

Post-records survey inspections in Zimbabwe

Post-records
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inspections

Reflections on compliance and non-compliance with records survey recommendations

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to establish public departments' compliance with National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ)'s records survey recommendations as well as to find out reasons for compliance and non-compliance.

Design/methodology/approach – This quantitative research used a survey research design and collected data using questionnaires, which were triangulated by document reviews and personal observation. A census approach was used where all 15 public departments upon which post-records survey inspections were conducted by Gweru Records Centre in the Midlands Province in 2016 were involved in the study.

Findings – The study revealed that many public departments in Zimbabwe disregarded records survey recommendations given by NAZ after records surveys. This was despite the fact that NAZ was armed with the [National Archives of Zimbabwe Act \(1986\)](#) which in principle is supposed to induce compliance by client departments. As a result, the records management situation in public departments has not improved much, and in some cases, it has become worse.

Originality/value – A lot has been published about records surveys in Zimbabwe, for example, by [Chaterera \(2008, 2013\)](#), [Dewah \(2010\)](#), [Karimanzira and Mutsagondo \(2015\)](#), [Maboreke \(2007\)](#) and [Mutsagondo \(2012\)](#). These studies have shown the importance of records surveys. However, none of them has evaluated the effectiveness of records surveys by examining the degree of compliance to records survey recommendations by public departments. This study thus scores a first in this regard. The study will enable NAZ to make a cost-benefit analysis of records surveys as well as to use results of this study to effect necessary operational, tactical and strategic decisions as regards the exercise.

Keywords Records management, Gweru Records Centre, National Archives of Zimbabwe, Post-records survey inspections, Records surveys

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

This study seeks to outline what post-records surveys inspections are, identify reasons for conducting post-records survey inspections, outline public departments' degree of compliance and non-compliance with records survey recommendations and assess reasons for compliance and non-compliance with National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ) records survey recommendations. NAZ is mandated to acquire, preserve and provide access to documentary heritage, in whatever format ([NAZ Act, 1986](#)). One way of ensuring that this goal is achieved is through conducting records surveys and post-records survey inspections within its clients. These are government ministries and departments, subsidiary bodies and local authorities, collectively referred to in this study as public departments.

According to [Bennick and Sitton \(2014\)](#), a records survey is an exercise that is undertaken to determine major records series or categories that end users create, receive, process or maintain in their day-to-day work. [Chaterera \(2013\)](#) holds that a records survey is



a critical exercise that is undertaken to achieve proper records management practices within public departments. Through its provincial records centres, NAZ visits each public department once every four years (NAZ Mission Statement, 2015) where records centre staff examines records' creation, use, maintenance and disposal as well as giving advice on filing and preservation of records (Karimanzira and Mutsagondo, 2015). However, after conducting records surveys, NAZ does not wait for four years to visit that department again as enshrined in NAZ mission statement. Instead, it conducts post-records survey inspections a year later to find out if their recommendations have been addressed as well as to identify problems that the department may be facing in addressing these recommendations (Mupindu, 2015). This study was carried out in the Midlands Province, one of Zimbabwe's ten administrative provinces. Gweru Records Centre, the provincial arm of NAZ in the Midlands was responsible for conducting both the records surveys and post-records survey inspections.

Background to the study

Literature review is a survey of different things written about a topic, theory or research question (Randolph, 2009). Based on the understanding that no study exists in isolation (Bell, 1973 cited by Kalusopa, 2011), this study interrogates literature on records surveys in Zimbabwe and other countries as well as literature on records management practices and the behaviour, attitude and perceptions of records officers and public sector management as regards records and records management. Nevertheless, literature was carefully reviewed to address each and every one of the four objectives of the study.

There is need for one to first understand what records surveys are before one can understand what post-records survey inspections are. Chaterera (2013) holds that a records survey is an exercise whereby information on how records are created, kept, used and disposed within a public office is gathered with focus on quantity, physical form, type, location, physical condition, storage facilities, use and rate of accumulation. Mutsagondo (2012) holds that a records survey is an exercise which involves viewing and examining how records are created, used, stored, retained and disposed within an organisation. According to NAZ Act (1986) and the NAZ Mission Statement (2018), NAZ inspects and examines records that are created, received, used, maintained and disposed by public sector departments. NAZ also gives advice on filing, preservation and maintenance of records. After one or two years, NAZ visits these departments to find out progress (or lack of it) made in relation to the recommendations that were made. This exercise is what records practitioners refer to as post-records survey inspections. Mutsagondo (2012) defines post-records survey inspections as exercises that are held to assess a department's responsiveness to records surveys and to recommendations given.

Under normal circumstances, NAZ conducts one records survey per department once every four years (NAZ Mission Statement, 2018). However, four years is rather too long a period to assess departments' responsiveness to records surveys (Mupindu, 2015). Thus, post-records survey inspections are held to assess the department's responsiveness to records survey recommendations (Mutsagondo, 2012). Mupindu (2015) also holds that post-records survey inspections are conducted to check if public departments are complying with recommendations given during records surveys, to assist departments in undertaking the recommendations given, to further cultivate contact with public departments and build good and lasting relations with them and lastly, to assess the effectiveness of records surveys. To get objective feedback, post-records survey inspections should be held at very short notice. If this is done, an accurate picture of the prevailing records situation can be obtained and assessed against recommendations given earlier on.

Compliance with NAZ observations and recommendations by public bodies is expected as NAZ is a public body which was created by an Act of Parliament and as it operates on the basis of the NAZ Act (1986). Section 6 of NAZ Act empowers the Director of NAZ to do the following in government ministries:

- (1) Subject to Subsection 2, the Director (NAZ) may, in respect of any ministry:
 - inspect and examine the records of that ministry;
 - give advice or instructions concerning the filing, maintenance and preservation and when necessary transfer to the National Archives records of that ministry; and
 - give instructions with regard to the retention or destruction of the records of that ministry
- (2) Before performing any function in terms of Subsection (1), the Director shall consult the Secretary of the ministry concerned and, in the event of any dispute or disagreement arising as to the performance of any such function, the matter shall be referred to the Minister responsible for the administration of the ministry for decision and his decision shall be final.
- (3) Where the Director gives any instructions in terms of Subsection (1), it shall be the duty of the ministry concerned to comply with such instructions.

Section 7 also empowers the Director of NAZ to do the above in statutory bodies and local authorities.

However, it has been noted by Zimbabwean scholars such as [Maboreke \(2007\)](#) on Masvingo Province, [Chaterera \(2008\)](#) on Midlands Province, [Manheru \(2009\)](#) and Mutare (2009) on Chitungwiza Hospital and Tsaura (2011) on Midlands Provincial Education Office that records are still poorly managed in public departments despite the fact that NAZ conducts records surveys on them. They further claim that in some departments, records were still kept in cardboard boxes, while in others they were piled on floors in corridors and basements of buildings. This shows little regard for records surveys and recommendations given after each and every records survey. [Mutsagondo \(2012\)](#) thus comments that even though records surveys are held time and again as part of the National Archives' mandate to society, not all of them yield the desired results. In a study on records and information management surveys by [Karimanzira and Mutsagondo \(2015\)](#), 44 per cent of records officers claimed that they addressed a few records survey recommendations, while 20 per cent addressed many of them, 12 per cent addressed most of them and disturbingly 24 per cent addressed none of them. The study also revealed that only 34 per cent of records officers agreed with NAZ records survey recommendations, 58 per cent did not agree with them while 8 per cent were undecided.

These statistics show little regard for NAZ as their records survey recommendations are largely neglected by ministries, local authorities and statutory bodies. Lack of regard for records surveys was revealed by [Karimanzira and Mutsagondo \(2015\)](#) who noted that 56 per cent of records officers in public departments had negative perceptions about NAZ records and information management surveys. Of them, 36 per cent of them saw records surveys as disruptive, while 20 per cent saw them as a waste of time. Only 28 per cent of records officers saw records surveys as a good exercise, while 16 per cent were not decided.

In a post-records survey inspection report by [Mupindu \(2016\)](#), records officers in public departments cited financial challenges as the major reason why public departments failed to implement NAZ records survey recommendations. In the same report, Mupindu queried why these departments had failed to implement recommendations of a non-financial or low-

financial nature like restricting access into the registry to unauthorised people, cleaning offices and dusting files. Nevertheless, [Mutsagondo \(2012\)](#) agrees that some records survey recommendations had financial implications and thus needed money to implement as well as prioritisation by and support of management. Examples of these are buying new filing equipment, hiring more personnel and updating skills of registry personnel. In her study on the impact of records management in Tanzania's public service, [Ndenje-Sichalwe \(2010\)](#) holds that an effective records and archives management system thrives on the availability of sufficient resources, among other necessities like a strong statutory base and appropriate placement within the structure of government.

Blame for poor records management practices and failure to implement archival authorities' recommendations has also been leveled on management which is said to have little regard for records, records management and archival institutions. [Matangira \(2016\)](#) observed that in Zimbabwe, top management within the public service was generally not aware of the significance of records management. In fact, they accorded a low profile to records management, records personnel and archival authorities. Likewise, in Uganda, [Luyombya \(2010\)](#) observed that management was largely not concerned about the management of records until when things went wrong for example when an important file could not be located. Lack of interest in records management by senior management within the public service has far-reaching consequences, especially as it has a bearing on the manner in which resources are allocated within an organisation. [Mnjama \(2002\)](#) notes that funds are needed in records sections to buy specialised storage equipment, payment of staff salaries, restoration facilities, maintenance costs, archival boxes, insurance and acid-free paper. He argues that many archives and records management programmes fail due to lack of funding. Poor funding of records management activities was also noted by [Tafor \(2001\)](#) who discovered in his research that all members of East and Southern Africa Regional Body of the International Council on Archives experienced budgetary problems in one way or another.

Problem statement

Despite the importance of records surveys in ensuring proper and professional management of public records ([Chaterera, 2008, 2013](#) [Maboreke, 2007](#)), many public departments do not comply with recommendations given by archival authorities ([Karimanzira and Mutsagondo, 2015; Mutsagondo, 2012](#)), a situation which has resulted in continued poor records keeping and poor records management practices within public departments. The cost in terms of time, money and effort expended on public departments by NAZ seems to be in vain as many departments fail to address recommendations made after records surveys. This has raised questions about public departments' perceptions of NAZ, records surveys and the importance of records and records management within public sector administration.

Purpose of the study

The study aimed at establishing whether public departments addressed records survey recommendations made by NAZ, as well as to assess reasons for such compliance or lack thereof.

Objectives of the study

Specific objectives of the study were to:

- (1) outline what post-records surveys inspections are
- (2) identify reasons for conducting post-records survey inspections

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- (3) outline public departments' degree of compliance and non-compliance with records survey recommendations
 - (4) assess reasons for compliance and non-compliance with NAZ records survey recommendations

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Methodology

A survey research design was used in this study. According to [Babbie \(2011\)](#), a survey is a good research method when one wants to acquire information about characteristics, opinions, attitudes and experiences of people. As such, it was regarded as suitable in collecting data about records and other public service officers' perceptions, views and attitudes about records surveys and post-records survey inspections. The study was based on 15 post-records survey inspections conducted by Gweru Records Centre in 2016 which was a follow-up exercise on records surveys held in 2015. Although 22 records surveys were conducted in 2015, Gweru Records Centre carried out 15 post-records survey inspections.

A total of 30 officers, comprising 15 records officers and 15 provincial heads of departments from 15 public departments were the major informants in this study. In addition, two officers of NAZ's Gweru Records Centre also participated in the study. All respondents completed questionnaires, and they were purposively selected because of their relevance to the problem under investigation. Records officers are the focal personnel when NAZ staff conducted records surveys and post-records survey inspections. Provincial heads of public departments are responsible for making operational, tactical and strategic decisions, some of which involve the management of records and implementing recommendations of records surveys. A total of two officers of Gweru Records Centre that is the archivist and the records management officer are responsible for conducting records surveys and post-records survey inspections.

A total of 32 officers completed 3 sets of questionnaires. The first questionnaire was for public departments' records officers, the second was for provincial heads of public departments and the third was for Gweru Records Centre staff. Document reviews and observation were used to triangulate questionnaire responses and findings. Post-records survey inspection reports of all the 15 departments comprised documents reviewed in collecting data. These documents provided data on observations and recommendations made after post-records survey inspections. Observation focussed on office tidiness, shelving of records, filing of records, security measures like burglar bars and "No Entry" signs. Names of public records officers and those of public departments were not publicised. Public departments were denoted by letters of the alphabet, which ranged from A to O.

Findings of the study

Post-records survey inspections in the Zimbabwean context

According to Gweru Records Centre staff, the issue of post-records survey inspections is rather new as it was introduced in the Midlands Province in 2012. As such, it was greatly misunderstood by public service officers who in this study gave varying perceptions as to what they thought post-records survey inspections were. A total of 8 of the 15 (53 per cent) records officers in public departments saw post-records survey inspections as records surveys. They did not realise that these were not new records surveys, but follow-ups on records surveys which were conducted earlier on. As such, some of these officers had ill-feelings towards post-records survey inspections, as they equated them to the dreaded records surveys. Only five (33 per cent) records officers from public departments fully understood what post-records survey inspections were

and why they were held. The remaining two records officers did not respond to the question on what post-records survey inspections were. All 15 (100 per cent) provincial heads of public departments in the Midlands confused post-records survey inspections with records surveys. Nevertheless, 12 (80 per cent) of them appreciated the role that records surveys and post-records survey inspections played in enhancing sound records management practices in their departments.

One officer of Gweru Records Centre explained that post-records survey inspections are exercises that are held to check on progress, or lack of it, as regards implementation of records survey recommendations. He further explained that post-records survey inspections are basically not records surveys, but an audit of how much has been done or not done after a records survey as well as an appraisal of the records and records management situation in the post-records survey period.

Reasons for conducting post-records survey inspections

According to two officers of Gweru Records Centre, post-records survey inspections are held for three main reasons. First, post-records survey inspections are conducted to find out progress or lack of it, towards implementation of records survey recommendations. If there is progress, fine, but if there is none or if the situation is getting worse, post-records survey inspections help Records Centre staff to identify challenges that their client is facing and see how best they can assist.

Second, Gweru Records Centre staff indicated that post-records survey inspections help NAZ to judge the effectiveness of their records surveys. If recommendations are given time and again but implementation is low, this shows that a problem exists somewhere somehow. One officer explained that it may mean records surveys are not properly conducted which may give the impression that NAZ conducts them as a mere routine. Another officer reiterated that failure to implement recommendations may mean public records officers and management's attitude towards records surveys is negative. As such, efforts towards behaviour change may have to be instituted before more resources could be channeled towards the exercise.

Third, this audit exercise helps NAZ to make a cost-benefit analysis of records surveys. NAZ expends time, human resources, money, vehicles and effort to carry out records surveys. In this regard, post-records survey inspections are both tactical and strategic management tools to assess viability and utility of NAZ operations which in turn can be used to determine prioritisation of activities and resources within the institution.

A total of 53 per cent of records officers in public departments held that post-records survey inspections were held because Records Centre staff did not have much work to do in their offices. They also claimed post-records survey inspections were held by records centre staff to raise money through transport and subsistence allowances which are normally given in the public service when work is conducted away from one's work station. A total of five (33 per cent) officers from public departments were able to correctly state why post-records survey inspections were held and they greatly appreciated the role that the exercise played in the management of records in the public service. Provincial heads of public departments were not asked reasons why post-records survey inspections were held, as they were not aware what the exercise was all about.

Public departments' compliance and non-compliance with National Archives of Zimbabwe records survey recommendation

Documentary evidence from records survey reports at Gweru Records Centre helped researchers to compile a consolidated outline of public departments' compliance and non-

compliance with records survey recommendations. Post-records survey inspections were based on ten of the most common recommendations given by NAZ's Gweru Records Centre during records surveys. These were:

- (1) transfer semi-current records to the records centre;
- (2) devise a retention-disposal policy which is approved by NAZ;
- (3) devise a vital records programme;
- (4) establish a filing control system;
- (5) procure (more) filing equipment;
- (6) restrict access to or into the registry;
- (7) put precautions against fire;
- (8) put precautions against pests;
- (9) have precautions against dust and sunlight; and
- (10) put precautions against water or floods.

The study sought to find out how each of the 15 departments addressed records survey recommendations that were made a year earlier. These results are shown in [Table I](#).

By assessing post-records survey documents, the researcher was able to collect data on how all the 15 departments responded to records survey recommendations based on the ten variables that is a-j above.

Department N was number one as it implemented 60 per cent of the recommendations that it was given. However, the department failed to put in place a retention-disposal policy, a vital records programme, a filing control system and measures that guarded against water or floods. Save for putting in place pre-cautions against water and floods, all other areas of non-implementation did not have direct financial implications. Instead, in-depth knowledge of records management was needed for the department to devise a retention-disposal policy, a vital records programme and a filing control system. Personal observation revealed that the department still used a mixture of different filing control systems, which made it difficult to locate and retrieve records. The records officer of the department stated that lack of money made it difficult to replace a cracked asbestos sheet which let rain into the registry during the rainy season. The provincial head of department also stated that financial challenges prevented them from addressing recommendations that were made by NAZ.

Table I.
Records survey
recommendations
addressed by
departments A-O

Item recommended	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	(%)
Transfer semi-current records	×	✓	✓	×	×	✓	×	×	✓	×	×	✓	×	✓	×	40
Devise a retention-disposal policy	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	0
Devise a vital records programme	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	0
Create a filing control system	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	0
Procure filing equipment	×	×	✓	×	×	✓	×	×	×	×	✓	×	✓	×	×	33
Restrict access to and into the registry	✓	×	×	×	×	×	×	✓	×	×	×	×	✓	✓	✓	33
Put precautions against fire	×	✓	×	×	×	✓	×	✓	×	×	×	×	×	✓	✓	33
Put precautions against pests	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	×	✓	×	×	✓	×	×	✓	✓	×	53
Put precautions against dust/sunlight	✓	✓	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	×	47
Put precautions against water/floods	×	✓	×	×	×	×	✓	×	×	✓	×	×	×	×	×	20
% recommendations addressed	30	50	30	0	10	30	30	20	10	30	10	10	40	60	20	

Second placed was Department B which implemented 50 per cent of the recommendations made a year earlier. The department failed to implement the following: putting in place a retention-disposal policy, a vital records programme, a filing control system, procuring filing equipment and restricting access into the registry. The records officer pointed out that non-implementation of NAZ recommendations was caused by financial challenges which faced the department. However, the records officer had difficulties in explaining how the department failed to address recommendations which had no direct financial implications like restricting access into the registry to unauthorised personnel. The provincial head of the department blamed the failure to implement recommendations of a non-financial nature on the ineptitude of his records officer and not on management. Personal observation showed that all officers in the department still had access into the registry and that they could pull out records from open wooden shelves as they pleased.

Third placed was Department M which complied with 40 per cent of the recommendations. Both the records officer and the provincial head claimed that failure to transfer semi-current records to the records centre, failure to buy a fire extinguisher and failure to mend a leaking roof was due to financial challenges. The records officer also expressed lack of assistance by Gweru Records Centre staff in devising a retention-disposal schedule, a vital records programme and a filing control system. Gweru Records Centre's records management officer dismissed reasons cited for non-implementation as mere rhetoric as transferring records, buying a fire extinguisher and mending a leaking roof involve very small amounts of money. The records management officer also expressed that Gweru Records Centre was in the process of compiling a list of public departments and the forms of assistance that they needed. As such, issues like devising a retention-disposal schedule, a vital records programme and a filing control system would be addressed for the benefit of many public departments in the near future.

Faring poorly were Departments A, C, F, G and J which implemented 30 per cent of the recommendations, while H and O had 20 per cent, E 10 per cent and D 0 per cent. Similar reasons as those given above by records officers and provincial heads were given to explain why these departments failed to implement recommendations given a year earlier. Nevertheless, the archivist at Gweru Records Centre expressed doubts about the sincerity of departments which had implemented very few recommendations. He thus dismissed failure to comply of such magnitude as caused by lack of appreciation of the role records management played within the realms of the public service.

The highest recommendation implemented was putting in place security precautions against pests which were addressed by eight (53 per cent) departments. It was followed by putting in place security precautions against dust and sunlight which was implemented by seven (47 per cent) departments. The third commonly addressed recommendation was "transfer semi-current records to the records centre" which was undertaken by six (40 per cent) departments. Fourth came "procure filing equipment", "restrict access to the registry" and "put in place precautions against fire" each of which was addressed by five (33 per cent) departments. Putting in place precautions against water or floods was undertaken by three departments (20 per cent). "Devise retention-disposal policy", "devise vital records programme" and "create filing control system" were not addressed by any of the 15 departments in the study.

Records officers and provincial heads of departments were quick to apportion blame on NAZ for failing to train records officers on how to devise retention-disposal policies, vital records programmes and creating filing control systems. As indicated above, staff of Gweru Records expressed that these were critical areas where public departments

needed assistance and these areas had been ear-marked for training workshops to empower records staff on how to effect such recommendations. Personal observation revealed that departments which implemented a number of recommendations had well kempt, orderly and cleaner offices. At the same time, departments which did not implement any or those which implemented a few recommendations had clumsy, disorderly and dirty offices. In one office, some records had been attacked by rodents, while in another, they had been damaged by water.

Discussion of findings

Failure to comply with NAZ records survey recommendations has been blamed on a number of factors by records officers, provincial heads of public departments and Gweru Records Centre staff. Among them were the following factors.

First, records officers and provincial heads of public departments blamed the impasse on financial constraints. It is true that the Government of Zimbabwe has from 2000 been experiencing economic and financial challenges. As noted by [Matangira \(2016, p. 48\)](#), the years 2000 to 2010 was a “decade of loss” for information management as the country battled with a plethora of economic and financial challenges. Among them were negative balance of payments, shortages of foreign currency, runaway inflation, unemployment and negative growth rate ([Chagonda, 2013](#); [Kairiza, 2012](#)). Economic challenges continued after 2010. According to [Murambiwa \(2012\)](#), political and economic challenges continued to haunt the archival profession well after 2010 despite the country adopting the multi-currency system.

Second, financial challenges were compounded by public departments’ failure to come up with a budget for records management. This challenge was noted in Zimbabwe by [Matangira \(2016\)](#) who observed that no funds were set aside for records management as top public service management was generally not concerned about records management. Public service management was also blamed by [Luyombya \(2010\)](#) in Uganda who revealed that managers generally became concerned about records management only when things went wrong or when an important record could not be found. In Botswana, [Mnjama \(2002\)](#) holds that many records and archives programmes fail due to lack of funding. However, financial challenges cannot fully explain why many departments fail to implement records survey recommendations some of which involved some few dollars while some did not have direct financial implications.

Third, negative personal attitude and perceptions about the records management function also played a part. This is especially true when one considers that some public departments were still complying with financial-related recommendations despite the impending financial crisis. Failure to buy archival boxes which cost US\$2.00 each leaves one wondering if such departments were sincere in advancing financial constraints excuses. Thus, financial challenges, though a contributory factor, cannot fully explain why many public departments failed to address NAZ records survey recommendations. Thus, blame can also be apportioned on negative personal attitude and perceptions about records management by public sector management, administration staff as well as some records officers. [Karimanzira and Mutsagondo \(2015\)](#) revealed that 56 per cent of records officers in public departments had negative perceptions about NAZ records and information management surveys. Of them, 36 per cent saw records surveys as disruptive, while 20 per cent saw them as a waste of time. Only 28 per cent of public sector records officers saw records surveys as a good exercise, while 16 per cent reserved their comments.

Fourth, lack of skills among records officers also played a part in public departments' failure to effect due records survey recommendations. Zimbabwe is endowed with a highly skilled human capital base and this pre-supposes that government-employed records officers are well-qualified and skilled. Nevertheless, in findings of the study, one provincial head blamed his records officer for ineptitude. It was also revealed in the same section that no public department had ever complied with Gweru Records Centre's recommendations to devise a retention-disposal policy, a vital records programme and a filing control system. Skills challenges among records officers in Zimbabwe have been noted by [Matangira \(2016\)](#) as well as by [Tsvuura and Mutsagondo \(2015\)](#), the later who noted that some public sector records officers held mere ordinary level qualifications. Similar challenges were noted in other African countries like South Africa by [Marutha and Ngulube \(2012\)](#) and in Botswana by [Kalusopa \(2011\)](#) and [Keakopa \(2008\)](#). The skills gap in Zimbabwe was worsened by NAZ's failure to conduct regular training workshops with records officers. According to [Dewah and Mnjama \(2013\)](#), one of the core functions of a records centre in Zimbabwe is to train records staff through workshops and seminars. As such, Gweru Records Centre should as a matter of priority help to upgrade skills of public records staff in the Midlands Province.

Finally, NAZ seems to be failing to garner respect among public service departments due to its rather misplaced position within the public service. Between 1935 and 2015, NAZ was a department in the Ministry of Home Affairs. It is now a department in the Ministry of Rural Development, Promotion and Preservation of National Culture and Heritage. [Matangira \(2016\)](#) argues that the positioning of the national archives within the structures of government should be carefully done; otherwise, the department remains powerless to operate within government, as it lacks both the respect and power to enforce its decisions over sister public departments. [Wamukoya and Lowry \(2013\)](#) observed that in Tanzania, the national archives falls under the Office of the President, a situation that has given it profile, visibility and influence over other public departments in managing public sector records. A similar set-up exists in Rwanda and Gabon, while in Japan and Israel, archival institutions fall under the Office of the Prime Minister.

Conclusion and recommendations

NAZ holds one records survey per public department once every four years. In between the four year period, one post-records survey inspection is held. These efforts are geared towards improving records management practices in public departments. However, the effort of NAZ has not been matched by corresponding compliance by public departments as many of them fail to implement records survey recommendations given. Thus, [Chaterera \(2008\)](#) holds that records and information management surveys by NAZ seem to be a mere routine requirement to fulfill legislative requirements but with little effect on the way public records are managed.

To foster excellence in public sector records management through records surveys and post-records survey inspections, this study advances the following recommendations. First, the Government of Zimbabwe should prioritise records management and set a budget for records management activities to cater for routine and capital projects within the records section or unit. If funds are set aside for records management in the public sector, public departments may have resources to address issues raised by NAZ in records surveys. [Baxter \(1963\)](#) holds that an earlier group of archivists in Zimbabwe successfully clamoured

for more resources for archival work in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. The same can still be done today.

Second, management and the rest of public service officers should change their mindset regarding records management and begin to accord to it the reverence and respect that it deserves just like any other organisational functional areas like personnel, finance and procurement. If this is done, more resources are likely to be expended towards addressing records survey recommendations.

Third, records officers should upgrade their skills to be able to undertake records management tasks like devising retention-disposal schedules, vital records programmes and filing control systems. This can be done through workshops, conferences and college and university courses.

Fourth, NAZ should assist records officers in undertaking demanding records management tasks like devising retention-disposal schedules, vital records programmes and filing control systems. NAZ should conduct training workshops for public departments' officers where records management skills are inculcated.

Finally, NAZ should be accorded not only records supervisory powers but also policing powers where it should impose penalties, fines and reprimands on non-complying public departments. Placement of NAZ within government is also important. The fact that NAZ falls under the Ministry of Rural Development, Promotion and Protection of National Culture and Heritage makes the department just one of those institutions. For it to earn more respect, it would be prudent to place it in a ministry or department that cuts across the entire public service like the Public Service Commission or the Office of the President. This has been advanced by the [World Bank \(2000\)](#) who held that national archival institutions should be placed within an office which plays a central governing role within the country such as that of the president or prime minister or the ministry responsible for the civil service. If this is done in Zimbabwe, NAZ would be better placed to supervise, enforce and when need be, reprimand sister departments within the public service.

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