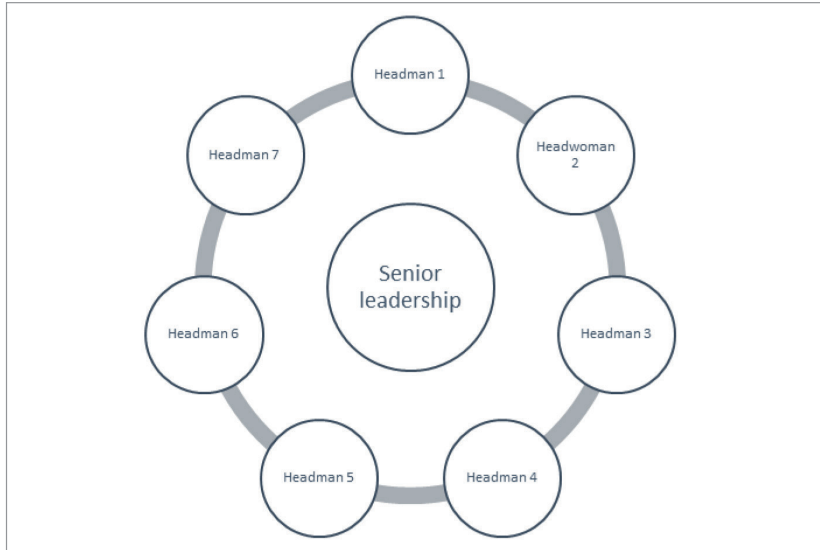

Figure 4:   Types of relationship headmen/women have with senior leadership

Administrators

All the respondents indicated that the people responsible for administering traditional councils are referred to as "secretaries". Their duties mainly include: writing and signing official letters in collaboration with a chief or headman/woman; taking minutes during meetings; and filing in the case of the "secretary" based at the central office of senior leadership, who also uses a desktop computer and a filing system to create and store records. For "secretaries" stationed in headmen/women offices, the duties are limited to writing letters and taking minutes using manual tools such as pens and notebooks. Refer to Figure 5 for a frequency distribution of offices. Therefore, it cannot be said that any form of real records management is taking place in the traditional institutions of Ga Molepo; especially those led by headmen and women.

Corporate Governance, Accountability and Transparency

According to the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Amendment Act (RSA 2010), municipalities are encouraged to cooperate with traditional institutions for functioning and administration. Looking at the Act, it is unclear as to the approach of the cooperation in terms of records management. For instance, while the study by Ngoepe and Van der Walt (2010) indicates there is a records management programme within the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, no such programme could be found in the area that was surveyed.

When asked whether traditional institutions are accountable and transparent, 18.9 per cent strongly agreed, while 75.7 per cent strongly disagreed. Records, such as published annual reports and financial statements, are hard to come by in traditional institutions.

Offices, Equipment and Virtual Storage Facilities

Although most traditional councils indicated that they have office space, the lack of equipment and tools to make these offices fully functional remains a huge obstacle. All of the 35 respondents (100%) indicated that they have an office although most of them are personal shelters turned into offices. Figure 5 relates to the question pertaining to physical and virtual storage facilities to solve the challenges of records management and access to information in traditional institutions.
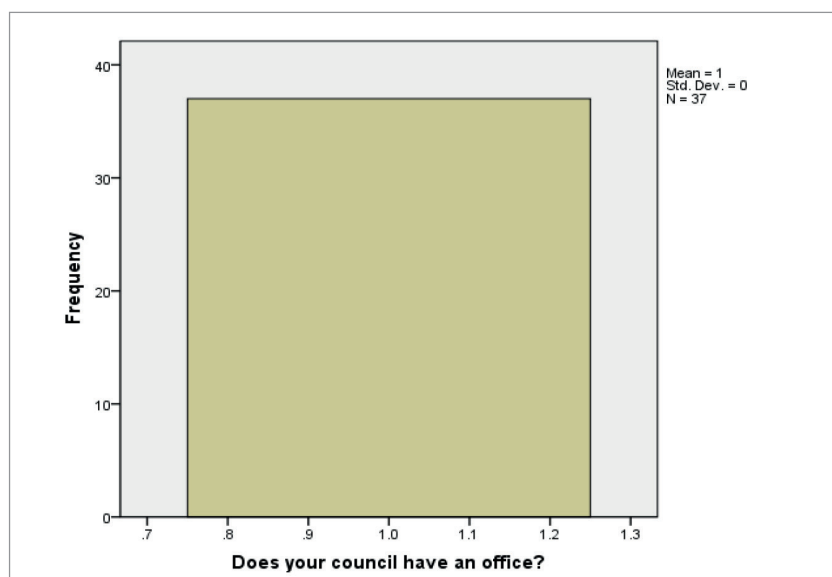

Figure 5:   Frequency distribution of respondents with offices

Records Management

Although most of the respondents indicated that their traditional councils have offices, many of them did not know anything about records management. Therefore, it is highly unlikely the respondents either know anything about or use modern formats of records management when they do have no knowledge of records management. This answers the question posed in Section 3.2: Do traditional institutions use modern formats of records management? Of the 35 respondents, 29.7 per cent indicated that they know about records management, while 70.3 per cent do not. Refer to Figure 6 for a representation of the respondents' knowledge of records management.
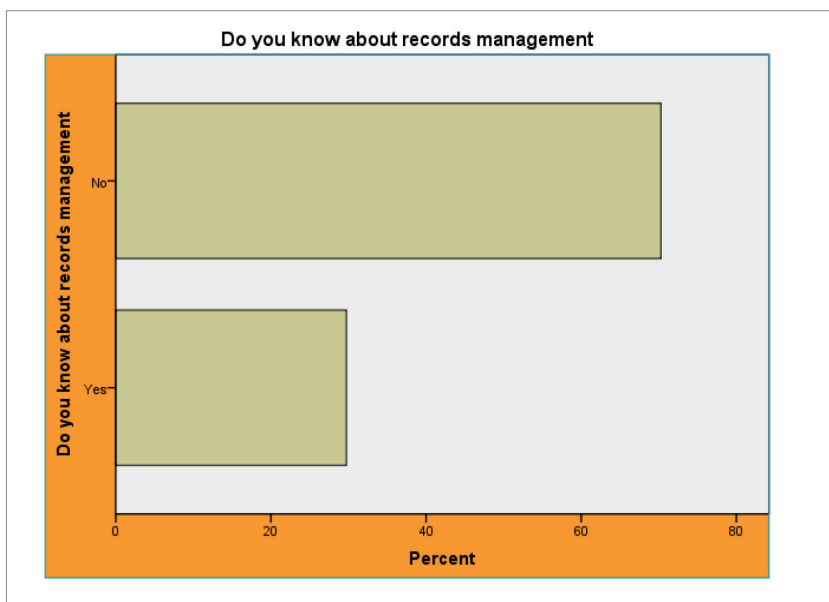

Figure 6:   Respondents' knowledge of records management

In addition, most respondents strongly disagreed with the statement: "All traditional councils keep records and manage them accordingly". Moreover, all 25 respondents pointed out that record keeping is important.

Ways, Methods and Tools Used to Administer Communities and Perform Records Management

There are no indications of efforts to engage in records management using modern ways in traditional institutions – an answer to the question posed in Section 3.2: Do traditional

institutions use modern formats of records management? Oral tradition (word of mouth) is still as common today as it was in ancient times. While emails could be helpful in terms of electronic record-keeping for traditional institutions in Ga Molepo, the absence of networked virtual facilities and record centres prohibits the use of "the internet of things".

Ten respondents (10%) pointed out that traditional councils rely on word of mouth for mass communication while seven respondents (7%) revealed that notebooks and exercise books without carbon copies are used in the creation, storage and dissemination of records. Meanwhile, nine respondents (9%) indicated that official stamps are used to validate records created, especially those meant for correspondence with external organisations such as banks. The fact that only two respondents (2%) indicated that official receipt books are seldom used implies financial transactions between residents and traditional councils are not consistently recorded for proof of payment. Only two respondents (2%) indicated that they have computers and multifunctional printers, which implies that manual handwritten records without virtual storage still dominate. Six respondents (6%) indicated that they use personal cell phones and one respondent (1%) uses a fixed landline telephone. While using a personal cell phone can be convenient, it would be hard to record and retrieve voice messages as is possible with a fixed landline telephone.
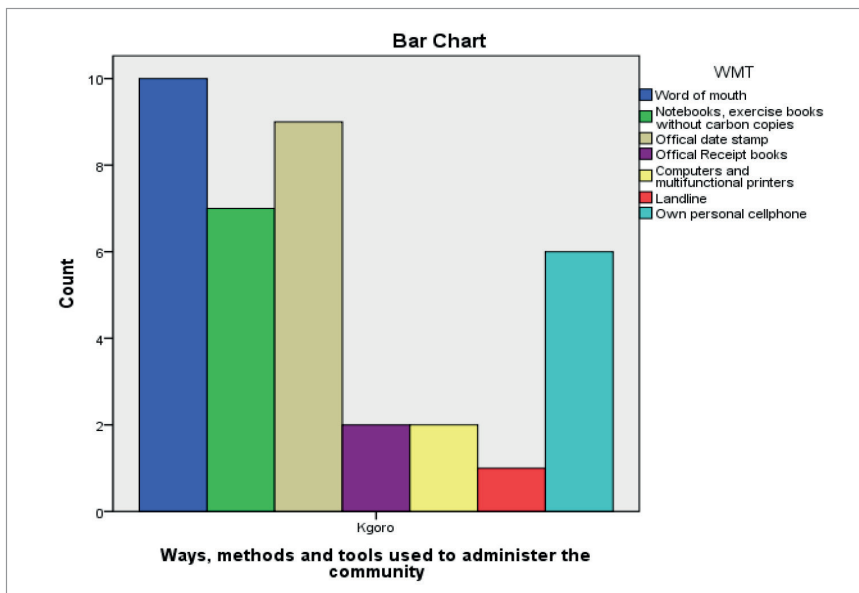

Figure 7:   Ways, methods and tools used to administer communities

Government's Provision of Resources

Government is still viewed as the "saviour" when it comes to issues of finance and traditional institutions are highly dependent on the directives of government. Of the 35 respondents, 78.4 per cent strongly agreed that government should provide more financial resources to traditional institutions, 16.2 per cent agreed, while 5.4 per cent disagreed. There was general consensus that the provision of financial resources would help traditional councils purchase essential equipment and tools used in the creation, storage and dissemination of records such as stationery, computers, printers and access to the internet.
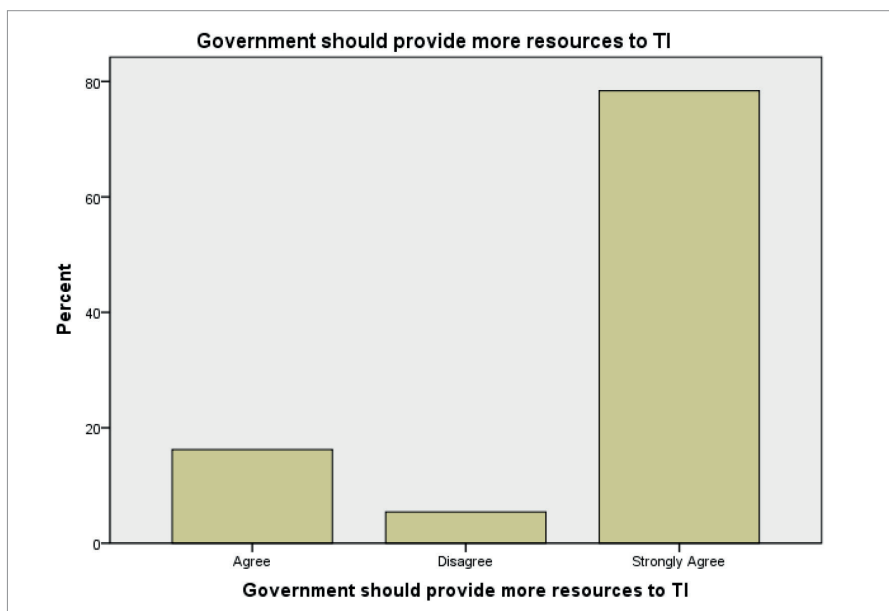

Figure 8:   Respondents strongly agreed that government should provide more resources
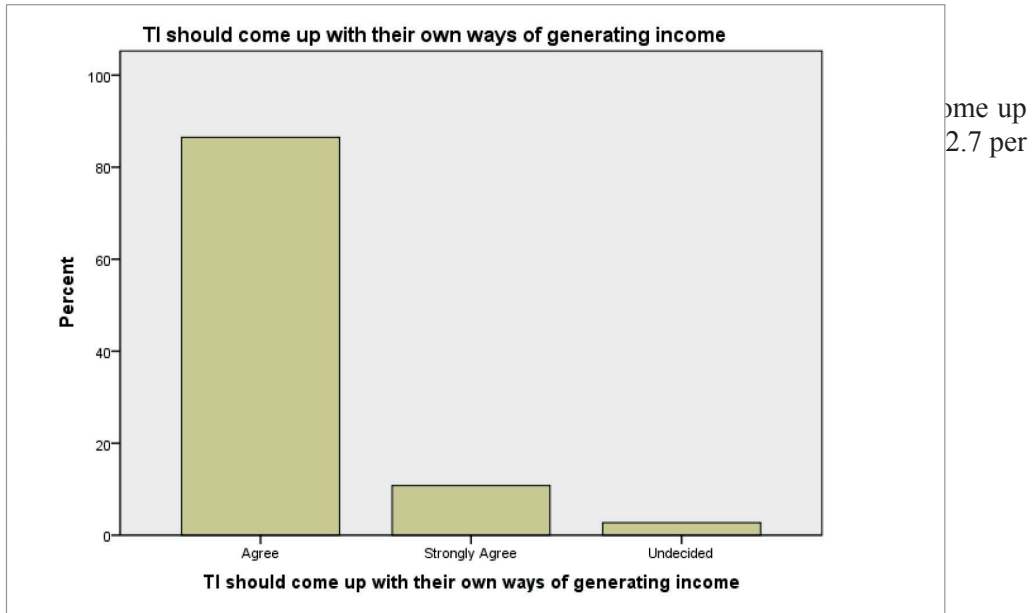
Figure 9:   Respondents strongly agreed that traditional institutions should generate their own income

A consistent cash flow would allow traditional councils to hire qualified personnel to manage records as well as purchase stationery and equipment such as computers and printers.

Community Contribution

Moreover, it appears the African culture of collectivism is evolving as many feel the tradition of asking members of the community to contribute is no longer useful. The old age tradition of requesting community members to contribute monies to purchase stationery used to create, store and disseminate official documents such as letters is no longer deeply entrenched. Of the 35 respondents, 73 per cent strongly disagreed that traditional communities should help finance traditional institutions, 2.7 per cent disagreed, while 24.3 per cent agreed.
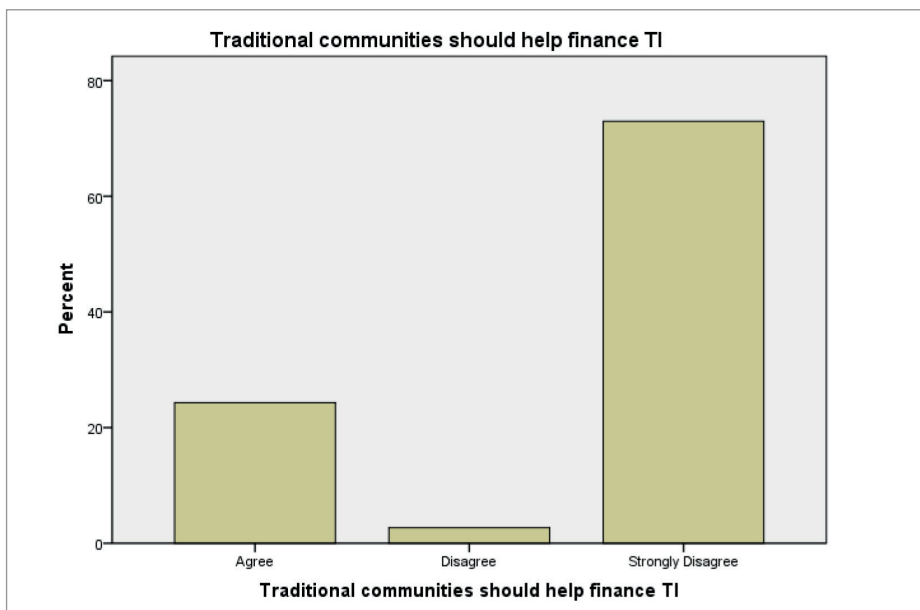
Figure 10: Respondents strongly disagreed that traditional communities should
contribute financially

Refer to Figure 11 for a graphical representation of a regression (path) analysis which indicates traditional institutions are highly dependent on the financial resources government makes available in order to improve on their current records management practices as highlighted in previous sections. Thus, the current records management practices are associated with the unwillingness of government to provide financial resources.

Figure 11: Graphical representation of a regression (path) analysis of variables

Conclusions and Recommendations

There are no real records management practices by both senior leadership and headmen/women in the traditional councils of Ga Molepo given the findings of the study. The use of notebooks and exercise books bought over the counter indicates that "secretaries" tasked with administrative duties attempt to create and keep records. However, such a practice could prove to be unsustainable in the long run without a steady supply of stationery. In addition, the use of notebooks without carbon copies is problematic and means most of the records created become untraceable once disseminated. Moreover, the heavy

reliance on handwritten paper-based records in traditional council offices means there is a high risk of losing records to hazards such as fire, mould and floods. Since only senior leadership at Boshega uses a computer connected to a multifunctional printer albeit without internet access, most traditional councils do not use modern formats of records management. Due to the lack of awareness and the absence of guidelines and standards, there are no real modern records management practices in traditional institutions. Government needs to elaborate more on the record-keeping function highlighted in the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Amendment Act (RSA 2010). The designation of administrative duties to people referred to as "secretaries" indicates that records management is not perceived as an organisational responsibility, but rather as one bestowed on individuals. As a result, the information culture amongst members of traditional councils could be referred to as centralised. It has been established that traditional institutions in Ga Molepo do not use modern ways of keeping records and this speaks to their inability to function and administer their respective constituencies in a rapidly changing democratic South African society.

The following recommendations should be implemented as a solution for the records management challenges faced by traditional institutions given the findings of the study:

- A message to government: emphasis should be placed on capturing collective memory at grassroots level instead of managing records at government level only. Clear procedures and processes need to be put in place by government in order to assist traditional institutions manage records effectively.

- Since not much has been written on records management in traditional institutions, the findings of the study should be utilised to develop strategies in assisting traditional institutions to effectively manage records. To begin with, traditional institutions need to collaborate with the National Archives of South Africa and other similar institutions elsewhere in setting standards and procedures for the management of records.

- Government needs to provide more financial resources for physical and virtual facilities and equipment in traditional offices. This would help transform records management ways from manual to computerised in order to align with rapid technological changes in society.

- The Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Amendment Act (RSA 2010) should be reviewed for the implementation of an effective record-management programme. This would assist in the introduction of corporate governance norms and values in traditional institutions, records-management practices.

- Traditional institutions need to find new innovative ways of generating income that can help them acquire the necessary tools for administrative purposes. A heavy reliance on government for finance disadvantages the acquisition of essential equipment and tools needed for the effective management of records.

- Information professionals should volunteer their services on a pro bono or paid-up basis for advice in the area of records management, especially to rural communities and their systems of governance.

- Young, skilled people need to feature in the administrative activities of traditional intuitions. Most of them fall within the category of millennials who are savvier with information and communication technologies (ICTs) used in modern records management than previous generations.

- Follow-up studies should be conducted on other aspects of records management in traditional institutions, in particular, to gain more insight into the perceptions, experiences and attitudes of traditional institutions towards modern records management and modern records-management formats.

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