

# Trials and Tribulations of a Research Administrator in a Low Income Country in Africa: A case Study of Makerere University College of Health Sciences, Uganda

Harriet Nambooze, Dickson Muyomba, Regina Namirembe, Achilles Katamba, Nelson Sewankambo  
Makerere University College of Health Sciences, THRiVE Program

## Definitions

**Trials and tribulations:**  
Troubles and events that cause suffering<sup>1</sup>

**Research Administrator:**  
“someone who leads, manages or supports the research enterprise” Chronister L.U & Killorene R (2006)<sup>2</sup>

(www.dictionary.cambridge)  
Chronister L.U & Killorene R (2006). *The organization of research*. In E.C. Kulakowski & L.U. Chronister (Eds.) *Research Administration and Management* (pp 41-72) USA, Jones and Bartlet Publishers, Inc.

## Background

- The culture of research administration & management (RAM) is relatively new in many low- and middle-income countries.
- Research managers & administrators (RMAs) face a myriad of challenges stemming from:
  - ✓ Lack of streamlined systems to manage and administer research
  - ✓ Limited competencies to perform RAM functions
  - ✓ Different funders' grants management regulations
- We summarize the experiences of RMAs of grants at Makerere University College of Health Sciences.



<https://soundcloud.com/chuckez/trials-tribulations>

## Results

### Structures

- No centralized grant management systems which lead to duplication of services and increase in costs of grants management.
- There are no formal RAM structures to cater for the components of the grants management cycle e.g pre-award and post-award activities.
- It is not known what it takes to administer grants/research at MakCHS and thus unable to justify the cost of grants/research management.
- Bureaucratic and manual systems which lead to excessive delays e.g. in procurement of goods and services.
- There are minimal resources earmarked for capacity development of RMAs.
- Despite RMAs efforts to network through regional research associations e.g ARAA, EARIMA there is limited or no institutional support for those efforts.



## Human resources

- No formal local training in research administration and management.
- Capacity building for research administration has been achieved through mainly short courses in grants management with a few attending highly costly online masters level training hosted by developed countries.
- No career progression opportunities which demotivates the RMAs.
- Roles and responsibilities are either not defined or poorly understood.

## Funders' regulations

There are no formal in-service trainings to update RMAs about changes in funders' grant management regulations.

## Discussion

- Despite the challenges (institutional & human resource) RMAs have managed to support the research enterprise.
- There is limited opportunities for capacity building in RAM thus the need for developing locally appropriate and accredited courses.



- There is need to establish a career track for RMAs to improve motivation.
- RMAs have focused mainly on management of international grants hence the need for governments to provide research funds which may help improve the status of RAM.



## Conclusion

- RMAs at MakCHS face several challenges which do not only make them ineffective but also affect the research output.
- MakCHS should strive to develop sustainable RAM systems to support the research enterprise to flourish.

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