



**Sample PhD Thesis Proposal on the Management of Publish Sector Records in Enhancing Good Governance, in Sierra Leone**

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**Abstract:**

The study proposes to investigate the effective management of records at MoFED concerning good governance, accountability and transparency. The proposed objectives of this study will be to identify the types of records generated and received, the records structures, procedures and regulatory requirements, life cycle concept, staff training and competency and challenges staff faced in managing records at MoFED. The study will employ questionnaire, interview, observation and documentary analysis as methods/tools to collect data, from one hundred (100) participants using simple random sampling method. Data will be analysed using SPSS( version16.0) package to compute frequencies, percentages and construct pie and bar charts. The hypothesis will be tested using Z-Score and Probability value to test variables against the stipulated probability level of significance at five percent (5%). The proposed findings will be that MoFED has insufficient trained and qualified staff in managing both paper and electronic records, and also insufficient equipment and supplies in preserving records. Also, the study proposes that MoFED has laws regulating the management of paper and electronic records but lacks the enforcement. The proposed recommendation will be that MoFED shall employ more trained and qualified middle level staff for the management of both paper and electronic records in order to enhance good governance, accountability and transparency. Key Words: PhD thesis proposal, Records management; Qualitative method, Quantitative method; Public sector; Sierra Leone

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Sierra Leone is located on the West coast of Africa with a distance of 28,000 square miles in length and share border with Guinea and Liberia. Statistics Sierra Leone (2016)

has noted that the population of Sierra Leone is seven million and ninety-two thousand one hundred and thirteen (7,092,113). It has an abundance natural resources which comprises: gold, iron oil, bauxite, diamonds and a good climatic conditions that is capable of producing agricultural products(coffee, cocoa ,rice, corn) for sustaining livelihoods of its citizens. With regards to all these naturals resources, Sierra Leone has a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of less than 7.5 %( Sierra Leone Ministry of Information & Communication, 2016), with a low per capita income of citizens. The reasons for this minimal reduction of GDP can be partly attributed to the mismanagement of resources( human and materials) which are not accounted for via supporting records for the overall development of the country( Kargbo, 2009). Thus the lack of transparency and accountability through records has often been the chronic records management problems which affect every Ministries, Departments and Agency (MDAs). The chronic records management problems have been the contributing factors for the suffering of a vast majority of Sierra Leoneans which cast the blame squarely on bad governance. This situation has been manifested in the governance system adopted by past and present governments over the control of resources (human and materials) for the national development of the country. Thus, the importance of records keeping and good governance is key to any modern economy. This is evidenced in the rights and responsibilities of people as the value of records is a continuous process.. On this note, it could be acknowledged that any country in this modern era which cannot consider records keeping seriously hardly develop without the retention of good information. This is because information has been considered a service that could be used for developmental planning (Kargbo, 2009).

Evans et al(2014) defined research proposal as a base for successful research criteria for any researcher's(student's) intention to investigate the problems surrounding an area of study and proffer recommendations in order to acquire an undergraduate or postgraduate qualification. Thus, a good proposal can prevent misstates and enhance quality research reports. In this light, the researcher proposes to investigate on the records management situation at Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MOFED) in enhancing good governance (sustainable development) in Sierra Leone.

## 1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Wikipedia (2021) defined record as a content of a document that signifies the activities, transactions, regulations of public sector organisations for executing governance processes. Not all documents are records. Virtually, some of the documents that an organisation keeps as “evidence” are called, records. This evidential nature of records includes all books, papers, maps, photographs, machines readable materials and other documentary materials regardless from physical form or characteristics that serve as individual organisations functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operation or other activities of the organisation(ACARM,2007). While ISO 15489-1(2016) described records management as a “field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records, including the processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of an information about business activities and transactions in the form of records”(p.8). Records management in Sierra Leone now-a-days is being used by public sector organisations to carry out their activities in order to enhance good governance. Agere (2000) noted that good governance is a way of measuring how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources in a preferred way. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (2021) defined Governance “the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented)”(p.3). For the purpose of this research, governance can be applied to national, local governance as well as the interactions between other sectors of Sierra Leone society. In this case records management is an instrument/tool which many organisations use as an evidence to conduct businesses in Sierra Leone to which the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development(MoFED) is not an exception.

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development(MoFED) situated at George Street, Freetown, Sierra Leone and was created in 2007 following a merger between the Ministry of Finance (MoF)and the Ministry of Development and Economic Planning(MoDEP). Since then, the MoFED has functioned as key institution responsible for national development, and a critical partner for ensuring the success of public sector reforms relating to pay and performance, as well as civil service realisation (MoFED, 2012). The mandate of the MoFED is provided in the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone. This mandate is clarified in the Sierra Leone Gazette No. 21 (Wednesday, 30th April,

2008) and several legislations, including the Government Budgeting and Accountability Act 2005, the Financial Management Regulations 2007, the Mines and Minerals Act 2009, and several legislations on taxation. The primary reason for merging the MoF and MoDEP was to prevent problems of overlap, duplicity, lack of coordination, and wastage in the capital spending and current expenditure budgeting processes. Before the merger, both Ministries produced national budgets-the recurrent expenditure budget in the case of the former, and the development estimates from the latter. In this case such duplication in the functions of organisation could lead to records management implication with unnecessary expenditure in the salary payment and excess production of records(ACARM, 2007). Thus the overall responsibility of the Ministry rests on a Minister who is assisted by two Deputy Ministers. The Ministry is divided into two broad functional departments namely, (i) Strategic Planning and Donor Relations and (ii) Fiscal Operations. Each of the Deputy Ministers is responsible for one of these functional departments. From observation on first sight, there is evident of records management activities in all the departments/units, but the researcher is particularly interested in the MoFED registry/administration unit which is where all the generation and maintenance of financial records are made on behalf of the Ministry and then included in the annual and medium term budget. It also ensures efficient and judicious utilisation of the Ministry's resources. This division generates and preserves personnel records because it is involved in the recruitment process.

Kargbo(2009) revealed that there is a conceptual relationship between records management and good governance in Sierra Leone. He stated the historical and the current management of records in public sector organisations about good governance. Records were being maintained by the colonial government to make an informed decision and achieve the ultimate goal of the then governments. However, the post-colonial governments are still managing records but these records are not reflecting on the overall development of the country. Kargbo reiterated that any modern economy which cannot properly maintain its records will hardly develop. Sierra Leone is not an exception to this assertion. This current research will concentrate on both conceptual and empirical findings not theoretical as Kargbo's findings.

Yusof(2009) maintained that the process of planning, appraisal and implementing the retention policy of financial records in an organisation involves co-operation and co-

ordinations by stakeholders. Appraisal connotes the assessment of these records whether or not they can still be retained because of their utility value. Yusof's(2009) study revealed that financial institutions in Malaysia were aware of the rules and regulations governing financial management. But records management has never been a priority. This is because there is no enforcement of practice. Thus the data of Yusof's survey were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS version 11). However, the researcher will use the same methodology to gather data relating to the area of study at MoFED, Sierra Leone. The only pitfall of this survey is the lack of the testing of varied variables/hypothesis to justify the validity of his findings which is critical for any survey conducted. This research will use the Z-score at 5% significance level to test the research hypothesis.

Further, Mokhtar and Yusof(2009) investigated the use of electronic management policy guidelines in managing records at government agencies in Malaysia. They conducted a survey and made a content analysis of their report. Their findings revealed that most government institution in Malaysian public sector organisations do not possess policy guidelines in electronic records management on their own. However, they relied on the ones provided by the central government and international governments but are not frequently utilised.. This research uses the descriptive statistics to analyse the research data but was not hypothetically tested using statistical methods. There will be the use of Z-score to test the variables that whether or not MoFED has policy guidelines to manage electronic records on their own and is effectively and effectively utilising them. Thus, testing hypothesis enables an in-depth insight into the findings and maintains reliability of the result.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Over the years a lot of issues have been revealed as justifiable to the current problems and important to the future success of public sector records management in Africa, Sierra Leone to be specific:

The ineffective use of legal framework that protects the decision-making about record classification, preservation, and destruction of both paper and electronic records is often made abruptly. Record-keeping issues cannot be achieved without the training of

records personnel and the monitoring of records management programme at the public sector (ACARM, 2007).

It is still a truism that Record Managers are not well paid in terms of salary compared to other informational practitioners such as accountants and finance officers and little appreciation of their task. This low profile is basically the result of inadequate resources for and not regarding records keeping very important for the development of organisation (Tafor, 2007).

The lack of research programmes to promote records management issues more widely within and outside government to highlight the importance of quality records keeping for the delivery of accountable, effective and efficient, and transparent government.

The lack of accessibility to well-organised records can be used to formulate, implement, and maintained effective services. In Sierra Leone it is a common practice in both government and private departments for records officers to lose or misfile record because of disorganised systems (Kargbo, 2009).

The value of records and the information they contain, as well as their potential for use, in support of good governance (sustainable development), is not fully appreciated and understood across Sierra Leone society.

Thus based on these problems highlighted above, the need to research on public sector records to enhancing good governance prompted the researcher to investigate about the record management situation at public sector organisations specifically, MoFED.

### **1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

'Aim' is basically the overall driving force of the research and the objectives are the means by which you intend to achieve the aims (Dawson, 2009).

The main aim of the study will be to critically assess whether or not public sector records are created and managed effectively and efficiently at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED) in enhancing good governance, transparency and accountability in administration. The objectives of the study will be to:

- i. identify the type of records generated and received by, record structures, procedures and policies, regulatory requirements governing their keeping at MoFED;
- ii. investigate whether or not the management of records at MoFED is consistent with the life cycle concept of proper records keeping;

- iii. investigate the perception that poor records management is responsible for the absence of accountability, and transparency at MoFED;
- iv. critically assess participants' response at the MoFED relating to staff training, competency and challenges faced in records keeping; and
- v. explore the relationship between the MoFED registry/administration and the National Archives.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Specifically the following questions will be answered by participants using both interview and questionnaire instruments in data analysis.

1. Which types of records are generated by and received at MoFED? what policies and legislation exist for the management of both financial and non-financial records at MoFED?
2. Are facilities, equipment and supplies provided for proper management of records? How are records managed in relation to disposition and retention schedule and monitoring at MoFED?
3. Who are the users of records at MoFED and why do they use these records? What competencies/qualification do users and managers possess in managing these records in overcoming challenges faced?
4. Is there an ICT unit at MoFED institution overseeing other units' computer system, and a laid down policy/legal framework for the management of electronic records at MoFED?
5. Does sound records keeping enhance governance, transparency, and accountability at MoFED institution? and is there a relationship between MoFED registry/administration and the National Archives?
6. Is there there any research programme to promote the management of records in enhancing good governance at MoFED Sierra Leone?

#### **1.5 DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

Oliver (2003) noted that design of the study deals with the nature of data and the type of methods a researcher adopt to collect and analyse information. Evans et all(2014)

called this research methodology, which is divided into two parts-qualitative and quantitative research. Quantitative research involves the use of numbers/figures to analyse research data when questionnaire is used, while qualitative research denotes the use of interview, focus group discussion, observation to collect data from the field of study that are fresh and could be used for analysis(p.23). These are also called the primary source of data that are being collected from the field of study, while secondary source of data are the second class information which are published in journals, books, conference papers, memoranda, and internet sources.

### **1.5.1 Research Variables**

Variables are representation of outcome of the study under investigation (McComes,2021). The study will consider certain variables related to the creation and management of public sector records at MoFED. These are policies, guidelines, and standards; facilities, equipment and supplies; current, semi-current and non-current records; preservation, security and training competency; disposition and retention; ICT; good governance (sustainable development), transparency, accountability and corruption; users.

### **1.5.2 Population Studied**

Population is the set of elements from which a subset may be drawn(sample). It is the entire group of people, objects, or events in a category. Merriam(2009) defined "Population" as a larger group on which one intend to conduct a survey. In this research population will be two hundred (200) staff of MoFED registry/administration. These will be divided into one hundred civil servant officers, sixty(60) contract officers, and forty(40) other staff, about whom the researcher wished to make generalisation because they are connected to all the other units within the MoFED institution.

### **1.5.3 Research Sample**

Sample is the small portion of participants selected/recruited from the population to have their opinion/experiences about the phenomenon under investigation (Dawson, 2009). There are two type of sampling methods. That is, non-probability and probability methods of recruiting participants. Non-probability sampling is the art of selecting few participants from the population who are not representative of the sample frame, while

probability sampling connotes the selection of samples that will represent the entire population or all samples selected have an equal chance of being selected (McCombes, 2021). However the researcher will use both sampling methods to recruit participants for the survey project. For non-probability sampling, purposive and convenient sampling methods will be used for participants selection. The rationale for this is that, it is simple and convenient for the researcher to access the participants at any time. It also identifies participants that have more experienced and have spent more years in the management of records at MoFED, Sierra Leone. For probability sampling method, simple random, systematic and stratified sampling methods will be used to acquire the sample size. In this study, the research will put more premium on stratified simple random sampling method to get a sample base from the population which will be stratified into three categories: Contract Officer (CO), Civil Servant Officers (CSO) and other staff at MoFED. This technique will be used because it is straightforward. Not only the simplicity but can also be used in research when the characteristics of population are homogenous and heterogeneous in their characteristics and functions (Salkind, 2006). The intended samples sizes will be: 50 Civil Servant Officers, 35 Contract Officers, and 15 for other staff respectively.

#### **1.5.4 Research Instrument**

The research instruments for this study will be qualitative (observation and interviews (unstructured interview), which will be conducted on some participants. And information will also be elicited from textbooks, journals and internet that will be used for discussions in chapter four based on the related literature reviews; and for quantitative method questionnaires will be administered in collecting data. The rationale for using observation, interviews is to make an in-depth and nomothetic analysis of the way records are managed at MoFED, while the use of questionnaire is to reach wider participants, increase reliability of result, and to minimise bias that observation and interview methods will cause in conducting research, due to small sample size.

### **1.5.5 Method of Collecting Data**

The author has already made an exploratory interview from some senior and junior staff relating to the aforementioned variables to be incorporated into the questionnaire for the main study. For research to be conducted properly, it is good to pilot test the questionnaire to know if they are properly worded, straightforward, simple and free from ambiguity. Thus the questionnaire will be pilot tested to six participants. This virtually will increase the response rate if questions are understood by participants. The researcher will use both close and opened ended question to frame the questionnaire. Prior to the actual survey, a formal letter will be sent to the Senior Records Officer(SRO) to request permission to administer some questionnaires to selected participants via email or by hand, on the effective management of records at MoFED administration unit. The questionnaire will be expected to be completed within two weeks and then returned. The collection of data will be done through email and by hand method.

### **1.5.6 Method of Analysing Data**

Merriam(2009) defined data as a piece of unrefined information collected from a research field. This study will use both quantitative and qualitative research methods in analysing the research data collected from the field. For quantitative research method the treated data will be presented/scored in varied formats in the subsequent chapters: tabulations, charts, and graphs, and then interpreted and analysed based on research questions relating to the management of records at MoFED. For data collected from interview and observation, content analysis will be used to analyse the data while for documentary evidence, contextual analysis will be used to do discussions based on the reviews of related literature on the effective management of records at a specific level. The test of hypothesis will be done using Z-score to test the varied variables stated above, in order to prove the correctness of the research hypothesis (An effective and efficient management of records will enhance good governance in MoFED).

### **1.5.7 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations are the norms or standards for conduct that distinguishes between right and wrong. In research, ethical behaviour is critical for collaborative work because it encourages an environment of trust, accountability, and mutual respect

among researchers (Merriam, 2009). Ethical consideration is important in research which many agencies have outlined codes and policies to guide researchers, which Fourah Bay College is not exempted. These codes and policies address issues such as anonymity, confidentiality, observation of rights, protection of data/respect for intellectual property, acknowledging authors of sources used, objectivity, obliging a fair copy to the case study, honesty, social responsibility, non-discrimination and many others. Thus, participants will be informed that the aforementioned codes and policies will be used in order not to violate the ethical rules of research or infringe on the right of participants.

### 1.6 CHRONICLE OF ACTIVITIES

EVENT	DATE	DURATION
Field work studies	Second week of October 2021	2 weeks
Background to the study	November 2021	1 Month
Literature review	December 2021-February 2022	3 Month
Writing the third chapter	March 2022	1 Month
Letter to MOFED	First week of April 2022	1 week
Administering questionnaires and conducting interviews	Second week of April- May 2022	1 Month 2 weeks
Analysing questionnaires	June-July 2022	2 Months
Writing up of first draft	August 2022	1 Month
Writing up of final fair copy and prepare for oral presentation	September 2022	1 Month

**(Source: authors own MPhil research proposal)**

## 1.7 DISSEMINATION

The result of this research will be produced in PhD thesis which will be made available in Fourah Bay College library that should be consulted by student/lecturers, researchers from time to time. The information acquired will be used to generate and implement records management policies on the development of the organisations which MoFED is not an exception.

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