AN EXAMINATION OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION, GHANA

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that, except for specific references which have been duly acknowledged, this work is the result of my own field research under the supervision of Dr Amanda Coffie and it has not been submitted either in part or whole for any other degree elsewhere.

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(STUDENT)  (SUPERVISOR)

DATE: ..........................  DATE: ..........................
DEDICATION

First and foremost, this work is dedicated to the Almighty God for His grace and blessings which have propelled me this far. Secondly, I dedicate this material to my family for their love and care.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the Lord Almighty, I say I am most grateful to you for taking me this academic journey peacefully and successfully. You are indeed great.

To my inspirer and academic supervisor Dr Amanda Coffie, I say thank you for your unflinching support from the beginning to the end of this work. Your timely response and patience are well treasured and I must say God bless you. Some special thanks also go to the Director, Lecturers, Staff, and Librarians at LECIAD for their advice, direction, and motivation given me during my time of the study.

To my Mum and Dad, I say God grant you long life and thank you so much for your constant prayers and support which have brought me to a successful end of my master’s programme. To my big sisters, I say, I am very appreciative of all your support, advice and prayers. I would extend my sincere gratitude to Mr Asare of Special Care Registry and Ms Naomi Ashong of the Legal and Consular Bureau for their immense contribution towards this work and Prof. Kwaku Danso-Boafo, former Ghana High Commissioner to the United Kingdom and Dr Musah Adams of Information Studies Department, University of Ghana for their noble assistance.

My final thanks go to all my special friends and the entire LECIAD Class of 2017. I say God Bless you all.
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<td>ARMS</td>
<td>Archives and Records Management Section</td>
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<td>CCTV</td>
<td>Closed Circuit Televisions</td>
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<td>ESARBICA</td>
<td>Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives</td>
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<td>ICA</td>
<td>International Council of Archives</td>
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<td>ICT4D</td>
<td>Information Communication Technology for Accelerated Development</td>
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<td>IRMT</td>
<td>International Records Management Trust</td>
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<td>ISO</td>
<td>International Organisation for Standardisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDAs</td>
<td>Ministries, Departments, and Agencies</td>
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<td>MFARI</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration</td>
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<td>MMDAs</td>
<td>Metropolitan, Municipal, District Assemblies</td>
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<td>MOH</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
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<td>PRAAD</td>
<td>Public Records and Archives Administration Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>SANParks</td>
<td>South African National Parks</td>
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ABSTRACT

The study examined records management practices at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration (MFARI), Ghana. The objectives of the study included an analysis of the records management practices at the MFARI, Ghana and their impact on MFARI’s mandate of developing and maintaining Ghana’s diplomatic relations; as well as the identification of the challenges the Ministry faces in managing records of Ghana’s international affairs. The study hypothesised that the practice of good records management facilitates decision making in the conduct of international relation. The conclusions of this thesis are based on a critical analysis of both primary and secondary data. The approach employed was a qualitative one. Primary data was collected via face-to-face interviews with five (5) key informants who were purposely selected from the Ministry and Academia. The study found that despite government recognition that efficient records management is a critical concept in public sector reforms and a major factor in ensuring efficacy and accountability across the public sector, serious gaps persist in the records management system at the MFARI. Using Schellenberg’s Records Life Cycle Model as a conceptual framework, the study concluded that MFARI lacks good records management practices and that this was a major constraint on the attainment of the Ministry’s mandate; as is evidenced by delays in retrieval of key documents or provision of information needed by management to make urgent decisions as it corresponds and conducts business with its foreign counterparts. The hypothesis was therefore confirmed. Consequently, the study recommends a shift towards the adoption of International Standards for records management at MFARI to facilitate its role in developing and maintaining Ghana’s diplomatic relations.
CHAPTER ONE
RESEARCH DESIGN

1.0 Introduction

Ghana as part of its foreign policy agenda is required by the Constitution to cooperate and promote friendly relations. To achieve this goal, Ghana engages in external partnerships that foster economic, political, social and cultural cooperation among countries, sometimes with individual states and other times with regional or other blocs. Furthermore, like all other modern countries, Ghana sends ambassadorial representatives abroad and receives diplomatic envoys accredited to the country. The state participates in trade agreements with state and non-state actors and belongs to a number of international organisations of states such as the African Union and the United Nations. The engagements yield several international documents in the form of memorandum, treaties, conventions, contracts etc. which are important national assets.

The keeping of these international agreements is under the control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration (MFARI). The MFARI, like all other government ministries, creates, receives and generates volumes of records which serve as a national asset. As the Constitution (Article 41) requires that these records are protected and preserved as they are highly essential for their evidential value.

The above issues point to the need for institutions to have a good records management system in place to be able to run efficiently and effectively. Shepherd and Yeo note that records serve as a corporate memory of organisations. Thus, they enhance daily business activities, inform decision
making and policy formulation, and are means through which an organisation carries out its business.³

Schellenberg defines records as

“all books, papers, maps, photographs, or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by any public or private institution in pursuance of its legal obligations or in connection with the transaction of its proper business and preserved or appropriate for preservation by that institution or its legitimate successor as evidence of its functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities or because of the informational value of data contained therein.”⁴

From this definition, it is clear that records come in many forms. In a state institution that deals with multiple organisations, persons, and states and whose interactions with these partners can take many forms, specimens of these document types are sure to be found. As noted above, these documents are crucial evidence of Ghana’s progress, obligations, and rights in diplomatic affairs. Ghana’s MFARI as part of their roles engage in negotiations with other countries through its representatives abroad, draft laws, ensure policy plans and protocols concerning diplomatic work, enter into bilateral and multilateral treaties, cooperate with the international community on judicial matters, help in the ratification of international conventions and agreements. All these activities involve creation, receipt, and transfer of information in the form of records which the Ministry cannot function without. For instance, during arbitration, the Ministry needs to produce documents that relate to an agreement made with other states.
It becomes key than that some thought is given to where, how and by whom these documents will be kept. This is what the critical concept of records management seeks to address.

The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) 15489-1 standard defines records management as

“the 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 and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records.”

A major justification for the study is that the MFARI creates, receive and keep sensitive records which have continuing utility and enduring value and as such need to be properly managed. When these records are managed properly, they become authentic, maintain their integrity and fulfil their legal, financial and diplomatic mandate as the institution conduct its external affairs. However, without good records management, all these would be meaningless. This call for the need to manage them effectively and efficiently to ensure that organisational goals are achieved and corporate memory maintains.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

States globally are facing challenges with the proper preservation and organisation of records. The management of records in public organisations, in particular, is faced with major setbacks. There is a rich body of work by scholars on the challenges associated with management of records
in Africa. For example, Abioye identifies that a major problem in Nigerian records and archives centre and for most African archives is infrastructure.\(^8\)

Equally, Okoro, suggests that lack of awareness and unconcerned attitude of organisations to records management training has influenced the unorganised nature of records in Nigerian institutions.\(^9\) In Ghana, Akussah notes that the difficulties in managing records are due to the lack of comprehensive retention schedule and comprehensive policy.\(^10\)

The issues related to records management has been discussed globally in a more general context. In respect public institutions, however, only a few studies have been conducted in Africa; (Kitalu, Akussah. Akotia, Mampe and Kalusopa). However, as crucial as records preservation is for the efficiency of the MFARI, the extant literature indicates that there is a paucity of knowledge in assessing records management practices and utilisation as relates to the conduct of external government affairs. The study, therefore, examines records management practices of the MFARI, Ghana.

1.2 Research Questions

- What are the records management practices at Ghana’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration (MFARI) and are they consistent with international practices?
- How does the current Records Management System of MFARI enable it to develop and maintain diplomatic relations?
- What are the challenges of MFARI’s records management practices?
1.3 Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to find out how records are managed and utilized in the conduct of Ghana’s external affairs. The specific objectives include the following:

- To examine the records management practices at Ghana’s MFARI
- To access how the current records management system is assisting MFARI in meeting its constitutional mandate.
- To identify the challenges of MFARI records management practices.

1.4 Scope of the study

The study focused on records management at the MFARI of Ghana under the Fourth Republic (1992-present). Specifically, the Legal Consular Bureau and Special Care Registry (SCR) were the main sections of the Ministry chosen for the study. These sections were chosen because they are the main recipients and maintenance of the Ministry’s records which is the focus of the study.

1.5 Rationale of the Study

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration in the conduct of its mandate of developing and maintaining diplomatic relations with other countries deals and rely on records. The performances of these tasks involve various forms of communication and through a different medium such as paper and electronic. The use of either of these media involves the creation of records. Records are vital as they make individuals and organisations accountable for their actions, provide evidence for decision making, help in smooth running of the business, keep and preserve institutional memory. The MFARI deals with confidential and large volumes of records as it
conducts its mandate. It is therefore important that the information they create and receive are properly managed in a way that will make them relevant and serve their purpose. To accomplish this, there is the need for all sections of the Ministry to be sensitive towards records management. The study, therefore, sought to examine how the MFARI approaches records management in the conduct of its mandate. The examination would help identify the weaknesses in the system and areas of major challenges which recommendation could be made to address them.

1.6 Hypothesis

Good records management system provides efficiency in decision making and enhances Ghana’s development and maintenance of diplomatic relations.

1.7 Conceptual Framework of Study

The study adopted Records Life Cycle as a conceptual frame in the examination and analysis of records management practices at MFARI.

The Records Life Cycle Model proposed by the American, R.T. Schellenberg, 1956, has guided the management of paper records in many organisations. The Records Life Cycle Model perceives records as a biological organism, which undergoes life transitions from birth to death, and an asset, which is produced, stored and utilised for as long as its essence subsists and eventually destroyed or sent to archives.11
The Records Life Cycle Model as noted by R.T Schellenberg is composed of three stages: stage one is the active-stage or current-stage where records are created by the Ministry as they receive documents from their diplomatic relations or respond to any correspondence. Records at the active stage are regularly used as the Ministry conduct its daily diplomatic activities such as agreements, memoranda, treaties and so on. These records are generally kept at the registry of most organisation and at MFARI, they are mainly kept at the Special Care Registry. The second stage is the semi-active or semi-current stage where records are occasionally used as a reference in the conduct of the Ministry’s current activities. These records are normally kept at the records centre pending disposal by transfer to the archives or destruction. Finally, the records enter the inactive or non-current stage where they are kept in the archives because of their enduring value and for research purposes.

The features of the Records Life Cycle Model imply that the model is more applicable and suitable for organisations dealing with the management of paper records. The model of records life cycle was adopted for the study because my preliminary study revealed the Ministry deals mostly with paper records which call for the need to manage them efficiently throughout their lifespan of active, semi-active and inactive stage within the institution. A major strength of the model is the identification of various stages of the processes with their attendant duties to be performed to ensure that records are well managed throughout their life. The model also ensures that large volume of inactive records that occupy office space and make retrieval of important documents difficult are properly managed. Accordingly, the proponents note that adhering to the requirements of each stage will enable institutions or organisations to access and use such data to facilitate the process of achieving its mandate. Despite the relevance of the model to records management, it has been criticised by Marshall and Mckemmish for its limited focus on paper records and inability
to deal with electronic records. These authors contended with the continuum model and argued that it can deal with both manual and electronic records and provides a more comprehensive and effective ways of dealing with records and their challenges. Nevertheless, the Records Life Cycle Model was adopted for the study because MFARI during the period under reviewed for this study was primarily dealing with paper records.

A Figure 1.0: Stages of the Records Life Cycle Model

Source: The diagram was constructed by the researcher using Information from Records Life Cycle Model.

1.8 Literature Review

A literature review is conducted to show the diverse opinions, agreements, disagreements, and trends of thoughts on a research topic and be correctly depicted and acknowledged in the text. This section of the study, therefore, reviews literature that has relation to the study and is relevant to the topic and help in addressing the stated objectives.
1.8.1 Global Perspective of Records Management

The International Standards Organisation 15489-1 defines records as

“information created, received, and maintained as evidence by an
organisation or person, in pursuance of legal obligations or in the
transaction of business.”¹³

The Public Records and Archives Administration Act 535 of Ghana also defines records as

“any recorded information regardless of form or medium created,
received and maintained by any institution or individual in the
pursuance of its or his legal obligations or in the transaction of its or his
business.”¹⁴

The two definitions have some similarities as both view records as information that is produced
and stored in the conduct of daily activities. From the definitions, it could be inferred that there is
more to record than information. Thus, it should be trustworthy; consistent and reliable and be able
to support accountability and aid as evidence. Data must be managed with confidentiality; its
content and context must be preserved, and there must be security and proper maintenance to
ensure its trustworthiness.¹⁵ Two main qualities of good records could be noted from Shepherd
and Yeo. First and foremost, institutions use records in the conduct of daily transactions and to
enhance decision making.¹⁶ Lastly, records are used for the purpose of research, to educate and to
create an understanding of a company’s underlying principles.¹⁷ Cox indicates that the evidential
value of a record can only be achieved, if the structure, context, and content, are maintained,
meaning that without maintenance, there won’t be any record.¹⁸ The essence of records in
organisations is for formulating and implementing policies, keeping track of day-to-day activities,
achieving consistency in decision making, providing quality service to individuals and achieving
greater efficiency. The International Records Management Trust (IRMT) and the World Bank concur that “records are essential for the effective functioning of private and public organisations”. The IRMT and World Bank posit that records validate activities and resolutions of organisations and also, aid as benchmarks for evaluating the future decisions and activities of the organisations. Shekelle et al. opine that accurate and reliable records lead to improvement in patient care, increase the efficiency of care, communication between caregivers, reduce medical errors and costs, security and quality decision making.

Records management seeks to enhance the effective and systematic control of Records Life Cycle – creation, store, use, and disposal of records – that are daily generated because of daily transactions and activities. This signifies that management of records is grounded on the principles of daily appraisal and controlled retention or destruction of records with the aim of ensuring legal and regulatory compliance and corporate accountability. Simon Fraser argues that records management does not only allow an institution to function daily but also to fulfil its legal and financial requirements since up-to-date information of activities is available as a reference point. Records that are managed effectively enable efficient and the appropriate making of decisions, assist future decision making, give evidence in litigation cases, increase the responsibility of decision-makers and fast-track an efficient delivery of service.

1.8.2 Active Phase

Records Creation and Capturing

Records creation includes “developing consistent rules to ensure integrity and accessibility, deciding on systems to log and track records, and procedures for registering, classifying and
The purpose of records creation is to make sure that only user-required records are produced by the organisation.

Yusof and Chell are of the view that if the meaning assigned to creation is to be relied upon, then it means organisations are functioning in a paper environment. Unfortunately, this is not always true because, in an electronic environment, records are created automatically by the system. However, the primary challenge for any electronic management system is the inability to record the origination of new records in a consistent and rational manner while some records need an individual to manually create a record and this normally occurs in the paper environment.

A comparative study by Norris into some institutions and departments in New York found out that records management is often not efficient at the time that records are created. The outcomes of these inefficiencies are a redundancy of records, the absence of official copies and poor records for clinical audits and medico-legal issues. Mrwebi in his survey, put forward that as records are produced in various formats. It is, therefore, necessary that some standards for records retention are outlined and adhered to in the organisation to guard against duplication of information. The National Archives of Canada asserted that the most important aspect of the creation and capturing of records is to “recognise records as the main source of information that have been generated and to empower employees to assess the value and role of the information contained at the moment of creation within a recognised framework, thereby making it easy to support the institution’s activities and policies”. Similarly, in healthcare facilities, patients’ medical records (patient history) are made during consultations and diagnosis made by medical officers. Subsequently, this recorded information is taken and kept safely by the hospital’s records handling unit.
In support of the above study, the findings from a study by Akussah into healthcare facilities in Ghana indicated that almost every patient visit, medical documents, and drug prescriptions are produced and handwritten in paper formats. This signifies that most records about patients are still created and maintained in paper formats.\(^\text{33}\)

*Use and Maintenance*

Records usage is when records are duly obtained and shared by all workers of an institution, and it is at this point that ensures smooth access to appropriate, precise and available information. Regardless of the format, it is imperative to maintain and manage records to ensure that they are stored safely, updated and not mistakenly destroyed. (National Archives of Canada.)\(^\text{32}\) It is prudent for health institutions to establish policy manuals regarding the classification of documents into records and security concerns as both form part of records maintenance. This can be achieved by instituting security measures and access controls to deny unauthorised access to the system. The Stakeholders Theory and the Records Continuum Model used by Mensah and Adams to survey both private and public hospitals in Ghana claimed that an effective management of hospitals’ records is critical factors in providing capacity for hospitals’ efficiency, information security, and confidentiality, quality of care and decision making.\(^\text{34}\) However, a comparative survey done by Wamukoya into the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ESARBICA) region disclosed that in many African countries, records have been produced and stored in paper formats.\(^\text{35}\) This revelation was because most records officers were used to working with paper records to the extent that they perceived the act of keeping records in the context of a paper-based environment.\(^\text{36}\)
The International Records Management Trust in their survey posited that, over the last decades, there had been a decline in the records management in developing countries such as Sub-Saharan Africa, which has had detrimental effects on efficiency, accountability, security, confidentiality, service delivery and decision making in organisations.\(^{37}\)

### 1.8.3 Semi-Active Phase

*Use and Storage*

At this point, records that have been used and are no longer needed regularly by the organisation are used for reference and to fulfil legal and financial obligations. At this stage, organisations must formulate policies that guide the procedures and manners in which records are to be stored. The essence of this is to ensure proper storage relating to privacy and security issues since any disclosure of sensitive and confidential information could amount to legal suits especially, medico-legal issues in the health sector. The findings from Dhabi’s study indicated that the storage systems (offsite and onsite) are to be furnished with environmental control, security measures and applicable safety to ensure better storage and preservation of inactive records.\(^{38}\) Thus, the records must be stored in larger and conducive storage places pending ultimate disposal.

The Stakeholders Theory and the Records Continuum Model used by Mensah and Adams to survey both private and public hospitals in Ghana revealed that the most common storage equipment used by public health institutions were steel cabinets and wooden shelves. To the authors, there were problems of inadequate storage equipment and inadequate filing space.\(^{34}\) Wema in his study indicated that records were stored in affluent office space instead of the less affluent repository, such as archives. The inappropriateness of storing records on floors has repercussions on the final disposition of the records when the time for retention had expired. The
author suggested that keeping active and inactive records together cause severe storage and retrieval problems and, increases the deterioration of records. This means that active records should be separated from inactive records to facilitate easy retrieval to expedite decision making.39

A study carried out by Nchise into Ghanaian hospitals revealed that almost every patient visit, medical documents, and drug prescriptions were stored in folders. The ramifications of storing patients’ records in folders to some extent make such folders susceptible to the violation of privacy and confidentiality issues and other challenges such as missing files, misfiling, and damaged files. Therefore, records should be stored in a way to enable access to users and ensure that they are protected from unauthorised use, disclosure, removal, access, loss, deterioration, and destruction.40

1.8.4 Non-Active Phase

Disposal and Destruction

Records disposal is how an organisation, through its records officer damages transient records or sends archival valued ones to an archival repository for permanent safekeeping.41 The reason for disposal or destruction is to remove records from active use permanently with no possibility of reconstructing the information.42

The International Records Management Trust pointed out that among other challenges identified in most African countries; there were no records retention and disposition policies in the ESARBICA region.43 This was evident in a study by Balasu that there was no public-sector organisation in Ghana that applied records retention and disposition schedule as they are not in existence.44 The author further expatiated that the absence of records retention and disposition schedule is a serious weakness in the governments’ disposition infrastructure.45 A later argument
was that once records are no longer useful by their creating agencies, archivists must make a final decision about the disposition of records; that is whether records merit continued maintenance and preservation in archives or destroyed or disposed of.46

**Archival and Preservation**

Archival and preservation of records are records that are saved lastingly due to its administrative, research or legal value. Preserving records effectively means that the records must be stored in a safe and secure location and displayed under appropriate preservation conditions. Preservation of records facilitates perpetuation in decision making while providing substantiation of precedent activities and historical superiority for future generations. A survey by Cox in the United States of America revealed that there was no coherent system of archives and records management existed.47 To the author, this was a major barrier to the successful protection of the nation's documentary heritage and the scheme between records officers and other information professionals.48 According to Ngulube and Tabor, Archivists and Records Managers in Sub-Saharan Africa face great difficulties in managing and preserving long-term electronic records especially converting paper records to electronic versions through scanning and other technological means.49 Not excluding Ghana, a study by Akussah showed that there were inadequacies in preserving awareness among the staff and users of public records in the registries of Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in Ghana.50 This was attributed to the inadequate professional training of staff and the lack of preservation education in the form of seminars and workshops.51 This was not different from subsequent surveys conducted by Adams and Mensah into the MMDA’s and public hospitals respectively. In their studies, they found out that most common preservation equipment used in the public sector were steel cabinets and wooden shelves and that there were problems of inadequate storage equipment.52
1.8.5 Good Practices

Security and Access Controls

Security issues in most public institutions like public hospitals follow traditional norms. Safety measures such as locking cabinets, employing security personnel, cameras, Closed Circuit Television (CCTV), alarm systems, fire warnings and protection systems are mostly taken for the physical security of records. On the other hand, electronic security measures such as firewalls, passwords, encryption, security copies and access rights for each user category are some of the tools used for securing electronic records integrity, accuracy and trustworthiness. In healthcare facilities, medical records are filed in a secure location that is locked during non-clinic hours to safeguard against loss, tampering, or use by unauthorised personnel. Hospital staff must take reasonable steps to protect the personal and confidential information it holds from misuse and loss and unauthorised access and modification or disclosure. The lack of security controls in organisations exposes the organisation to lose private and confidential records about the individuals and the organisation.

1.8.6 Disaster Management Plan

Disaster management plan is a formal written plan, based on identified possible accidents together with their consequences, describes how such accidents and their consequences should be handled either on site or off site. Disaster management is also known as disaster preparedness is regarded as an essential part of any records management programme. Disaster management ensures that institutions are ready to act swiftly to emergencies. Disaster mitigation, or the ability to identify risks and prevent some emergencies from happening, should always play a key role in an institution's emergency preparedness and planning efforts.
A survey by Ngulube revealed that even though disaster preparedness plans allow institutions to plan and make decisions about emergency response and recovery, archival institutions in South Africa did not adequately plan for emergencies.\textsuperscript{56} To the author, the absence of disaster management plan is obvious in South Africa. Similarly, Akussah’s study into government registries in Ghana pointed out that most of the government registries did not have any idea about disaster preparedness.\textsuperscript{57} The repercussions of a lack of a disaster management plan in institutions lead to missing or lost records and damaged files which ultimately affect decisions and service delivery.\textsuperscript{58} An organisation that is well prepared for a disaster can efficiently and quickly face any emergency that might be dangerous to staff, documents, and building.\textsuperscript{59} Moreover, it protects records against theft, deliberate or accidental and unauthorised damage and destruction.\textsuperscript{60}

\textbf{1.8.7 Staff Capacity Building}

Management of records is defined as a skill-required work that is emerging. It affects the competencies and skills required to handle data. It is therefore important to offer on-the-job training for all employees who take part in record management, from the inception to their destruction or preservation.\textsuperscript{61} While it is a requirement of record management that designers and creators of records obtain a certain level of knowledge in records management, the records management professionals have to possess an upgrade of their skills that they apply in the course of their work.\textsuperscript{62} The IRMT declared that public officials in various institutions lack the requisite skills concerning the form of data and data keeping and about why these records need to be kept safe and properly managed. These public officials are simply oblivious to their roles in the proper handling of these records over a long period.\textsuperscript{63} This was apparent in a survey conducted by Wamukoya and Mutula on requirements of capacity building for management of records into public sector organisations in the Eastern and Southern Africa. They reported that there was a lack
of skills in the management of records in Sub-Saharan Africa and later emphasized the need for records management awareness, education and training and continuing professional development.\textsuperscript{64}

Furthermore, surveys carried out by Ngulube and Tafor, and Ojedokun in some African countries revealed that inadequacy of needed expertise in managing records also accounts for the unsatisfactory handling of paper records. This is what motivated the surveyors to look into whether institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa could manage the enormous challenge electronic records would poss.\textsuperscript{65} Surveys conducted by Afolabi and Egwuyenga in Nigeria also showed that management of records in Nigeria had been troubled by factors such as inadequate skills and inexperience records officers, insufficient resources and the placement of records management in a low priority in relation to other things.\textsuperscript{66} Studies in Ghana by Akussah and Woode admitted that the records units in Ghanaian organisations lacked professionalism due to the paucity of skilled staff.\textsuperscript{67} This evidence shows that the skills needed by records officers in the management of records are essential if a good records management system is to be practised.\textsuperscript{68}

1.8.8 Compliance

\textit{Legal and Regulatory Framework}

Laws and regulations play significant roles in the management of records. Base on practical knowledge of other countries, appropriate legislation such as records and archives laws, freedom of information and data protection laws are used to safeguard malpractices in the field of records management.
The Life Cycle and the Records Continuum Models employed by Chachage and Ngulube survey some companies in the Iringa region in Tanzania disclosed that organisations need to keep records as they generate them during their routine activities to obey the legal procedures as well as to protect the stakeholders’ rights. Conformity is mainly concerned with “information integrity, privacy and records retention”. Compliance with legislation influences how records are created or captured, transmitted and used, stored, indexed, retrieved, controlled, retained and preserved. Contrarily, insufficient regulatory mechanisms have been marked as an affront to effective records management in developing countries especially records in electronic forms.

A study by Barata, Bennett, Cain, and Routledge revealed that there was inadequate legal and institutional framework that regulates records management in Namibia. On the other hand, McLeod and Hare pointed out that adherence to the legal and regulatory framework is imperative to the strengthening of records management practices in organisations. Conversely, the non-adherence and compliance are a leading cause of poor records management particularly, in Africa.

1.8.9 Policies and Standards

The International Standards Organisation 15489-1 provides a framework for public and private organisations in the management of its data, notwithstanding of the tool in which the records are produced, stored and used. The Stakeholders Theory and the Records Continuum Model adopted by Mensah and Adams to conduct a survey of both private and public hospitals in Ghana reiterated that the existence of records management policies provides the mandate and overall authority for the creation, use and protection of records, and are vital to the effective management of records in all organisations. Ngulube and Tafor in their study further explained that the implementation of
standards of management of records and incorporating them ensure the consistent handling of records for the required time.77

1.8.10 Summary of Literature

The literature review showed that sound records management is lacking in Africa. Throughout creation to disposition, there appears to be a professional deficit in the management of records. It was noted that serious attention is not given to records management in Africa as there is a general lack of acknowledgement on the part of both management and staffs. Storage environment and facilities have been overlooked which presents a major challenge to institutions. From the literature, legal and regulatory frameworks for records management lacked in Africa. Those that exist are deliberately ignored because of lack of professionals and recognition in the management of records. The inputs from various authors have revealed that good records management is lacking in Africa. The literature further reveals that most government institutions lack disaster plan which ensures that records are protected and retrieved during a catastrophe such as fire outbreak or flood. It is not surprising that the MFARI lost most of its vital records and could not retrieve them during the 2009 fire outbreak at the Ministry which has adversely affected the Ministry. On this note, it is important that the Ministry take records management seriously as any request to produce any documents that pertain to agreements made with other states will be a great embarrassment to the nation. The study, therefore, hopes to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on sound records management practices and how it can impact on nations dealings with one another.

1.9 Definition of Key Terms

**Records:** Records are defined as “information created, received, and maintained as evidence by an organisation or person, in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business.”78
**Electronic Records**: Electronic Records refer to “records that are dependable on the relevant devices for access or reading that is computer hardware and software such as a database.

**Records Management**: Records Management is the “field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, capture, receipt, maintenance, use, and destruction or preservation of records, as well as maintaining evidence of information about business daily activities and transactions in the form of records”.  

**Disaster Management Plan**: Disaster Management Plan is a formal written plan, based on identified potential accidents together with their consequences, describes how such accidents and their consequences should be handled either on site or off site.

**Records Creation and Capturing**: Records Creation and Capturing are “developing consistent rules to ensure integrity and accessibility, deciding on systems to log and track records, and procedures for registering, classifying and indexing”.

**Records Disposal**: Records Disposal is how “an organization, through its records officer destroys or erases ephemeral records or transfers valued archival records to an archival institution for permanent safekeeping”.

**Archival Records**: Archival Records are records that are kept permanently because of its administrative, legal, fiscal, or research value.

1.11 Methodology

The study used a qualitative approach in the collection of data and analysis. The qualitative study utilises small sample size, and it can provide rich and in-depth information about being studied. As in qualitative study, the researcher relied on interviews with participants to collect data for the study. According to Collis and Hussey, the main feature of the qualitative method is the use of small sample size, and the outcome of it cannot be measured and quantified. Creswell explains
that qualitative method is an inquiry into a social phenomenon.\textsuperscript{86} Since the study utilised a small sample size of five (5) and adopted interview as means of collecting data, a qualitative approach was relevant. Further, the study did not rely on figures but respondent’s words and narratives which form part of the main features of a qualitative study. Polit and Hungle define population as the total of all objects or subjects under discussion.\textsuperscript{87} In the case of the study, the population was the staff at the MFARI.

For the study, purposive sampling technique was used to select key informants for interviews. This method was used because respondents selected (records officers) had adequate knowledge of the purpose of the study. The method also ensures maximum efficiency in the data collection, very fast, easy and cost-effective.\textsuperscript{88} The method was also employed because the researcher had limited time to complete the study for submission. Further, financial constraints on the part of the researcher also accounted for the use of this method.

According to Kumekpor, a sample size is “the number of sample units or unit of analysis that constitute a sample.”\textsuperscript{89} Spata opined that sample size constitutes those people chosen to participate in a study from the general population.\textsuperscript{90} A sample size of five (5) comprising two records officers each at the Special Care Registry and Legal and Consular Bureau and a Senior Lecturer from Information Studies Department, University of Ghana were utilised and provided relevant information for the study. Limited time, difficulties in getting officers to participate in the study and unwillingness of others to take part in the study accounted for the small number. Also, a qualitative study requires a small sample size as it provides a higher capacity to gain more depth and meaning of the phenomenon under study.
The main sources of data were from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources of data utilized interviews with records managers at the Special Care Registry and action officers at the Legal and Consular Bureau Section. These sections directly deal with records and could provide relevant information for the study. Also, a Senior Lecturer from Information Studies Department, University of Ghana was interviewed for the study. Secondary sources included a review of existing literature on the subject under study.

The study relied mainly on primary data. With this, the researcher used semi-structured interview to solicit information from respondents. The use of interview gave the researcher the opportunity to ask pertinent questions and understood very well respondents’ views. It also aided the researcher to clarify issues that were not clear during the interaction. The use of interview also helped to address the issue of bias in the recording. The first part of the interview addressed participants’ profile and the second part addressed the main issues as related to the objectives of the study and conceptual framework.

Before the study, the researcher visited the study area to familiarise himself with the environment, inform and seek approval from the appropriate authority of his intention to conduct a study, interact and identify potential participants. After approval was given, the researcher interacted with potential staffs to seek their support to participate in the study. Those who agreed were given a briefing of the study and a convenient day and time were agreed. Before commencement of the main interview, participants were told the length of time involved in the interview and sufficient time was also allowed during and after the interview for the participant to ask any questions relating to the research topic. Interview for each participant lasted between 30-45 minutes. The
researcher recorded interviews digitally and had them transcribed. Data were analysed using narratives.

*Ethical Issues*

Before the researcher began the study, a proposal was first submitted to the supervisor assigned to the researcher to be assessed and approved. The researcher was given approval, and the study began. In the realm of research, it has been established that it would be unethical for one to conduct a study without the consent and approval of participants. Knowing this, the researcher contacted participants personally and communicated the intention of the study to them. After participants agreed, the researcher was given a date to conduct the interview. Before the start of the interview, the researcher explained the content of the interview guide plainly to the understanding of participants and any clarification was resolved. Participants were made to understand that information provided would only be used for academic purposes and their names would not be mentioned in the study. They were also told to be free not to answer any questions they may feel uncomfortable. Participants were also asked to complete an informed consent form to formally declare their willingness to participate in the study.

1.12 **Organisation of Chapters**

The study comprised the following chapters:

**CHAPTER 1 – Introduction**

This chapter discusses the background of the study, problem statement, objectives and research questions, rationale of the study, methodology, hypothesis, and review related literature. Chapter one also provided a conceptual framework as well as sources of data.
Chapter two explores discussions on the state of records management practices from an international perspective, Africa, and Ghana.

CHAPTER 3 – Records Management Practices of MFARI.
In chapter three, the study presents records management practices at MFARI. The chapter also analysed data collected for the study.

CHAPTER 4 - Summary of Findings, Recommendations, and Conclusion
The last chapter of the study summarised findings, conclude the study and make recommendations.
ENDNOTES

1 The 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, article 40
2 The 1992 Constitution of Ghana, article 14
7 Ibid., p.3
9 Akussah, op. cit., p.3
10 Ibid.
11 Schellenberg., op. cit., p.1
13 ISO., op. cit., p. 2
14 Public Records and Archives Administration Act 535 (Ghana)
15 Shepherd and Yeo., op. cit., p.1
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., p.2
19 Ibid., p.7
21 Ibid., p7
24 Ibid., p.8
26 Ibid., p. 8
27 Ibid.
29 Ibid., p 8
32 Ibid., p. 9
33 Akussah., op. cit., p.3
36 Ibid., p.10
37 International Records Management Trust., op. cit., p.7
38 Dhahi, A. (2009). Patient information retention and disposal schedule version the library board of Western Australia
39 Mensah and Adams., op. cit., p. 9
40 Ibid., p.9
41 International Records Management Trust., op. cit., p.7
42 Ibid., p.7
43 Ibid., p.7
45 Ibid., p.12
46 Ibid.
47 Cox., op. cit., p.12
48 Ibid., p.12
50 Akussah., op. cit., p. 3
51 Ibid., p.3
52 Adams and Mensah., op. cit., p.9
53 Ibid., p. 9
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
56 Ngulube., op. cit., p.12
57 Akussah., op. cit., p.3
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 International Records Management Trust., op. cit., p.7
63 Ibid.
64 Wamukoya., op. cit., p. 9
65 Ngulube., op. cit., p.12
67 Akussah., op. cit., p .3
69 Ibid., p.13
70 Ibid., p.3
71 Ibid.
74 Ibid., p.17
75 ISO., op. cit., p.2
76 Adams and Mensah., op. cit., p.9
77 Ngulube., op. cit., p.12
78 ISO., op. cit., p.2
79 Ibid.
80 Ministry of Health and Ghana Health Service.
81 Yusof, Z. M. and Chell, R. W., op. cit.
83 Norris, T. D., op. cit.
85 Ibid., p.19
88 Creswell., op. cit. p.20

CHAPTER TWO

RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN GHANA, AFRICA AND INTERNATIONAL STANDARD FOR GOOD RECORDS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

2.0 Introduction

The chapter discusses records management practices in Ghana and Africa. Using secondary sources, the chapter identifies an international standard for good records management system and compares with records management practices in the public sectors in Africa and Ghana.

2.1 International Standards for Good Records Management System

For the study, the United Nation Standard for manual and electronic records management derived from the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO 15489) and International Council for Archives (ICA) standard for managing both paper and electronic records was used. The standard is divided into four main sections as relates to the key records management concept and process (creation, maintenance, administration, and dissemination). The requirements assume that basic records management is in a place like policies, procedures, business retention, and classification. About this study, only those requirements specifically relevant to the study were utilised.

2.1.1 Creation

Records are created in different formats and may include; paper, digital and electronic and transferred through various medium such as (workflows, email, postal mail). Records management systems must be able to capture the content, structure, and context of records to ensure they are reliable and authentic representations of the business activities or transactions in which they were created or transmitted. This is known as ‘point of capture’ metadata and should be captured as a
record; it should not be possible to alter any of these metadata features without changes being tracked and auditable.

2.1.2 Email

Email is basically used for simple communication between and outside the organisation. It is required that institution provide its user with emails capable of capturing attachments. Regarding emails, individuals should be allowed to capture it as a single record linked by metadata. Individuals should capture emails from their own email application.

2.1.3 Identification

Every record should have a unique identifier which is linked to and allows for the easy distinction of records. The unique identifier should be able to be stored as metadata entities to which they refer.

2.1.4 Classification

Records classification is a scheme that can help capture, retrieve, maintain and dispose of records. It helps defines how individual records are grouped. The system should be able to help the administrator create new aggregations at any level within any existing one.

2.1.5 Metadata

Metadata ensures that records are linked to the context in which they were created and used as evidence of a business process. The metadata value should conform to specified schemes and view by users subject to the right of access.
2.1.6 Maintenance

Access and Security

Organisations need to control access to their records by users. Access should be limited to specified users and security classifications. Users, therefore, need to obtain clearance to allow access to records. Only administrators should be allowed to set up user profiles. The administrator can as well be allowed to alter the security category individual records. There should be a tracking feature to monitor and take records of locating and movement of documents.

Disposition Authorities

Disposition practices involve steps to destroy and transfer records to archives as well as an assessment of retention schedule. Disposition’ includes some actions, such as destruction, transfer, permanent archive and reassessment of a retention period. The standard requires every disposition practice to follow specified disposal authorities, automated reporting, and destruction.

It further provides that there should be a well-managed system to transfer records. This should be the responsibility of the records manager and other records officers. Reliable and authentic records must be able to be retrieved.

2.2 Overview of Records Management in Africa

A study by Gwinn noted that many countries in the developing world use acid-based paper in producing most materials. Concerns about the use of quality paper for records had been ignored. It has been proven from a technical standpoint of view that most countries in Africa and other developing world had not made effort to enhance the quality of paper production specifically when it comes to work that is of significant value. A study by Akussah (2002) in government ministries
in Ghana revealed that most records were created using acidic paper. From his study, only it was not surprising that few number of registries were aware of the type of paper used for creating records.\(^4\) This implies a lack of a standard for paper quality as compared to the developed world.\(^5\)

An important revelation of Akussah’s work as the fact that most staffs at the government ministries were not aware of records management.\(^6\) What accounted for this, Akussah noted, were a lack of adequate professional training for staffs and continuous education such as seminars and workshops.\(^7\) From his study, preservation of records presented a major issue for both records professionals and users. Akussah, therefore, recommended continuous education of records and information professionals and called on the need to create awareness of preservation of records.\(^8\) Amehame-Addo study also reinforces Akussah’s call on the protection of records and noted the absence of training and awareness creation as factors militating against deterioration of records. Amehame-Addo suggested that all records users at all levels within government institutions be given adequate education in the form of training, seminars, and workshops.\(^9\)

Piggott contends with Amehame-Addo and Akussah and stressed that preservation should be a major concern to the archivist. Piggott re-emphasised that it will be a negligent act on the part of the archivist to relegate preservation to the background of records management work.\(^10\) Millar also shared that records management in Ghana is concern of inadequate support for records professionals, lack of legislation, policies, and standards, adequate training and funding.\(^11\)

Carlos also stressed the importance of having adequate training for records professionals and staffs and shared that if proper training is not given to them, migrating to electronic records would be an impossible task.\(^12\) According to him, it adds to some of the major problems pose by the information
era most especially in developing countries. Other problems such as the legal environment, intellectual property rights, the need for transparency and accountability all compound the challenges of records management in Africa. Sebina conducted a study in Botswana and noted that most public officials appointed to records management positions had no records management training. As a result, they were not in the better position to manage records properly and were unable to address records management challenges.\textsuperscript{13}

A study by Moyo and Ngulube in Africa had noted the lack of policies and plans on archives and preservation.\textsuperscript{14} The impression here is that the Africa countries are not fully and seriously committed when it comes to preserving records or information.\textsuperscript{15} This fact presents a major worry of the ability of the continent to cope with the digital era since the old system of preservation had been a major challenge to the continent. There is the need for the continent to take the necessary steps and put proper mechanisms in place before embracing the digital system.\textsuperscript{16}

\section*{2.3 Overview of Records Management Practices in Ghana}

In Ghana, the National Records Centre and Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD) are State institutions responsible for making sure that public data are well managed and kept (ACT 535). Though the institutions had a big facility to contain most records that come to their outfit, a study by Akotia noted that with PRAAD capacity of 80,000, it had been challenged with excess boxes of 20,000 as a result of recent increase in government records due to expansion of government activities which had necessitated the creation of new institutions and departments.\textsuperscript{17} The government of Ghana had recognised the need for state institutions to practice good records management, hence the restructuring of the National Archives into PRAAD as a major step forward. Despite this effort, Akotia had noted that after several years, the vision of the
reform had not materialised. PRAAD over the years had been challenged with lots of issues.\textsuperscript{18} Akotia noted major weaknesses and gaps in records disposition practices and infrastructure. According to Akotia, public institutions had not been able to support PRAAD in carrying out its mandate.\textsuperscript{19} Policies, procedures, and guidelines, as well as best practices, were all non-existent.\textsuperscript{20} Several studies in records management in Ghana had also noted this.

Akussah’s study into government registries in Ghana pointed out that most of the government registries did not have any idea about disaster preparedness.\textsuperscript{21} The repercussions of a lack of a disaster management plan in organisations lead to missing or lost records and damaged files which ultimately affect decisions and service delivery.\textsuperscript{22} An organisation that guards against disaster effectively and timeously offers protection to employees and assets in dangerous emergency situations.\textsuperscript{23} Moreover, it protects records against theft, deliberate or accidental and unauthorised damage and destruction. The negative effect of lack of a disaster management plan requires organisations to backup electronic records on a regular basis to safeguard against loss of information due to equipment malfunctions, human error, or other natural disasters.\textsuperscript{24} On the other hand, institutions that have not complied with their retention policy should not dispose of their record notwithstanding the existence of backup plans.\textsuperscript{25}

Studies in Ghana by Akussah and Woode admitted that the records units in Ghanaian institutions lacked professionalism due to the paucity of skilled staff. This evidence shows that the skills needed by records officers in the management of records are essential if a good records management system is to be practiced.\textsuperscript{26} In Ghana, for the effective and efficient management of hospital records to exist, there is the need for hospitals to create records management awareness
for staff and, employ staff that have the requisite skills and competencies to manage the records in
the design, creation, storage and disposition stage.\(^{27}\)

A study by Akussah showed that staff and users of public data or records in Government Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) had inadequate knowledge on preservation.\(^{28}\) This is attributed to the insufficient professional on-the-job training of this personnel and the absence of education on preservation through workshops. This was not different from subsequent surveys conducted by Adams and Mensah into the MMDA’s and public hospitals respectively. In their studies, they found out that most common preservation equipment used in the public sector were steel cabinets and wooden shelves and that there were problems of inadequate storage equipment.\(^{29}\)

Balasu’s study also noted that there was no public-sector organisation in Ghana that applied records retention and disposition schedule as they are not in existence.\(^{30}\) The author further expatiated that the absence of records retention and disposition schedule is a serious weakness in the governments’ disposition infrastructure.\(^{31}\) A later argument was that once records are no longer needed by their creating agencies, archivists must make a final decision about the disposition of records; that is, whether records merit continued maintenance and preservation in archives or destroyed or disposed of. Consequently, the delay in authorising the disposal of records may result in unnecessary accumulation of records.\(^{32}\)

A study carried out by Nchise into Ghanaian hospitals revealed that almost every patient visit, medical documents, and drug prescriptions were stored in folders.\(^{33}\) The ramifications of storing patients’ records in folders to some extent make such folders susceptible to the violation of privacy and confidentiality issues and other challenges such as missing files, misfiling, and damaged files.
Therefore, records should be stored in such a manner to facilitate user access and ensure that they are protected from unauthorised access, use, disclosure, removal, deterioration, and loss or destruction.\textsuperscript{34}

The Stakeholders Theory and the Records Continuum Model used by Mensah and Adams to conduct a survey of both private and public hospitals in Ghana revealed that the most common storage equipment used by public health institutions were steel cabinets and wooden shelves.\textsuperscript{35} The authors noted that there were problems with inadequate storage equipment and inadequate filing space.\textsuperscript{36}

According to Adjei, the management of records is still in its infancy which has made information storage poor and eventually affected retrieval.\textsuperscript{37} He noted that the method of keeping and storing of records is crude and rudimentary.\textsuperscript{38} Adjei attributed the poor management of records to lack of inadequate trained records management personnel to manage records in a more proper manner. He added that there is a lack of government commitment as well as institutions in ensuring proper records management.\textsuperscript{39}

Akussah conducted a study in Ghana to find out the state of records management in some selected registries in government ministries and found that most records in the conduct of government business were not properly handled, intensively used by officers who did not place value on records. As a result, most of the records were damaged.
2.4 Conclusion

The chapter explores International Standard for managing records, state of records management in Africa and Ghana. It was noted from the discussion that records management practices in Ghana are faced with numerous challenges. PRAAD which is the national body responsible for overseeing that public records are properly manage had not received the needed support in carrying out its mandate. There is a lack of adequate government and institutional support in providing PRAAD with the needed resources to enable it discharges its duties. In Africa, records management challenges were also noted just as in Ghana. There were problems with the training of records management professionals, management support for records management to mention a few. Most records management practices in Ghana and Africa were not consistent with the international standard. This, therefore, calls for a review of records management practices in Ghana and Africa so that international standards would be adhered to help improve the work of public institutions in carrying out their respective mandates.
ENDNOTES

2 Ibid., p.4
3 Ibid., p.4
5 Ibid., p.4
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
11 Ibid., p.6
12 Ibid.
16 Ibid., p. 6
18 Ibid., p.1
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Akussah, H., op. cit.
22 Ibid., p.2
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
31 Ibid., p.3
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
36 Ibid., p.3
38 Ibid., p.4
39 Ibid.
CHAPTER THREE

REVIEW OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AT MFARI AND EFFECTS ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF GHANA’s DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

3.0 Introduction

This chapter is focused on the records management practices at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration. The objective is to present an overview of MFARI’s adopted policy and practices and to compare it with International Standards as well as determine the effect of their adopted record management practices on their main role of developing and maintaining diplomatic relations. The chapter is based on primary and secondary data and begins with an overview of MFARI’s role in the development and maintenance of Ghana’s diplomatic relations. This section is followed by a discussion of the record management practices at MFARI and comparative analysis with standard practices which is in line with the study’s adopted conceptual framework. Finally, the chapter notes the challenges as well as the effects of the current records management policy and practices on the dispensation of the Ministry’s Constitutional mandate.

3.1 Overview of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration (MFARI) and its Role in Diplomatic Relations

MFARI main mandate is to provide support to government most especially in foreign policy formulation and implementation through the advice of policies that government needs to undertake as it conducts its foreign relation activities. As part of its functions, MFARI works together with other government ministries by coordinating, controlling and directing activities to ensure that Ghana’s foreign policy agenda is achieved.
In order to effectively perform its functions and achieve its objectives as captured in its mission statement, the MFARI has various bureaus that perform specific functions within the ministry. For instance, the protocol bureau as part of its roles ensures that members of diplomatic and consular corps are granted privileges and immunities. The Administration Department performs personnel recruitment, promotion, registration, training, and finance. The Legal and Consular Bureau attends to matters that border on the law as Ghana conducts its external affairs. The Economic Affairs Section advances Ghana’s economic interest to achieve targets set by the government for expansion of trade, tourism, and investment. Finally, protection of nationals, issuing of visas, immigration documents, registration of birth, authentication of documents and provision of relevant information material to a mission abroad are performed by the Consular and Information section respectively.

Records management is important in foreign relation for effective making and proper implementation of policies as Ghana relates with other states through various agreements, treaties, memoranda, reports, and conventions which come in the form of both manual and electronic records. Reasons for managing records effectively as relates to the conduct of diplomatic relations have been highlighted hereunder;

- Records management helps to keep and preserve the institutional memory of foreign affairs ministry for future usage.
- Good records management helps to keep records of detailed promises and agreements made to Ghana by other states to help in the socio-economic development of the country.

Therefore, in the Great Kings of the ancient East, archive and later registry were created in the earliest foreign ministries to keep correspondence, treaties, reports, memoranda and important documents.
• Foreign policy is lawful in nature and takes the form of agreements, contracts, memoranda between and among states which are records themselves.

• Foreign policy must be pursued by resort to judicial procedures which require records as evidence. The records also need to be scrutinised for consistency and without good records, this cannot be achieved. Thus, good records management ensures that records are properly maintained, preserve and made available for legal purposes.

• Foreign policy objectives are captured in various documents, including important statements, speeches, and interviews of political leaders, releases for the media and instructions to diplomats which need to be preserved for future reference.

3.2 Discussion of Results of Data Collected for the Study

The study was guided by the Records Life Cycle Model and explored how the Ministry manages the records from current, semi-current to the non-current or inactive stage. The existence and adherence to policies, procedures and regulatory frameworks that guided the management of records were also discussed as they serve as a blueprint for sound management of records.

3.2.1 Current Stage Records

The current stage of records management life cycle looks at how records are created, the type of records created and received and how such current records are managed pending their transformation to semi-current and finally non-current stage. In exploring this, respondents were asked of the forms of records created by the Ministry, where the records are kept after creation and existence of formal filing system and filing procedure manuals or index at the Ministry. From respondents, memos, treaties, agreements, protocols, personal letters, and conventions were the
main records created and receive at the Ministry before they are sent to appropriate departments or ministries.

According to respondents, this is how records creation emanate from their outfit and mentioned that most of the records if not all come in the form of hard copy. It was also found that recordings of records at the Ministry were done manually and that the concept of electronic records management hardly practiced.

“The special Care Registry receives all the correspondence coming out of the country and registers them. They are mainly memos, draft, agreements, treaties, charters, protocols and normal letters which are not confidential. After registering in a notebook, then we send them to the various departments. This is how we create our records. The records we receive most of them are hard copy documents.”

The researcher further asked how information was recorded in the notebook and why they keep the notebooks as their main record book. The study found that date of receipt and date of dispatch of documents were captured in the notebooks used for keeping records. There was no proper procedure of recording documents that come to the Ministry. It was also noted that the notebooks used to keep records were not properly kept. After recordings, they were just left on the table or desk and only open when correspondents had arrived. For example, Mr Asare Mensah noted the following as the process of receiving documents in their section.

“When the documents come to us we must receive and record them in our books. After the recordings, we send to the various departments. We don’t have a system recording on the computer. Some of the letters after action was taken are brought back to us and we keep them in the cabinet”
It should be noted that records creation or receipt is the first phase of the records life cycle and that proper care must be taken during this phase to make the life cycle of records thrive. This is because when the first phase fails, the subsequent phases would also fail. Information provided points to the fact that the ministry does not take into cognizance the life cycle concept of records management as the management of records at the current stage was not properly done. There was no standard form of keeping records at the first phase (creation) of records management.

Blake recognized the importance of records creation and opined that records creation is an important aspect of record keeping and provide effectiveness in the records management system by enabling the institution to implement a wide range of activities. According to Kemoni records creation provides a suitable system that ensures that the activities of institutions are well documented and ensures that this documentation reflects the correct and complete records of every transaction.

3.2.2 Semi-Current Stage Records

Managing semi-current records is an important aspect of records management practices. These records are needed for occasional references to the Ministry. In assessing how these records are managed the study asked where these records were kept before transfer to the records centre, how often they were transferred to the records centre, how closed files were handled, how easy is it to access records transferred to the records centre and whether the transfer was governed by retention schedule policy. The study noted that semi-current records were mixed with current ones and kept in and on top of cabinets and office floors. There was no special room designated for keeping semi-current records. A study by Makhura and Du Toit at South African National Parks (SANParks) also stated that most people used cabinets to store semi-current records in their offices.
The study found that records were not often transferred to records centre and that there was no retention schedule that guided the transfer of records at the Ministry. Respondents noted that when files become bulky, they are closed and given a volume number like volume 2, however, they are kept in the office. Explaining their reason for adopting this approach, the records officers mentioned that though they are needed for reference purposes, the main problem had been limited space to keep those closed files. The understanding here was that records officers know how to close files and open them but they lack adequate knowledge on how to manage these files. This process was in sharp contrast with the models proposition of auditing and preparing retention schedule so that records that are no longer needed are sent to the records centre or archives to create space, these files were packed on top of cabinets. Because of this, most records had been kept longer than their retention period limiting space required to store current records. This finding is consistent with Wema study of problems of managing semi-current records in higher institutions showed that expensive office space was wasted on storing records which could have been moved to less expensive space, such as archives. The inappropriateness of storing records on floors or cabinet tops has repercussions on the ultimate disposition of the records when their retention time had expired. Wema suggested that keeping active and inactive records together pose serious storage and retrieval problems and, increases the deterioration of records. Respondents admitted that problems of locating documents exist as sometimes records are found missing which delays decision making at the Ministry.

“space here is too small so we also keep some on top of the cabinet. It takes some time to transfer the records to the records centre. For the retention schedule, we don’t have something like that here. In case it is a file, if it becomes bulky we close it and open a new one as volume 2. We don’t throw the old one because you need to refer to it. I received a
Good management of records requires the availability of adequate storage facilities and clean environment for the storage of records. However, the state of records storage facilities and environment at the Ministry contradicts ISO 1489-1 policy and guidelines for records management which provide that records storage environment should have appropriate storage condition for ensuring the cost-effective mechanisms for the protection, accessibility, and management of records. This implies that there is the need for the Ministry to take a critical look at its records management system to be able to access information timely and efficiently in carrying out its mandate. Kemoni reaffirms this point and stated that the records storage should include all the systems for storage, processes, facilities, and devices used for the storage of records. Insufficient records storage equipment has the risk of increasing the deterioration of records as records would be stacked on shelves increasing the probability of wear and tear of files and loss of folios.

### 3.2.3 Inactive Stage Records

The final stage of the records management life cycle concept is the inactive phase where records have outlived their usefulness and no longer needed for day to day business. At this stage, records had already been appraised to confirm that they are no longer useful for day to day administration and needed transfer to the archives for permanent preservation because of their enduring value. The study inquired from respondents how they approach records at their outfit when they reached the inactive stage. Explanation from respondents showed that records appraisal was lacking as the most current and semi-current records were mixed up and kept at same place making retrieval of records difficult. Wema suggested that keeping active and inactive records together pose serious
storage and retrieval problems and, increases the deterioration of records. Most records that were no longer needed and have to be transferred to the archives or destroyed were packed somewhere at the office without any retention schedule. The findings of the current study confirm Balasu’s study on records management practices in public sector organisations in Ghana which noted that public sector organizations in Ghana do not practice records retention and disposition schedule. MFARI does not have a transfer policy or procedure for dealing with inactive records. Further, the result concurs with Tale and Alefaio study of records management in sub-Saharan Africa which revealed that records management practices in Sub-Saharan Africa had not been given the necessary credence as it is required in organizations and are been controlled by staffs with limited experience and skills.

“We don’t have a retention schedule but those that are kept for so long and we know they won’t ask for it again; we pack them somewhere. We cannot tell of any transfer policy. We know that sometimes the people at the national archives come for some of the records”.

3.2.4 Storage of Records/Environment

The study also assessed the storage facilities used to keep records and the environment under which the records were kept. This was important because records storage facilities and environment play a major role in terms of security and preservation of records. Respondents mentioned that the main storage facilities had been wooden and metal cabinet. However, respondents indicated that after the fire outbreak disaster which affected the Ministry, attention had been given to the use of metal cabinet. The revelation of this confirms Makhura and Du Toits study at SANParks which found that offices store their records in cabinets. It also validated findings of Akussah’s study at the
government of Ghana ministries which noted that the ministries used wooden, metal shelves and cabinets as well as drawers as their main storage facilities.\(^{17}\)

> “Now we have metal cabinets and in case there is fire outbreak it will not affect the file like the old one where we were using wooden cabinets.”\(^{18}\)

Further probing showed that the storage environment had no artificial control equipment installed in the storage area. Personal observation revealed that apart from the office air-conditioning system, there was no fire detection and suppression in the repository. However, respondents confirmed that the office was always cleaned by cleaners assigned to clean the various offices at the Ministry. It was also found that there were no written guidelines for handling of records. Findings showed that in terms of storage facilities and environment for keeping records, the Ministry had major problems. This point to the same fact that records management was not well recognized by the MFARI. Akussah stressed that the storage systems (offsite and onsite) of records need to be equipped with environmental control, applicable safety and security measures to ensure better storage and preservation of inactive records.\(^{19}\) Thus, the records must be stored in larger and conducive storage places pending ultimate disposal. It should be noted that environmental condition plays a major role in the preservation of records which every sound records management system should incorporate. This obviously had been the cause of most documents at the offices changing colours and fading which consequently would impact on access to information. Ngulube agreed on this point and opined that maintaining right environmental conditions in areas of storing archives and records is of utmost relevance as it ensured that documentary materials are preserved and protected from deterioration.\(^{20}\) According to Records Management Manual, the required temperature and humidity for storing records are 18 °C to 24 °C and 45% to 55% respectively.\(^{21}\)
This was found not to be the practice at the Ministry due to lack of air condition facilities. Cox states that the evidential value of a record can only exist if the content, structure, and context are preserved, meaning that without preservation, there won’t be any record. One shocking revelation was the habit of some personnel who used to be cooking with electrical equipment at the records office which was queried and halted. This practice if had continued would have posed a major risk to the records at the Special Care Registry and affected the preservation of the records.

“As you can see, we cannot check temperature and humidity because there are no special facilities to do that. The old time's people were bringing equipment like microwave and stoves and items to cook in the office environment. Later the head of department and civil service wrote a letter for staffs to stop such practice.”

3.2.5 Security

Security stands as a major issue in the management of records. The lack of adequate security measures makes the records vulnerable to theft, unauthorised access, and disaster. Respondents were asked of the state of security of records in the office about to the existence of fire protective system, a burglar-proof bar, who has access to records storage areas and how access to records is controlled. It was reported that fire protective system exists at the Ministry but there was none at the special care registry. There were no burglar-proof bars at the office, no closed-circuit television cameras (CCTV) and intruder alarm system.

The only security measure that was noted was in terms of access to the records. It was said that only records officers have access to the records and no other person could take records from the office. However, the incident of some missing documents showed that the security system was very weak at the Ministry which reaffirms Dikopoulou and Mihiotis point that lack of security
control in public organisations exposes the organisation to lose private and confidential records about the individuals and the organisation.\(^\text{24}\)

### 3.2.6 Training

Training of records personnel forms an integral part of having a sound records management system. Training of records personnel and staffs ensured that they acquire in-depth knowledge of the concepts and the needed skills that would assist in performing their work as records officers. With the requisite training records, personnel and staffs would appreciate the value of records management at every stage of the records life and ensure that records are properly maintained and managed to help organisations achieve its goals. The International Records Management Trust declared that public officials in various institutions lack the requisite skills concerning the form of data and data keeping and about why these records need to be kept safe and properly managed. These public officials are simply oblivious to their roles in the proper handling of these records over a long period.\(^\text{25}\) Wamukoya and Mutula conducted a survey on capacity building requirements for records management into public sector organisations in the Eastern and the Southern Africa and reported that there was a lack of skills in the records management in Sub-Saharan Africa and emphasised the need for records management awareness, education and training and continuing professional development.\(^\text{26}\) However, from the study, respondents commented that they have had no training in records management since they started working.

“\text{It is unfortunate we don’t receive any training since I came to work here, we have not gotten the opportunity to go for training.}\(^\text{27}\)

Respondents’ views in this context show that records officers lack adequate training on records management which obviously had accounted for poor attitude towards records management at the Ministry which mostly delays decision making because of difficulties in retrieving documents.
From the demographic background, respondents’ academic backgrounds were political science, history and international affairs which require that records officers are given adequate professional training to be able to manage records efficiently and effectively at the Ministry. Ngulube, Tafor, and Ojedokun buttress this point clearly in their studies that scarcity of skills and inadequate training in records management has somewhat contributed to the poor handling of paper records. This is what inspired these surveyors to look into whether institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa could manage the enormous challenge electronic records would pose.28

3.2.7 Classification and Filing
Classification of records formed an important aspect of the study. Respondents understood classification as the creation of file numbers for documents so that they could be located when the need arises. The study confirmed that there was some form of the classification system in place at the Ministry which is consistent with the international standard. Respondents were using classification scheme and had categorised all letters that come to the office into two main groups; Ghana and External. Additional sub-categories were also noted which included Commonwealth file, Environmental file, Incoming emails, and Mission abroad. The study also found that letters were given a reference for identification purposes. Respondents also stated that every letter has a file number to help easy identification of records.

“Classification is the file number assigned to the files. Like here, we have Commonwealth file, Environment file, Letter from Africa is a Commonwealth file document. We also have Contract document file, bilateral and peacekeeping file. Also, every letter has its own file number example letter of introduction has its own reference number.”29
According to respondents, this has helped them to easily identify records that come to their outfit and send to appropriate authorities or sections of the Ministry. Although there existed some form of the classification system, personnel were not educated on the use of the system. According to Kemoni, classification scheme should be a major concern to every good record management records programme.\textsuperscript{30} ISO 15489 state that classification allows records to be put in the right perspective to facilitate access and retrieval.\textsuperscript{31}

### 3.2.8 Electronic Records Management

The study also sought to access the existence and management of electronic records at the Ministry. Respondents confirmed that they keep electronic documents in the form of e-mails. However, findings showed that electronic records management system was not fully adopted and incorporated as the Ministry still create and rely mostly on manual system despite the fire outbreak which destroyed most vital records. Records received were still recorded in notebooks and kept in cabinets and top of cabinets.

“When the letters come here, we have to book them. We don’t use the same book. The letters to the minister, we book and send it to minister. We record the subject of the letter, date and reference number and where it is coming from in the notebook. The person who receives it signs and it’s important because someone can say it is not him who signed.”\textsuperscript{32}

Given the advent of technology, it is important that records are created electronically and communication is done electronically to save cost, time and space. The Ministry should encourage employees to create and store recorded information on an approved electronic system since facilities such as computers exist for managing records electronically. Asked how they keep and
share electronic records they create occasionally; it was noted that there was no procedure for keeping any electronic record they create. The reason had been that they were not sure whether there existed any policy in their department that governs electronic records storage and retention.

“Well, we are not aware of any such policy in our department. We still do most of the things manually.”

Akussah’s study on the management of public sector records in Ghana attests to the fact that electronic records management is not well utilized in government ministries. Akussah noted that the practice of electronic records management has been taken for granted in government ministries. This explains why the first major effort to introduce national electronic records management policy in 1997 was met with little success. Despite the introduction of Information Communication Technology for Accelerated Development (ICT4AD) in 2003 which calls on the Civil Service to modernise its service delivery activities by implementing electronic records, electronic records management is still not well adopted by government ministries which were evidenced from the study. Akussah observed in his study that public service has an erroneous thinking that electronic files constitute working documents whilst paper files constitute official records. This means that important information needed by the government to make an informed decision is taken as unofficial document and affect government business.

Findings from the study have established that electronic records management was not effectively utilized at the Ministry which calls for the need for proper policies and guidelines to be put in place to make electronic records more relevant in the conduct of Ghana’s foreign affairs. This would be necessary because the foreign affairs constitute an important government institution and represent Ghana’s image globally. Further, globalisation is changing the way countries conduct its internal
and external affairs using technology which is noted to facilitate quick decision and make work easier and better. This requires that the Ministry becomes aware of global changes and become abreast with it to be able to conduct its foreign affairs and mandate effectively and efficiently and most especially in decision making and agreements with other nations. The Ministry needs to adopt records management policy that solves the current challenges relating to the management of records at the Ministry.

It is also important that the Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD) as the legal body play its role in this context. PRAAD needs to develop effective procedures and guidelines for the management of electronic records. PRAAD needs to be provided with all the necessary resources needed to carry out this mandate. Akussah noted this and opined that the institution is challenged with technological capabilities to perform in the volatile electronic information environment and call for the need for government to provide the technological support needed to discharge its mandate.37

3.2.9 Policy, Procedures, and Regulatory Framework

Policies, laws, and regulations play a major role in records management. Legislation and policies such as freedom of information, data protection laws, records, and archives have proven to provide and enhance security in managing United Nations records. In view of this, it was important to find out whether some form of policies, procedures and regulatory framework exist in managing records at the Ministry. In response, the study noted that no form of policies or procedures existed at the Ministry in managing its various records. This confirms Moyo and Ngulube standpoint that most Sub-Saharan African States lack archival protection plans and policies.38 However, respondents admitted that they were aware that the Public Records and Archives Administration
Department (PRAAD) exist as a national regulatory body to ensure that public institutions manage their records according to records management standards. According to respondents, this has not been the case because many public institutions have been managing records in their own way contrary to any existing policies or laws on records management. The indication here was that PRAAD as a legal institution mandated to ensure that records in public institutions are well managed and standards followed are not effectively enforcing the mandate given them. Agyei noted that there is a lack of government commitment as well as institutions in ensuring proper records management. Myler agrees with Agyei and reiterated that failure to capture and preserve electronic records in eastern and southern African institutions of higher education have been attributed to lack of policies and procedures, among other factors. A study by Barata, Bennett, Cain, and Routledge revealed that there was inadequate legal and institutional framework that regulates records management in Namibia. On the other hand, McLeod and Hare pointed out that adherence to the legal and regulatory framework is imperative to the strengthening of records management practices in organisations. Conversely, the non-adherence and compliance are a leading cause of poor records management particularly, in Africa.

“For policies and procedures, we are not aware of that. But as managers of any documents that come that come to the ministry, it’s important we take very good care of them so that when they are needed, we can provide them. So here, we manage the records in a way that helps us. I am aware that PRAAD is the legal body responsible for ensuring that public institutions managed their records according to standard but I don’t know whether that is working because public institutions are not serious when it comes to record and they do it in their own way.”

The revelation of this clearly explains why records were not properly kept at the Ministry. Personal observation by the researcher saw how records were dumped on floors and top of cabinets which
contradicts records management standards. It was not surprising that information was requested at the time of the interview by one of the sectional directors on the number of protocol visas issued within months but records to that effect could not be provided. If proper procedures and policies had been in place and where been enforced, the incidence of loss of documents and unnecessary delays which negatively affect decision making would not be happening or would be minimized. Kemoni supported this point and noted that the lack of policies regarding the management of records in the ministries directly affect the smooth delivery of public service as it delays decision making.\(^{44}\)

Ngulube and Tafor recognized the need for institutions to have comprehensive records management policies and noted that lack of management policies negatively affects institutional capacity and lack of comprehensive records management policies had been the main causes of archival and records management underdevelopment in Africa.\(^ {45}\) ISO 15489 stressed that the objective of the policy should support business purposes and transactions as and when they are needed and also ensure proper records management practices through the entire life cycle of records.\(^ {46}\) Blake added that policy for the management of records would be very important for strategic development on how records would be managed in a public environment.\(^ {47}\) Kuchio also explained that a well-coordinated records management policy ensures that public sector is able to manage its active, semi-active and inactive records appropriately.\(^ {48}\) Kuchio added that the implementation of records management policy should however not be restricted to registry personnel but should encompass all key players from senior management and staffs who come into contact with records daily.\(^ {49}\) ISO 15489-1 provided that a policy for the management of records needs to be taken and approved at the highest level, and applied in the entire organisation and obligation.\(^ {50}\)
3.2.10 Challenges

The study also explores records management challenges at the Ministry. The aim was to identify the challenges so that appropriate recommendation could be made and necessary steps are taken to address them. The main challenges that were identified included; lack of office space, storage equipment, and training. Respondents complained that office space was too small which had resulted in keeping some of the records on the floor and cabinet tops. Asked if management was aware of the challenge, respondents expressed that management was aware but had been adamant in responding to the challenges. They further added that even storage equipment had been inadequate and the need for them to also acquire some form of training had also not been successful. Respondent held the belief that records management was not recognised and that had accounted for why management had not been concerned with the challenges that confront them in the office.

“There are lots of problems we face here; you can see for yourself how the records are displayed on the floor and the cabinet top. There is no space, the room is too small and we don’t have enough cabinets to keep them. Maybe you can support us with some. Since we came here, we have not had any form of training. We are just doing what we can do best. The issue is that people don’t see records management as something so important. It is only when a problem comes.”

Findings were in line with several studies. The International Records Management Trust declared that public officials in various organizations lack the requisite skills concerning the form of data and data keeping and about why these records need to be kept safe and properly managed. These public officials are simply ignorant of their roles in the proper handling of these records over a long period. Wamukoya and Mutula noted that capacity building was important in records management in public institutions and reported that there was a dearth of skills in the management
of records in sub-Saharan Africa and emphasised the need for records management awareness, education and training and continuing professional development.\textsuperscript{53} Ngulube had noted that records management is a skill-required work that is continuously evolving and which has implication on the skills and competencies needed to manage records.\textsuperscript{54} Ngulube stressed that workers should be offered on-the-job training in order to upgrade their skills and knowledge on records management which would eventually impact positively on decision making in and help institutions achieve their goals.\textsuperscript{55} Millar reported on the challenges that confronted records management professionals in Ghana and noted the lack of recognition for records professionals, training, and human resource development, funding for records management activities as major challenges.\textsuperscript{56}

\subsection*{3.3 Conclusion}

The overall findings from the study and analysis have demonstrated that the state of records management at the Ministry had been bad which call for the need for management at the Ministry as well as government to take appropriate steps in addressing the challenges. The various functions performed by the Ministry portrays Ghana’s image outside and relies solely on records. Without records and good records management system in place, the institution cannot carry out its mandate efficiently and effectively. It is therefore important that records management is taken seriously at all levels and in all activities at the Ministry.

The next chapter summarised findings, make conclusion and recommendations.
ENDNOTES

1 Respondent view, Special Care Registry, MFARI.
2 Ibid.
7 Ibid.p.6
8 Respondent view, Legal and Consular Bureau, MFARI
11 Ibid.p.7
12 Wema., op. cit., p.6
15 Respondent view, Special Care Registry, op. cit.
16 Makhura and Du Toit., op. cit., p.5
18 Respondent view, Special Care Registry, op. cit.
19 Ibid., p.8
23 Respondent view, Special Care Registry, op. cit.
27 Respondent view, Special Care Registry, op. cit.
29 Respondent view, Special Care Registry, op. cit.
31 ISO., op. cit., p.1
32 Respondent view, Special Care Registry, op. cit.
33 Respondent view, Legal and Consular Bureau, op. cit.
34 Akussah., op. cit., p.8
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.


43 Respondent view, Special Care Registry, op. cit.

44 Kemoni., op. cit., p.12

45 Ngulube and Tafor, op. cit., p12

46 ISO., op. cit.p.1

47 Blake., op. cit., p.1


49 Ibid. p.17

50 ISO., op. cit., p.1

51 Respondent view, Special Care Registry, op. cit.

52 International Records Management Trust., op. cit. p.11

53 Wakumoya., op. cit., p.11

54 Ngulube., op. cit., p. 9

55 Ibid., p. 9

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

4.0   Introduction

This chapter summarises the study’s findings, conclude and make relevant recommendations for records management at the MFARI, Ghana.

4.1   Summary of Findings

The aim of the study was to examine records management practices at the MFARI, Ghana and its role in facilitating and developing diplomatic relationships with other countries. The objectives of the study were:

- To examine the records management practices at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ghana.
- To assess the impact of the current records management system in meeting the mandate of the Ministry
- To identify the challenges of the current records management system at the Ministry and its implications for MFARI’s role in developing and maintaining diplomatic relations.

The study hypothesised that the practice of good records management facilitates decision making in the conduct of international relations. It employed a qualitative approach in the form of an interview to examine the research questions and objectives. The two main records sections (Special Care Registry and Legal Consular Bureau) at the MFARI were the focus of the study. These offices are important and were relied upon both because they manage records. The Special Care Registry, more importantly, receive controls and manages all records that come to the Ministry. These two sections of the Ministry provided useful information for the study. Four officials of the section...
which comprised two records officers each at the offices provided were interviewed with one respondent from the academia for the study. The data was analysed using the theme for the study’s conceptual framework.

Summarily, the study has demonstrated that despite government recognition that records management is a critical concept in public sector reforms and a major factor in ensuring efficiency and accountability in public sector, serious gaps persist in records management system at public institutions which the study confirmed. Good records management practices at the MFARI were lacking. There were reports of inadequate storage facilities, lack of recognition of records management by management and staffs, inadequate training for records managers at the Ministry, lack of policies, procedures, and guidelines for effective records management and inadequate security for records. The life cycle concept of records management which requires that records throughout its lifespan from creation, usage maintenance and to final disposition should be well managed had not been effectively practiced by the Ministry.

4.2 Conclusion

The findings from the study showed that treaties, agreements, protocols, contracts, personal letters, visa applications, memos, and conventions were the main records created and receive at the Ministry. It was noted generally that records management at the creation stage which is the first phase of records life cycle was poorly done. Though Records Officers record receipt and dispatch of documents, maintenance, and effective tracking system were lacking which caused a delay in locating records. Notebooks for keeping records were dumped anywhere without proper care. Records personnel were not responsive to adopt or incorporate an electronic system in managing records at the creation stage which would enhance and ensure efficiency in their work.
The study also found that records at the semi-current stage were not properly kept as most were left on the floor. The reason was that the registry office lacks space to keep these records which are needed for reference. These records were dumped on the floor and stacked to each other which have impacted negatively on retrieval of documents at the Ministry.

From the study, storage facilities for keeping records were inadequate. Few metal cabinets were found at the records office. This had accounted for keeping some of the records on the floor and cabinets tops which contradict records management policies and standard.

Findings also noted that security of the records was poor. Apart from the office air conditioner which helps preserve the records, there was no fire protective system, burglar-proof bars, no closed-circuit television cameras (CCTV) and intruder alarm system. The only security measure was access to records by only records personnel of the records.

In terms of classification of records, the study noted that the institution had incorporated the functional classification system as a standard practice by the United Nations Archives and Records Management Section (ARMS). Records were classified according to the functions and origin. The examples included: Commonwealth file, Environmental file, Contract file, Bilateral file, Peacekeeping file etc.

The study found that records appraisal, disposition, and retention schedule were lacking at the Ministry. There was no procedure or process of transitioning records to the archives. The effect was that both semi-current and inactive records were mixed up making retrieval difficult. Records
that needed to be destroyed or transferred to the archives were kept in the office competing and limiting space needed to store current records. Lack of appraisal and disposition practices was noted to have contributed to limited space at the records section of the Ministry.

Findings from the study showed that policies, procedures, guidelines and regulatory framework for managing records at the Ministry were missing. Respondents could not tell and were not aware whether they existed. This was noted to have accounted for the poor state of records management at the Ministry.

The major challenges that confronted records management at the Ministry were limited space and equipment for records storage, lack of training and recognition for records managers and records management which had all resulted in poor records management practices at the Ministry.

Finally, the study showed that indeed, the practice of good records management facilitates decision making in the conduct of international relation. This was evident in the way poor records management at the Ministry had led to delays in retrieval of documents or provision of information needed by management to make urgent decisions as it corresponds and conducts business with its foreign counterparts. From the study, there was, for instance, an urgent situation where information of the number of protocol visas issue was requested by a director for the decision to be taken urgently but the information could not be provided by records officers which affected the decision that needed to be taken at that time.
4.3 Recommendations

The study makes a recommendation based on its findings, compliance with relevant national legislative requirements (Public Records and Archives Administration Department, ACT 1996 1628), International Standards Organisation (ISO) management practices and United Nations Archives and Records Management Section standards. Personal views and advice from Dr Musah Adams who is an expert and professional in the field of records and information management at the University of Ghana were included in suggested recommendations.

- Given the pace of technological development, it is recommended that serious attention is given to electronic records by the Ministry. The electronic records system is fast, efficient and cost-effective. The system should have set of rules for referencing, titling, indexing and providing security markings for records. According to the United Nations, every electronic system should have cost-effective technologies, prevent data loss, provide fast access to data without interruptions, offer adequate space capacity for storage and be prepared for equipment failure. This should be considered by the Ministry as it transitions to electronic records. Records management officers need to be trained to acquire necessary skills needed to manage the records at their outfit. It is important that the Ministry employs well-trained records personnel who can better appreciate and handle records at the Ministry. Other employees who handle records should also be given some fundamental training which would help minimise the problems they pose to records officers at the Ministry.

Adequate storage facilities and space should be provided to prevent records from missing and competing for space which results in tear or loss of important records. Adequate space would help to keep and safeguard semi-current records which are needed for reference.
Appropriate policies, procedures, and standards should be developed, followed and monitored to ensure that there is uniformity in records management practices at the ministry. Thus management, records officers, and PRAAD should play a major role in this respect.

- For the Ministry to carry out its mandate effectively, the good records management system must be put in place. Records Management Manual provides that an effective records management system or program should guide the management of records throughout their lifecycle. The implication here is that knowing when a record is created, functions it performs, a period of being useful to the institution that created it, parameters for maintenance, policies, guidelines, procedures and legal authority that guides and monitors it is indispensable to fulfilling the mandate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration.

- Finally, security issues should be a major priority in the design and implementation of sound records management at the Ministry. Records offices should be furnished with burglar proof windows, fire detectors and alarm system to prevent destruction and theft. It is also recommended that future research is done extensively to include all sections of the ministry delivery, accountability, and transparency in the management of the country’s public affairs.

Dr Musah Adams advised that government institutions must be educated on the need to ensure confidentiality of government records and the protection of vital records from unauthorized access. He also added that disclosure of certain vital government information should be guarded and be done within the legal framework.
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APPENDIX

Interview Guide for Interviews Undertaken

Interview Guide A: Officer(s) Responsible for Record Management at MFARI

1. Is there any policy that guides the records management of the Ministry? When was the policy formulated?

2. Briefly, describe the record management system adopted by the Ministry and your department?

3. How important is record management system to you as an officer and in the discharge of your duties as well as to the entire Ministry?

4. Describe the nature of records available at your desk/department (memos, minutes, reports, correspondence, electronic)

5. What classification scheme does the MFARI use?

6. Describe classification system of the records that your department deals with or is associated with?

7. How do you keep electronic records?

8. How do you keep confidential records?

9. Briefly, describe the current state of the environment at the location of the record.

10. Is there any retention schedule for records?

11. Does the Ministry in general or your department have any challenges with records management?

12. In your own opinion, what do you think can be done to improve records management?