

# Nurturing Professional Talent in Records and Archives Management in Kenya

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## ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings of a survey done in early 2016 on the preparedness of records and archives management (RAM) undergraduate students in Kenya to take up professional roles in records and archives management profession. The survey was conducted on the understanding that RAM in Kenya today demands well trained and nurtured talent especially in view of growing technological and professional issues in the field. Besides, there is increasing need for more robust and efficient RAM systems to serve needs for transparency and accountability. This requires a relook at the talent development of young RAM enthusiasts to ensure they are adequately repackaged to fit in the RAM world whilst remaining competitive in the global job marketplace.

**Key words:** Talent management, training, records management, archives management,

Promuovere il talento professionale nell'Amministrazione documentale ed archivistica in Kenya

## SINTESI

Questa relazione presenta i risultati di un sondaggio condotto in Kenya all'inizio del 2016 sulla preparazione dei master universitari per la gestione di documenti ed archivi (RAM) per l'assunzione di profili professionali specifici nella professione di gestione. L'indagine è stata condotta con la consapevolezza che RAM in Kenya oggi richiede talenti ben formati soprattutto in vista delle crescenti questioni tecnologiche e professionali in materia. Inoltre c'è sempre più bisogno di sistemi RAM più robusti ed efficienti per soddisfare le esigenze di trasparenza e responsabilità. Ciò richiede un ripensamento dello sviluppo del talento di giovani appassionati di RAM per assicurarsi che siano adeguatamente aggiornati per adattarsi al mondo RAM pur rimanendo competitivi nel mercato del lavoro globale.

**Parole chiave:** gestione del talento, formazione, gestione documentale, gestione degli archivi

Negovanje strokovnih talentov pri upravljanju z dokumentarnim in arhivskim gradivom v Keniji

## IZVLEČEK

V prispevku so predstavljene ugotovitve ankete, opravljene v začetku leta 2016, o pripravljenosti dodiplomskih študentov dokumentologije in arhivistike (RAM) v Keniji, da bi prevzeli poklicne vloge v dokumentacijski in arhivski stroki. Raziskava je bila izvedena z razumevanjem dejstva da RAM v Keniji danes zahteva dobro usposobljene in negovane talente, zlasti zaradi vedno večjih tehnoloških in strokovnih vprašanj na tem področju. Poleg tega je vedno večja potreba po bolj robustnih in učinkovitih sistemih RAM-a, ki zagotavljajo transparentnost in verodostojnost. To zahteva novo razmišljanje o razvoju talentov na področju RAM-a, da bi zagotovili, da so ustrezno pripravljene, da se lahko vključijo v svet RAM, medtem pa ostanejo konkurenčni na globalnem trgu dela.

**Ključne besede:** upravljanje talentov, usposabljanje, dokumentalistika, upravljanje z arhivi

## 1 Introduction & Background

In 2014, the Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA), which regulates higher education in the East African community reported that at least half (50%) of graduates of universities in East Africa are not suitable for employment (*Nganga 2014; Ernest 2014*). Specifically, the reported indicated that in Kenya 51% of graduates are unsuitable for job market, while Rwanda's 52% and Burundi's 55% were unsuitable for employment. Tanzania's unsuitable graduates stood at 61% while Uganda was worst at 63%.

The IUCEA study also reported that only 27% of employers felt confident with the graduates from East African universities while 47% were not confident (*Mwangi 2014*).

In view of the findings of this study, the present survey sought to investigate how records and archives management (RAM) graduates play within the scenario. If 51% of Kenya's graduates are unsuitable for employment, would it imply that 51% of Ram graduates are also unsuitable for the job market?

The objective of this survey was to primarily find out how universities in Kenya offering training in RAM are preparing their students to fit in the RAM job market and make recommendations on how universities can strengthen their RAM training to ensure they produce competent, effective and marketable young professionals.

Four reasons informed the conducting of this survey. First is the growing technological development in records and archives management, especially in e-records management, including digital archiving, which is rapidly transcending many institutions in Kenya. This emergence of new technologies and solutions is demanding availability of well trained and prepared records and archives management experts to support organizations implement robust records management regimes.

Second is increasing demand for efficiency and effectiveness in records management as emphasis on good governance, accountability and transparency becomes focus point for governments. In addition to this is implementation of e-government, a phenomenon that demands strong records management experts to facilitate.

There is also the expansion of training opportunities and institutions in records and archives management in Kenya. For many years only Moi University in Kenya offered undergraduate training in records and archives management. In the last two years, several other universities have come up including Kenya Methodist University, Inoorero University, Kisii University and the Technical University of Kenya.

Fourthly, with growing job opportunities around the globe in RAM, graduates are required to be crisp and thoroughly prepared to match their competitors from around the globe. Knowledge of RAM standards and ERM including digital preservation and archiving are key selling points for anyone looking for career opportunities across the globe. Whether graduates in Kenyan universities are well prepared is something worth investigating.

## 2 Background of the Survey

The survey sampled a total of sixty one (61) fourth year university students specializing in RAM at Moi University, Kenya Methodist University (KEMU) and Kisii University College. These were fifty one students from Moi University, seven from KEMU and three from Kisii University College. The survey limited itself to this group of students because they are specifically interested and being prepared to take roles in RAM. In addition the survey focuses on only undergraduates since they form the first line of professional development in RAM.

Semi-structured questionnaires were issued to the students with the following nine questions:

1. What factors made you specialize in RAM?
2. At the time of specializing in RAM, were you aware of possible career lines in RAM?
3. Do you intend to build a career in RAM?
4. Do you intend to pursue further education in RAM?
5. What career path/area of specialization would you want to take in RAM?

6. On a scale of 1(weakest) - 5( very strong), how would you rate your competency in the following areas:
  - Paper records management
  - Electronic Records Management
7. How many records management standards are you familiar with? Please specify.
8. Are you familiar with any Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS) or Records Management System? If yes, please specify.
9. On a scale of 1(weakest) - 5(very strong), how would you rate your competencies in the following ICT skills:
  - i. Microsoft Office Suite
  - ii. Computer networking
  - iii. Computer programming

These questions were specifically designed to address three aspects. Questions one to five focused on assessing students' definition of career path in RAM. These questions sought to understand if students have a clear understanding of career paths in RAM even as they specialize in RAM.

Question six and seven focused on assessing students' knowledge base in RAM. Question seven for instance was specifically designed on appreciation of the fact that for students to be competitive and productive, they must be familiar with RAM standards. Knowledge of the existing RAM standards was deemed a good measure of students' knowledge base in RAM.

Question eight was specifically included in appreciation of reality of e-records in organisations today. It was the premise of the survey that it is now critical that any graduate in RAM must have knowledge of RM systems and/or document management systems. In the last five years several organizations in Kenya have been implementing ERDMS or Document Management Systems (DMS) (Equity Bank, 2011; Kenya Roads Board, 2011; Kenya rural roads authority, 2011; Mumias Sugar Company, 2011; Ministry of Immigration, 2011; Ministry of Information, 2011). These companies will need to be supported with expertise that has good understanding of these kind of systems. It therefore follows that RAM graduates who have good understanding on EDRMS or DMS are likely to have a competitive edge in the job market.

The last question was to assess other technical skills that are now becoming critical for records managers and archivists. Computer literacy or especially proficiency in Microsoft Office suite is a minimum requirement in almost all jobs. Knowledge of computer networking is essential for records managers to understand the management of e-records in distributed environments, especially the security of information/records across computer networks. Computer programming is a skill that can help records managers understand the design and operations of e-records systems and perform technical analysis of these systems, not necessarily to be programmers.

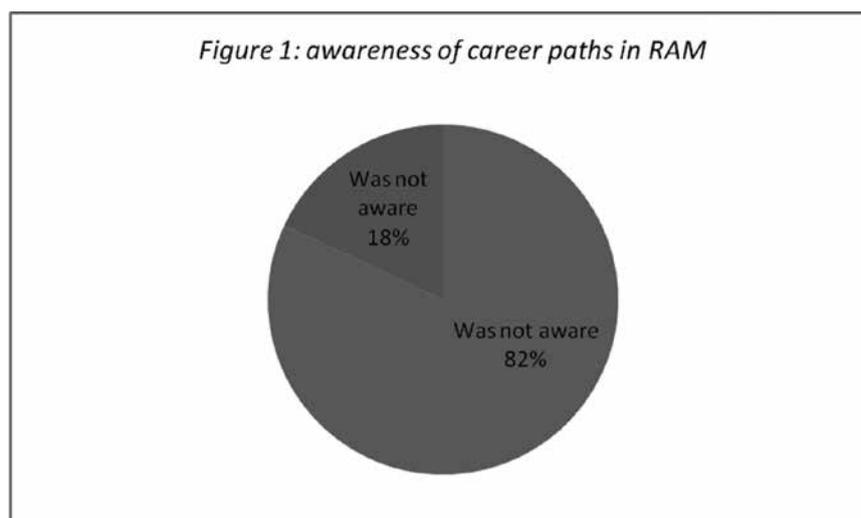
### 3 Survey Results

#### *1. What factors made you specialize in RAM?*

With regard to reasons that informed the students' decision to specialize in RAM in their final years, 42 students reported to have been driven by interest. Nine students indicated the availability of job opportunities as their driving force while eight indicated to have had no reason to specialize in RAM. One student cited her examination grades in previous years to have been the reason since she had performed better in RAM courses. One other student reported to have been employed in a records management role which is why she chose to specialize in RAM.

#### *2. Awareness of possible career lines in RAM*

On whether the students were aware of possible career paths in RAM at the point of specializing in RAM, the students' responses were as indicated in Figure 1.



*3. Do you intend to build your career in RAM?*

Students were asked on whether they intend to build a career in records and archives management. Fifty seven of them (93%) indicated they intend build a career in RAM while four (7%) reported they do not intend to build a career in RAM.

*4. Do you intend to pursue further education in RAM?*

Regarding whether the students would want to pursue further education in RAM, fifty seven of them (93%) indicated they intend build a career in RAM while four (7%) reported they do not intend to build a career in RAM.

*5. What career path/area of specialization would you want to take in RAM?*

In order to assess if students adequately understand career opportunities in RAM, students were asked to indicate what career path they would prefer to specialize in. Their responses were as indicated in Table 1.

*Table 1: preferred career specializations in RAM*

Specialty	Frequency	Percentage
“Academia”	1	2
“Archives Management”	4	6
“Consultancy”	1	2
“Electronic records management”	30	49
“Health records management”	1	2
“Legal records management”	1	2
“Mobile technology”	1	2
“None”	6	10
“Records and archives management”	15	25
Total	61	100

*6. Competency in paper and electronic records management*

The respondents were requested to indicate their self assessment competency levels in both paper and electronic records management, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was very weak and 5 very strong. The results were as indicated in Figure 2 and Table 2.

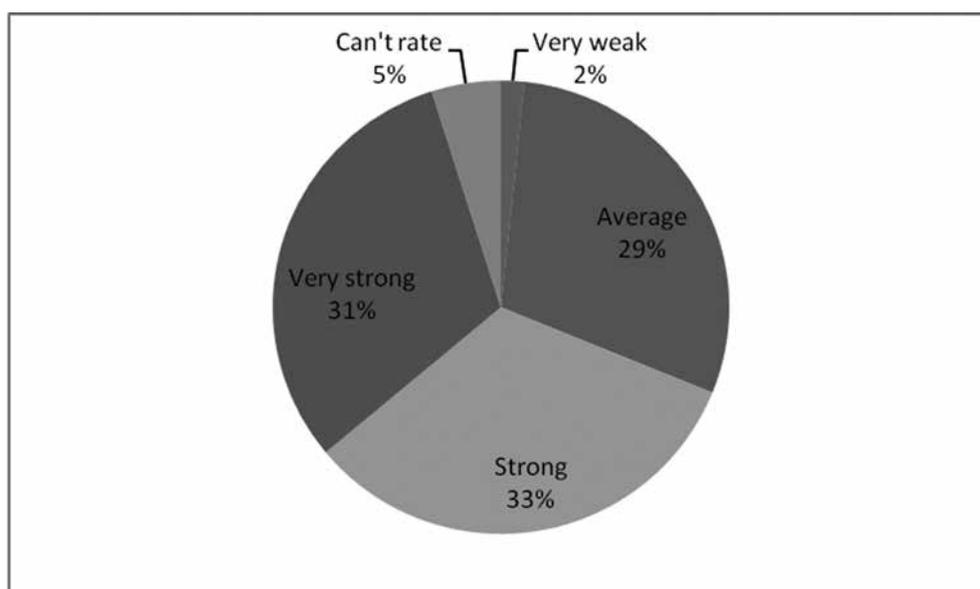


Figure 2: Competency in Paper records management

*Table 2: Competency Electronic Records Management*

Competency level	Frequency	Percentage
Very weak	5	8
Weak	7	12
Average	15	25
Strong	21	34
Very strong	10	16
No rating	3	5
Total	61	100

### 7. Knowledge of records management standards.

The survey also sought to find out the knowledge base of students in the theory and practice of RAM. Students were requested to specify the RAM standards that they are aware of. The responses were as indicated in Table 3.

*Table 3: Awareness of RAM standards*

Standard	Frequency	Percentage
"ISO"	10	16
"ISO 15426"	1	2
"ISO 15485"	1	2
"ISO 15489"	36	59
"ISO 23081"	1	2
"None"	12	19
Total	61	100

### 8. Familiarity with Electronic Document/Records Management Systems

The survey found it critical to assess students' awareness of ERM solutions. The survey therefore required students to specify any EDMS or RMS they were aware of. The solutions as cited by the respondents in verbatim were as indicated in Table 4.

Table 4: Awareness of EDMS/RMS

System	Frequency	Percentage
"CNG"	1	2
"DBMS"	1	2
"eFile"	1	2
"IRMS"	1	2
"Laiforms"	1	2
"Library System"	2	3
"MARC"	1	2
"None"	39	64
"TRIM"	13	21
TOTAL	61	100

### 9. ICT Skills Competencies

With regard to proficiency in Microsoft Office Suite, six students (10%) indicated they are average in use of MS Office suite whereas fifteen (24%) indicated they are strong in Ms Office. Thirty nine (64%) of the respondents reported to be very strong in MS Office suite. One (2%) respondent, did not provide a self assessment rating.

On computer networking, four (6%) reported to be very weak, eleven (18%) to be weak and twenty six (43%) considered themselves average. Four (6%) felt they were strong while nine (15%) indicated they are very strong in computer networking. One (2%) respondent did not provide a rating.

Regarding competency in computer programming skills, ten (16%) respondents indicated they were very weak while eighteen (30%) reported to be generally weak. Twenty five (41%) of the respondents reported to be average. Seven (11%) of the respondents considered themselves strong in this skill. No respondents felt to be very strong in computer programming while one (2%) could not provide a rating.

## 4 Discussion of findings

Broadly, this survey revealed two interesting issues around the subject of talent development in RAM. First is the growing desire by learners to train in RAM. This is revealed through responses to questions one, three and four of the survey. The facts that 42% of respondents had interest in the profession and that 93% intend to build a career in RAM and pursue further education in RAM are pointers to growing positive image of the RAM profession. This is despite of the fact that 82% of the respondents did not have idea of possible career lines at the point of them deciding to specialize in RAM, but they nonetheless chose to specialize in the field.

The second issue was the obvious gaps in the efforts to nurture this interest and desire through training. The findings revealed glaring inadequacies in the substance of trainings offered to the students. This was revealed in the data provided as responses to the other questions.

The responses to question five in particular revealed evidence of some general understanding of possible dimensions of RAM. The fact that 30 of the 61 respondents cited ERM reveals the reality of ERM and the need for training institutions to invest strongly in quality training in this line. However, the fact that 6 of the students had no idea of the direction they want to move within the profession was

wanting. The survey opined that by the time students are in their final year of study, they should have a fair, if not clear, understanding of possible lines they can pursue. However the findings revealed that this is not necessarily the case. The results also reveal a considerable measure of unawareness on actual possible occupational specializations in RAM looking at the feedback of 19 respondents who cited “archives management” and “records and archives management”. These are general aspects that cover all areas of RAM including specialized aspects like ERM.

The findings on competency in paper and e-records management were of significance to the survey to the extent that they revealed a sustained emphasis on paper records management training than e-records. Whereas 31% cited to be very strong in paper records management, only 16% indicated to be very strong in e-records management. Specific to e-records management, those in the range of very weak to average including those who could not give any rating were of same numbers as those who rated themselves as strong and very strong. This reveals a disturbing gap in skill levels given the growing emphasis on ERM across the globe today. These findings confirm fears that have been expressed by several authors on lack of adequate training e-records management in Kenya that undermines professional management on e-records (*Kemoni, 2009; Wato, 2006; Wamukoya and Kemoni, 2001; Mutiti, 2001; Bailey, 2001; Githaka, 1996*). Where records managers have no skills in e-records management, they shy away from it. The same would apply if they are weak in paper records management.

The survey found it critical to assess students’ knowledge of records management standards as an assessment of the knowledge base of the theory and practice of RAM. The need for standards in RAM has been emphasized for long and RAM has perhaps more international standards of the information science disciplines except ICT. The positive aspects of the findings on this awareness was the fact that majority of the respondents were aware of the ISO 15489. However, ordinarily, at this level of education, it is expected that ISO 15489 should have been mentioned by all the respondents. The downside of these findings was the fact that 22 of the 61 respondents could not cite any standard. Ten of these 22 cited “ISO” which is vague while 12 could not cite any standard. This raises fundamental questions on the scope of training in RAM. Unawareness on RAM standards is a glaring gap for undergraduate finalists looking forward to get into the job market. This survey focuses only on awareness not even implementation of the standards. There are several international RAM standards that any RAM professional must be aware of. The ISO 15489 is the mother standard of all these. However, there are critical standards that inform management of e-records, which should be known by the students. The inadequacies revealed by lack of knowledge of these standards undermines the quality of the young professionals and diminishes their global competitiveness.

With regard to knowledge or awareness of document and records management systems, the most outstanding of these findings was the fact that 64% of the respondents (36 out of 61) had no knowledge or awareness of any EDMS/EDRMS. These findings are alarming and raise fundamental questions on the intensity of trainings offered in view of growing interest in ERM. It is noteworthy that the survey did not seek to find the technical knowledge of respondents in the systems, but mere awareness by name. Therefore even though 15 mentioned TRIM, their technical knowledge of TRIM was not assessed. The percentage of students unaware of any EDMS/EDRMS is unacceptable in this era. Presently many organizations have either implemented an EDMS or are planning to implement one. These are opportunities for the RAM graduates and their lack of knowledge of these solutions results to these responsibilities being diverted to ICT experts. There are hundreds of EDMS/EDRMS solutions available online several of them with trial versions that competent graduates should be exposed to. These findings revealed a gap in the nurturing and training of young professionals where they are not exposed to automation solutions for RAM.

The findings on ICT skills were significant to this survey because of two reasons. First proficiency in basic computer skills, especially Microsoft Office Suite, is considered as a basic requirement for any professional employment in Kenya regardless of the profession. Secondly, it is essential for modern records managers to have adequate ICT skills to enable them be competent on e-records management. Besides assessing proficiency in MS Office, the survey also considered basic skills in computer networking and programming. An understanding of computer networking, especially regarding distribution of data and information and security of information is essential for records managers in this e-records era (*Wato, 2006*). Basic skills in computer programming would give students ability to interrogate RAM solutions, including critical analysis of systems features and functionalities, without relying on ICT experts. This is

a key factor in ensuring that the professionals are able avoid the risk of acquiring systems that are inadequate to their business needs and that they generally understand the operations of technology and application systems architecture in general. However, these findings revealed a weakness in these skills. Apart from MS office which had 64% considering themselves strong, computer networking and programming were below par. Twenty eight of the respondents indicated they were weak in programming while 15 were weak in networking. It is important to note that the survey was not interested in in-depth knowledge of networking and programming, but basic skills that can help the students manage e-records environments effectively and be able to identify sources of advanced support in these two areas.

## 5 Recommendations

In view of the foregoing findings, the survey made the following recommendations:

- There is urgent need for RAM training institutions in Kenya to relook at their curricula and realign them to emerging practical trends in RAM to ensure students are well nurtured to assume RM responsibilities confidently.
- The existing trainings in RAM must clearly expose the students to potential career lines within the field in order for them to confidently define career paths they would want to explore within the profession. This will help shape the direction students take from an informed standpoint, as opposed to current scenario where many are not clear of what possibilities are available for them.
- Proper and extensive training must be given on the various records and archives management standards in order for the young professionals to be well competitively prepared for the job market. Students must have the privilege to physical see and read the various standards in RAM and be trained on how to implement them.
- Practical training should be offered on records management systems including electronic records management systems, document management systems and other automation solutions. With the rapid growth in this line, a proper records management training school must now have computer laboratory dedicated for records management training installed with various RAM solutions for physical records management, e-records management, document management and digital archiving.
- Records and archives management training must deliberately seek to produce students who are well nurtured in both paper and e-records. As the world emphasizes on e-records and e-government platforms, RAM professionals must be well prepared to fit in this phenomena.
- In order to ensure that the RAM training programmes are relevant and focused on market needs, it is important for training institutions to work closely with consultants and service providers in RAM industry. This is because such stakeholders are in constant touch with developments in the industry and well informed especially on technological developments. These consultants could be useful in appraising the trainers on new developments as well as offering insights to students on emerging trends through professional talks.
- The training providers must also connect with other RAM professionals who are employed in various organizations. These could be professionals from leading national and international organizations like United Nations, World Bank and IMF. The essence would be for these professionals to provide professional advice to students on employment opportunities and job market expectations.
- In order for young RAM professionals to be all round leaders, it is important for them be also exposed to training in leadership, personal effectiveness, personality development and basic management skills. This would make them effective team leaders and change agents in the various roles they assume after training.
- It is important for training institutions to also expose the students to international trends in records management and specifically what is happening in other countries on records and archives management. This will enable students have a global outlook on developments in RAM, which would make them competitive to take roles outside Kenya.
- The lecturers and teaching staff in RAM should be continuously trained, appraised and refreshed on developments in the profession to offer quality training and coaching to their students. This would be more critical in e-records management and records and archives management standards, where there are continuous developments and paradigm shifts.

## 6 Conclusion

This survey was driven by the desire to contribute to efforts in nurturing and developing young talent RAM in Kenya in view of growing demand for records managers, increased competitiveness on the job market, growing professional discourse in RAM theory and practice and rapid technological developments in the profession. Whereas the survey has revealed existing gaps in preparation of young talent in RAM, it has also revealed that there is enthusiasm and interest of many young talents in RAM. It is important to point out that the survey did not focus on deep technical skills but merely focused on general, top level awareness of various issues under survey. In order for upcoming graduates in RAM to adequately serve the needs of organisations, be competitive in the job market and remain relevant, they must be well trained, well exposed to critical aspects of RAM and develop all qualities necessary to nurture their talent in RAM. The survey has laid a fact-based background that universities and colleges in Kenya could tap to develop their programmes to ensure their products are quality and competitive.

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## SUMMARY

Recent studies in Kenya indicate that about 50% of university graduates are not suitable for employment. This scenario also obtains for the rest of East Africa region. Given that the situation obtains on all university programmes, it is important to investigate how this stands out for the records and archives management profession. This paper presents findings of a survey done in early 2016 on the preparedness of records and archives management (RAM) undergraduate students in Kenya to take up professional roles in records and archives management profession. The survey was conducted on the understanding that RAM in Kenya today demands well trained and nurtured talent especially in view of growing technological and professional issues in the field. Besides, there is increasing need for more robust and efficient RAM systems to serve needs for transparency and accountability. This requires a relook at the talent development of young RAM enthusiasts to ensure they are adequately repackaged to fit in the RAM world whilst remaining competitive in the global job marketplace. The survey revealed that there are increasing efforts to advance RAM training in Kenya with more institutions emerging to offer professional training in RAM than was ten years ago. It also revealed increasing interest in RAM by the young professionals. On the flipside, the survey established a number of gaps in the development of emerging talent including inadequacies in curri-

cula, lack of practical and hands-on training and inadequate training in related soft-skills that would undermine development of wholistic talents. Recommendations have been made that could be essential in enhancing the quality of training and talent develop to nurture emerging talent in RAM in Kenya. These recommendations could be applied in other developing countries to enhance training and development of RAM professionals.

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