



Audit Service Bulletin

Vision : To become a world class supreme audit institution, delivering professional, excellent and cost effective auditing services

The future of public sector auditing and robotic process automation (RPA) application Otetemateng Tabil Emmanuel Junior - Assistant Auditor/Lawra District Office



In an era where public enterprises are increasingly adopting technology and digitalization to stay competitive, public sector auditors are not only encouraged but also required to enhance their understanding of these developments to remain relevant. The traditional method of manually examining payment vouchers is becoming obsolete, making it essential for auditors to embrace new technologies. Public sector institutions are progressively integrating computer-based tools and software designed to reduce repetitive tasks and human intervention in conducting public business.

For example, the government of Ghana now uses systems like the Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS), GHANA.GOV, and the Payment Distribution System (PDS) to ensure more reliable public sector operations. Auditing these systems requires a deep understanding of the networks they run on, their software components, and their applications before any meaningful audit can take place. As a result, accounting and auditing practices needs to evolve to keep pace with the structural reforms happening across public sector enterprises. Imagine a medieval auditor tasked with auditing the GHANA.GOV system; that will be wrecking! This underscores the urgent need for public sector auditors to adapt and meet the emerging challenges of technology-driven audits.

Today, we spotlight an exciting development in the field of accounting and auditing that has captured the attention of auditors in both the private and public sectors: Robotic

Process Automation (RPA) in audits!

All said and done, what then is Robotic Process Automation?

Robotic Process Automation is a software technology that limits the human interface of conducting business, enhances work applications, and manages software robots that emulate human action interacting with digital systems and software. RPA is widely used in various industries, including finance, healthcare, and public sector, to improve efficiency, reduce costs, and enhance service delivery. The fascinating thing about RPA is that it can work with existing software and systems without the need for significant changes or integrations, making it a flexible solution for many of these institutions. The gaining traction of RPA in emerging accounting and auditing environment could be ascribed to the efficiency and speed with which RPA application comes with. RPA help emerging auditors to sharpen their data analytic skills for more effective way of auditing in and around software system applications that are widely used by institutions.

Robotic Process Automation (RPA): A Game-Changer for Auditors? Why Should Public Sector Auditors Care About RPA?

Robotic Process Automation (RPA) is emerging as a transformative force that drives efficiency and precision in business performance, particularly in accounting and auditing. Although not yet widely adopted, RPA is poised to become integral to the future of auditing, especially in the public sector. Public sector auditors, therefore, must stay abreast with advancements in data

analytics, as these skills are crucial for leveraging RPA in their work. New technologies are already enhancing auditors' analytical capabilities, and the application of RPA takes this further by enabling auditors to analyze datasets through various advanced techniques. With RPA, auditors can easily identify outliers that require additional examination, improving the depth of both analytical and substantive reviews. Furthermore, RPA minimizes the time wasted on manually accessing datasets from system applications used by public institutions, delivering a higher level of efficiency unattainable through human intervention. The automation of dataset extrapolation for auditing purposes is more accurate with RPA, and the time required to audit system applications is significantly reduced compared to manual processes. RPA also aids auditors in understanding the components of software systems, providing them with efficient access to crucial information and datasets that would otherwise be difficult to retrieve manually.

The fastest way to achieve audit efficiency in system applications is through the use of RPA.

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Tasks such as the extraction, review, and reconciliation of accounting records from system applications can be performed at a much faster rate with RPA compared to human intervention. This is especially important in areas like revenue and expenditure audits, as well as tax audits, where RPA can greatly reduce the time required for these tasks. Public enterprises are increasingly adopting digital innovations, moving away from traditional, mechanical methods of record-keeping. Paper-based payment vouchers, vehicle logbooks, and accounts payable and receivable schedules are rapidly being replaced by system-based records. For auditors to perform thorough and effective audits, they must be proficient in data analytics and the application of RPA, which enables them to produce faster, more precise audit results.

RPA: Revolutionizing Audits, But Not Without Risks – The Pitfalls You Need to Know

While robotic process automation offers undeniable benefits, it also comes with significant challenges. One key issue is that

control and security concerns arise when automated processes are not properly managed, making them vulnerable to cyber threats. Another pitfall is the underestimated cost of RPA. While it may reduce labour expenses, the costs associated with implementation, maintenance, and potential system disruptions are often overlooked. Governance is another complexity—ensuring that automated processes comply with regulatory requirements and internal policies can be daunting. Moreover, automation can lead to a loss of process knowledge among employees as tasks once performed manually become increasingly unfamiliar. Data extraction for audit purposes presents another challenge, particularly with unstructured formats like PDFs, where accuracy and completeness are critical. Lastly, while offshoring simple audit tasks to shared service centers might seem efficient, it can introduce coordination costs, delays, and liability risks. These pitfalls underscore the importance of careful planning and management when integrating RPA into business processes.

Final Thoughts

In recap, let me be quick to add that this write-up is not exhaustive on robotic process application and its application in the field of auditing and accounting but to stir up the attention of public auditors in the emerging development of accounting and auditing. The notion that robotic process automation represents the future of applications in the auditing field is disbanded. The future is today; technology is the new order; it has come to stay, and its application in the human and institutional facet must be welcomed. Public auditors must adapt to this shift to remain effective in environments where accounting system applications are widely used. Looking ahead, auditors equipped with RPA and AI tools will be able to conduct deeper, more insightful audits, focusing on advanced activities like fraud detection, predictive analytics, and strategic advisory services. This evolution will transform the role of auditors, positioning them as trusted advisors rather than simple compliance monitors. Robotic automation is the new dawn!

How to balance work and school - Andrew L. Banou/Director of Audit/Navrongo Audit Office



As an Auditor you have the obligation to effectively work for your employer and also to go back to school to upgrade your career and achieve something greater. You may even have family, a spouse and children to take care of. It might seem impossible to balance all these responsibilities. But it can be done with a little ingenuity; a lot of planning and support of your loved ones. Here are some few tips to help you manage work and school:

Build a support system

Build a strong support system, both professionally and personally. That support system can make or break you. Whether it is your RA, DA, mentor or family member, make sure those around you are on board with your decision to go back to school. Let your RA or DA know you are going to school and you might have tight schedules because of that. Bringing your boss into the conversation early may even result in recognition or a promotion after graduation.

Pursue weekend, evening and online school programmes

Try to pursue weekend schools that have classes during the weekends. You may also

enroll with evening school programmes that have classes in the evening and where possible try to arrange for job schedules that are flexible with your school schedules. Depending on your job, you may pursue online programmes and do your homework on your computer at work during your lunch break. The flexibility of online courses eliminates the stress of scheduling conflicts between work and classes.

Have clear objectives

Research on the degree or professional programme before committing to it. Ensure your chosen programme is among the programmes recognized by your employer and seek for approval to pursue the programme. Establish realistic career goals, plans and expectation for what you will achieve after you have graduated.

Bring school to work and work to school

Do not just think of doing your school assignments and attending to your job, rather think of aligning and applying what you have learnt in the school to your work and this will enrich your mind and advance your career. Stay focused on your work and on your bid to upgrade your career. Let your possible promotion after completing the programme motivate you to work hard for

successful completion of the programme.

Take time to rest and have time for your family

Proactively plan your time as often as you can, to have enough rest and time for your family. Failing to rest may have health implications which may jeopardize the completion of your school programme and work schedules. Also find time to spend with your family so as to fulfill your family responsibilities.

Use a planner

A planner is especially useful if you have a lot of appointments and your days are so varied that you have trouble keeping track of your schedule. Fill in all your fixed appointments - class times, work times, due dates and familiar obligations. This way, you will know exactly when your free time is, so you can schedule studying sessions or leisure time.

Balancing work and school may result in stress, sleeplessness and loss of jobs if not carefully managed, but with dedication to schedules, focus on schedules, hard work and the motivation to get promoted after completion, it is worth to school whilst working as an Auditor.

Auditor's decision to rely on an audited entity's internal controls - Fred Lokko

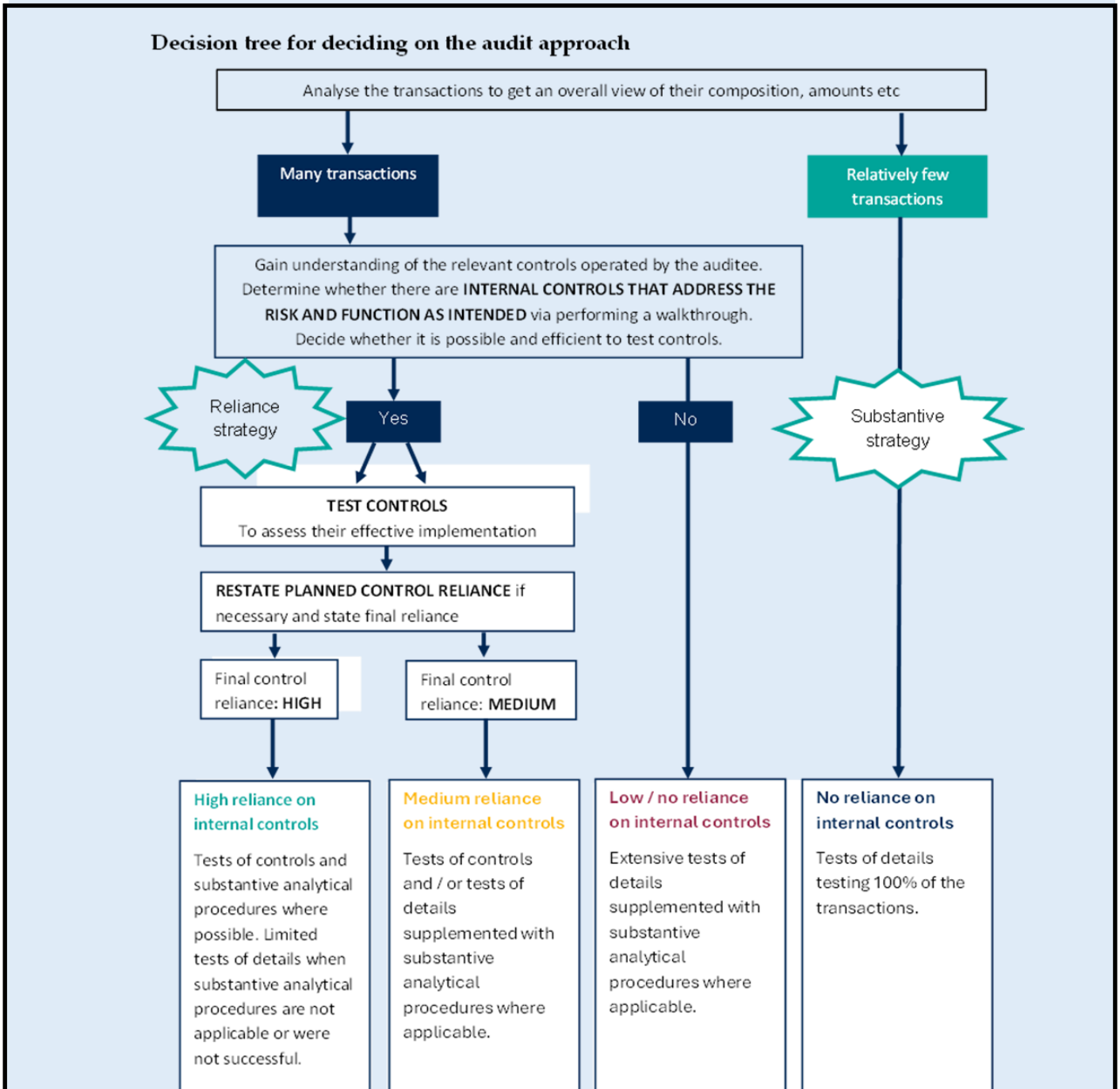


Internal Controls within the context of an audited entity's financial statements preparation and financial audit refers to the mechanisms put in place by the audited entity to mitigate against the risk of material misstatements in its financial statements. During an audit process, the auditor may have

to decide in respect to reliance on the audited entity's internal controls (Reliance strategy) or to proceed without such reliance and rather adopt the use of substantive procedures (Substantive strategy). It is important to note that, the auditor should only consider reliance on the audited entity's internal controls where there are many transactions in relation to identified significant and effectiveness of these class of transactions, account balance and disclosure (COTABD). Reliance on the audited entity's internal controls will potentially reduce the number transactions to be subjected to substantive procedures. The auditor should only rely on the audited entity's internal controls after obtaining assurance on the existence

and effectiveness of these controls through the process of System Description in relation to Significant CO-TABD's, Walkthrough test and Test of controls. The auditor may be guided by the following decision tree.

In the next edition of the Audit Service Newsletter, I will deal with the concept of Materiality in financial audit.



SAI Ghana enhances staff capacity with nationwide Financial Audit Methodology Training

SAI Ghana has successfully completed a nationwide Financial Audit Methodology (FAM) training program, equipping Trainer of Trainers (ToTs) across all sixteen regions with the new FAM as part of the transition from the Regularity Audit Methodology (RAM).

Funded by the PFM Secretariat, the two-week training aimed to enhance audit planning, execution, and reporting under the FAM framework.

It also tackled challenges in applying risk-based auditing techniques while ensuring compliance with regulatory and organizational policies.

The workshop covered key modules such as: Pre-requisite, Pre-engagement activities, including financial framework evaluation, audit queries, and team agreements.

Understanding the Entity, Materiality, Risk assessment and response, emphasizing fraud considerations, internal controls, and governance structures.

Performing audits, incorporating substantive testing, use of experts, and disclosure checklists and Reporting.

Sensitisation on the Audit Management Information System and Learning Management System.

Auditor-General, Mr. Johnson Akuamoah Asiedu emphasized the importance of continuous learning in auditing, stating that confidence stems from knowledge.

He also urged participants to maximize the opportunity for skill enhancement and expressed gratitude to the facilitators and organizers.

Mr. Patrick Neequaye, (Assistant Auditor-General and the PFM Focal Person for the Service), urged staff to view the session as an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the new methodology.

Positive Feedback

Participants praised the training for its practical insights and hands-on approach. They found the hands-on training with the case studies beneficial in understanding the practical application of risk-based auditing. Participants also indicated that the training has reinforced the importance of robust documentation in auditing. Finally, they were optimistic that the application of the methodology will improve their confidence in handling complex audit scenarios.

Recommendations

Participants highlighted areas for improvement to sustain the momentum of the training and ensure long-term success in adopting the FAM:

Recognition Programme: They recommended establishing a system to reward individuals and districts that excel in implementing the FAM.

Access to Reference Materials: They suggested uploading relevant laws and regulations onto the Learning Management System for easy access and reference.

Follow-up Support: Participants emphasized the need for post-training and refresher sessions to reinforce learning and address challenges encountered in implementation.

Pictures from the training



Rising incidence of strokes in young adults

Introduction

Strokes in young adults are of particular significance since this condition results in a greater loss of self-worth and socioeconomic productivity than in older people. Young and middle-aged people may look and feel healthy, and they may believe they are safe from major cardiovascular events. But new research from the American Heart Association shows the rate of stroke has been steadily rising among Americans younger than age 49 for the past 30 years.

Stroke is the fifth leading cause of death in the U.S. and the leading cause of disability around the world. In recent years efforts to control blood pressure, dyslipidemia and diabetes, and address atrial fibrillation (a common heart rhythm abnormality that causes stroke), have resulted in decreased stroke frequency in patients over 65.

While the incidence of stroke is decreasing overall in America, rates among young adults are increasing. Roughly 800,000 Americans suffer strokes each year. While only 15% of strokes occur in those aged 18-50, 120,000 Americans under 50 and 1.5 million young adults worldwide suffer strokes each year. The incidence of stroke in people ages 20-44 has risen from 17 per 100,000 in 1993 to 28 per 100,000 in 2015. The risk to patients in the prime of their lives is considerable.

In Africa, data published in the past decade demonstrates that Africans have a stroke within the fourth to sixth decades of life, which can have serious implications for the individual, their family and society.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSA) reports that nearly 240 people in South Africa will suffer a stroke daily. Of those, 70 may lose their lives and many will never fully recover and will have to learn to live with lasting disabilities. It's important to note that stroke affects not just the patient, but also their loved ones.

Improving patient outcomes is of paramount importance in stroke treatment. This is particularly relevant in a young adult, given the psychological, physical and financial effects – as well as the impact on family and the healthcare system.

Emerging research suggests that this generation of young adults may be uniquely predisposed to stress, burnout, experiencing crime and other traumatic life events, and clinicians and researchers are increasingly concerned about the long-term health effects of chronic exposure.

Stroke is not an old person's disease, even though many people believe that they can't be at risk because they are too young.

What is a stroke

'A stroke occurs when a blood vessel that is carrying oxygen and nutrients to the brain becomes blocked by a clot or ruptures,' explains Dr Karisha Quarrie, Operations Manager, Clinical Directorate at Life Healthcare. 'The affected part of the brain loses functionality, as it cannot get the blood and oxygen it needs.'

There are two types of stroke:

* Ischemic stroke, in which the flow of blood and oxygen is disrupted causing damage to brain tissue. (In older adults, hypertension, cardiac disease, and atherosclerosis of major vessels are major causes.) This represents roughly 85% of strokes in the overall stroke population and 60% of strokes seen in patients under 50. In recent years, studies have found that ischemic stroke in young adults is an increasing problem in both developed and developing countries.

* Hemorrhagic stroke, in which blood leaks out of a vessel into or around the brain causing disruption to underlying brain tissue (caused by hypertension, malformations of cerebral blood vessels) comprises about 15% of all strokes, but 40% of strokes in patients under 50.



Symptoms

Stroke symptoms in young adults are similar to those seen in older adults:

- Sudden onset of weakness, or numbness in the face, arm, or leg
- Sudden change in speech
- Sudden difficulty walking or maintaining balance
- Sudden severe headache
- Sudden change in vision

Stroke risk factors

Some rare conditions can predispose some people to stroke at a young age. But most risk factors for stroke in young adults are similar to those in older adults: high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, and obesity. These conditions are becoming more and more common among younger people. There are also additional "silent" risk factors for stroke in young adults which are:

- Sedentary lifestyle, with too much time working at a desk and not enough time being active

- Substance use, including tobacco, nicotine, alcohol, and illicit drugs
- Stress
- Being overweight or obese
- Unhealthy diet

Stroke prevention

Nobody is destined to have a stroke. You may be at an increased risk due to things like family history and genetics. But treating your other risk factors and taking charge of your health is an effective strategy that can prevent stroke risk from taking hold. Making healthy lifestyle changes can help significantly lower the risk of stroke. Here are some steps that can be taken to prevent stroke:

Blood pressure – keep it within the normal range and monitor closely

Smoking – quit to reduce the risk of clogged arteries, which could lead to ischemic stroke

Blood glucose – keep it within the normal range and get regular tests

Cholesterol – keep it within the normal range and know your numbers

Weight – lose weight, if necessary, and learn to maintain a healthy weight

Activity – get moving. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, 5 days a week

Diet – eat a healthy, balanced diet that includes plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables

Stress – understand your stress triggers and learn to counter stress with calming activities like a nature walk, exercise, connecting with a friend, or doing something fun or creative

Recognizing the signs of stroke in a young person


If a stroke is identified early and you get prompt medical intervention, you are more likely to have a good outcome. It is important for people of all ages to recognize the signs of stroke and know when to get help.

The "B.E. F.A.S.T." method for stroke identification:

- **B**alance: Are you experiencing sudden loss of balance or dizziness?
- **E**yes: Do you have any loss of vision?
- **F**ace: Does your face or your smile look uneven, or is one side of your face drooping?
- **A**rm: Is one arm or leg hanging down, or do you feel weak on one side?
- **S**peech: Are you having trouble speaking, communicating, or understanding others? Is your speech slurred?
- **T**ime to rush to the hospital.

- www.lifehealthcare.co.za
- www.stamfordhealth.org
- www.massgeneralbrigham.org
- www.manipalhospitals.com



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