



**UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL**

**INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

**RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN SELECTED MUNICIPALITIES IN
LIMPOPO PROVINCE OF SOUTH AFRICA.**

By

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the Information Studies Programme, School of Social Sciences, College of
Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa**

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February 2021

DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

The high level of corruption and maladministration, lack of accountability and transparency in municipalities has become endemic and is a cause for concern in many municipalities of South Africa. The ability of any municipality to effectively perform its constitutional duties depends on the availability of relevant and comprehensive information from records. The poor state of records management in the government and public sectors in South Africa is a well-documented phenomenon. In considering poor records management practices in the public sector of South Africa, it is necessary to establish records management practices in municipalities. The purpose of this study was to examine records management practices in selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. The underlying principle of the study was that municipalities in South Africa are mandated by legislation to manage records systematically. The study sought to establish the current records management practices in the municipalities of the Limpopo Province, to establish the level of knowledge that staff members in municipalities have of records management, to identify the activities and strategies used to support records management practices and, finally, to identify the challenges faced by municipal officials in managing records.

The Records Life Cycle and Records Continuum models were adopted in the study. Data were collected from 86 registry clerks using questionnaires and from five municipal managers and six records managers using interviews in the selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province using purposive sampling. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse quantitative data to generate frequency counts, percentages, bar charts and tables while Thematic Content Analysis was used to analyse qualitative data. The ethical protocol of the University of KwaZulu-Natal was adhered to. The findings of the study revealed that paper-based records are the main formats of records created in municipalities in the Limpopo Province. The study further revealed that most of the municipal officials working with records in the selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province do not have formal qualifications in records management. It is evident from the findings of the study that while municipalities have records management policies, their

employees, generally, are uninformed of their existence. The study recommends that records storage facilities in municipalities be improved to ensure that records are kept safe and conveniently accessible. Top management and political office bearers are encouraged to support effective and efficient records management practices in their municipalities. The study contributes to the body of knowledge on records management practices, especially in the context of the Limpopo Province.

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DEDICATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
DEDICATION	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
LIST OF TABLES.....	xxi
LIST OF FIGURES	xxii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xxiii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	1
1.0 Introduction and background of the study.....	1
1.1 Outline of the research problem	5
1.1.1 Research setting	8
1.2 Statement of the problem	10
1.3 Purpose of the study.....	13
1.3.1 Objectives of the study	13
1.3.2 Research questions.....	14
1.4 Definition of key terms.....	14
1.4.1 Records	15
1.4.2 Records-keeping	16
1.4.3 Records management	16
1.4.4 Practice	18
1.4.5 Records management practices	18
1.4.6 Municipality.....	19

1.4.7 Audit outcomes.....	20
1.5 Delimitation of the study	21
1.6 Rationale and significance of the study	21
1.7 Theoretical framework.....	26
1.8 Research methodology.....	27
1.9 Limitations of the study.....	29
1.10 Structure of the study	30
CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	32
2.0 Introduction.....	32
2.1 Overview of records management models	35
2.1.1 The Records Life Cycle Model	39
2.1.1.1 Limitations of the Records Life Cycle Model.....	44
2.1.2 The Records Continuum Model.....	44
2.1.2.1 Limitations of the Records Continuum Model	49
2.1.3 Victorian Electronic Records Strategy Model	49
2.1.4 National Archives of Australia Records Management Model.....	50
2.2 Relevance and contextualisation of the theoretical framework for the study	52
2.3 Summary.....	55
CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW	57
3.0 Introduction.....	57

3.1 The importance of the literature review	58
3.2 The importance of records management in organisations.....	59
3.3 Legislative framework governing records management globally	64
3.4 Legislative framework governing records management in South Africa	66
3.4.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996	67
3.4.2 National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Act (No. 43 of 1996)	68
3.4.3 Limpopo Province Archives Act (No. 5 of 2001)	69
3.4.4 Municipal Finance Management Act (No. 56 of 2003).....	70
3.4.5 The Promotion of Access to Information Act (No. 2 of 2000).....	71
3.5 Records management practices.....	72
3.5.1 Global trends in records management practices	72
3.5.2 Records management practices in Africa	75
3.5.3 Records management practices in South Africa.....	79
3.5.4 Records management practices in municipalities.....	84
3.6 Knowledge of staff about records management practices	89
3.7 Factors that affect the state of records management practices	91
3.7.1 Top management support	93
3.7.2 Perceptions of municipal officials about records management.....	94
3.7.3 Funding for records management programmes	95
3.8 Activities and strategies to support records management practices	96

3.9 Challenges faced by municipal officials in managing records.....	96
3.10 The role of records management in the auditing process.....	99
3.11 Current records management practices in the registry offices of municipalities.....	101
3.12 Summary	103
CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	105
4.0 Introduction.....	105
4.1 Research paradigm	106
4.1.1 Positivism	107
4.1.2 Interpretivism.....	108
4.1.3 Pragmatism	108
4.1.4 Post-positivism	110
4.2 Research approach	111
4.2.1 Qualitative research approach.....	112
4.2.2 Quantitative research approach	113
4.3 Research design	113
4.3.1 Survey	115
4.4 Population and sampling	116
4.4.1 Population	116
4.4.2 Sampling	117
4.5 Data collection methods	118

4.5.1 Data collection instruments	119
4.5.1.1 Questionnaire	119
4.5.1.2 Interviews	121
4.5.2 Pre-testing of data collection instruments.....	123
4.5.2.1 Changes made to the questionnaire.....	124
4.5.2.2 Changes made to the interview schedules	124
4.5.3 Data collection procedures	124
4.6 Data analysis.....	125
4.6.1 Quantitative data	126
4.6.2 Qualitative data	126
4.7 Reliability and validity	127
4.8 Trustworthiness of data	128
4.9 Ethical considerations.....	128
4.10 Summary	130
CHAPTER FIVE: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS	131
5.0 Introduction.....	131
5.1 Response rates	132
5.2 Results of the questionnaire survey of registry officers	133
5.2.1 Demographic profile of registry officers	133
5.2.2 What are the current records management practices in the selected municipalities of the Limpopo Province?	135

5.2.2.1 Records management policy	135
5.2.2.1.1 Awareness of the records management policy	136
5.2.2.1.2 Regular review of the records management policy	137
5.2.2.1.4 Managing records according to the records management policy	138
5.2.2.2 Records creation	139
5.2.2.2.1 Types of records created	139
5.2.2.2.2 Where records are kept after creation	140
5.2.2.2.3 Records creation training.....	141
5.2.2.2.4 Methods used to provide training.....	142
5.2.2.3 Filing of records	143
5.2.2.3.1 Records filing system	143
5.2.2.3.2 Frequency of filing of records	144
5.2.2.4 Storage facilities and maintenance.....	144
5.2.2.4.1 Storing of records	144
5.2.2.4.2 Access to the storage area.....	145
5.2.2.4.3 Control of access to the records storage area.....	146
5.2.2.4.4 Methods used to request files.....	147
5.2.2.4.5 Availability of records when required	147
5.2.2.4.6 Method used to distribute records	148
5.2.2.4.7 Experience missing records	149

5.2.2.4.8 Reasons for the problem of missing records.	149
5.2.2.4.9 Artificial climate control equipment installed in records storage areas	150
5.2.2.4.10 Equipment used to control temperature and relative humidity	150
5.2.2.4.11 Fire detection and suppression system	151
5.2.2.4.12 Availability of a disaster management plan	152
5.2.2.4.13 Pest infestations in the record storage area	153
5.2.2.4.14 Pests that were found in the record storage area	154
5.2.2.4.15 Control of pest infestations in the record storage area	154
5.2.2.5 Disposal of records.....	155
5.2.2.5.1 Records disposal policy.....	155
5.2.2.5.2 Guide in determining which records to destroy.....	156
5.2.2.5.3 Authorisation for the destruction of inactive records	157
5.2.2.5.4 Where records with permanent retention value kept	158
5.2.2.6 Electronic records.....	158
5.2.2.6.1 Types of electronic records created.....	159
5.2.2.6.2 Format of electronic records created	159
5.2.2.6.3 Storage of electronic records.....	160
5.2.2.6.4 Electronic records management.....	161
5.2.3 How knowledgeable are staff in municipalities about records management practices?	162

5.2.3.1 Highest level of education	162
5.2.3.2 Formal qualifications in records management	163
5.2.3.3 In-house training in records management	164
5.2.3.4 Frequency of training in records management	164
5.2.4 What are the activities and strategies that are used to support records management practices?	165
5.2.4.1 Sound records management strategy.....	165
5.2.4.2 Rating of records management practices in the municipality.....	166
5.2.5 What are the factors that affect the current records management practices in municipalities in Limpopo Province?.....	166
5.2.5.1 Factors that contributed to the current records management practices	167
5.2.5.2 Appreciation of the role of records.....	168
5.2.5.3 Relationship between records management and clean audit outcome.	168
5.2.5.4 Value placed on sound records management as key to a clean audit outcome.....	169
5.2.5.5 Support from top management.....	170
5.2.6 What are the challenges faced by municipal officials with respect to the management of records in municipalities in Limpopo Province?	170
5.2.6.1 Challenges faced in managing records	171
5.3 Results of interviews with records managers	172
5.3.1 Demographic profile of the records managers.....	172
5.3.2 Records management practices	174

5.3.2.1 Records creation	174
5.3.2.2 Records maintenance and use	176
5.3.2.3 Records appraisal and disposal	178
5.3.2.4 Records management policy	179
5.3.3 Knowledge of staff about records management practices	180
5.3.4 Factors that affect the current records management practices in municipalities in the Limpopo Province	181
5.3.5 Activities and strategies used to support records management practices	183
5.3.6 Records management challenges	184
5.4 Results of the interviews with municipal managers	185
5.4.1 Demographic profile of the municipal managers	185
5.4.2 Records management practices	186
5.4.3 Knowledge of staff about records management practices	187
5.4.4 Factors that affect the current records management practices in municipalities in the Limpopo Province	188
5.4.5 Activities and strategies used to support records management practices	189
5.4.6 Challenges faced with the management of records.....	190
5.5 Summary	191
CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS	191
6.0 Introduction.....	191
6.1 Demographic profiles.....	192

6.2 What are the current records management practices in municipalities in the Limpopo Province?.....	194
6.2.1 Records management policy	195
6.2.2 Records creation	199
6.2.3 Records filing.....	200
6.2.4 Records storage facilities	202
6.2.4.1 Storage facilities	202
6.2.4.2 Security of records.....	203
6.2.4.3 Methods used to request records	204
6.2.4.4 Method of delivery and distribution of records	205
6.2.4.5 Overall responsibility for records management	205
6.2.5 Records maintenance and use.....	206
6.2.5.1 File plans	206
6.2.5.2 Artificial climatic control equipment in the records storage areas	206
6.2.5.3 Fire detection and suppression system	207
6.2.5.4 Availability of a disaster management plan	208
6.2.5.5 Pest infestations in the record storage area	209
6.2.5.6 Control of pest infestations	209
6.2.6 Appraisal and disposal	210
6.2.6.1 Appraisal	211
6.2.6.2 Disposal.....	211

6.2.7 Electronic records as guided by the Records Continuum Model	213
6.2.7.1 Types of electronic records created.....	213
6.2.7.2 Formats of electronic records created	214
6.2.7.3 Storage of electronic records.....	215
6.2.7.4 Electronic records management policy.....	215
6.3.1 Level of education	217
6.3.2 Formal qualification in records management.....	218
6.3.3 In-house training in records management	219
6.4 What activities and strategies are used to support records management practices?	221
6.4.1 Budgeting and human resources.....	221
6.4.2 Support from top management.....	222
6.4.3 Records audit	223
6.4.4 Strategies to support records management.....	224
6.4.5 Sound records management strategies.....	224
6.4.6 Municipal strategic plan	224
6.5 What are the factors that affect the current records management practices in municipalities in the Limpopo Province?.....	225
6.5.1 Rating of the current records management practices in the municipality. 225	
6.5.2 Factors affecting the current records management practices.....	226
6.5.3 Appreciation of the role of records.....	228

6.5.4 Relationship between records management and clean audit outcomes..	229
6.6 What challenges are municipal officials facing in the management of records in municipalities?	229
6.7 Summary	233
CHAPTER SEVEN: MAIN FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	235
7.0 Introduction.....	235
7.1 Main findings	235
7.1.1 The current records management practices in municipalities in the Limpopo Province	235
7.1.2 Knowledge of staff in municipalities about records management practices	240
7.1.3 Activities and strategies used to support records management practices	241
7.1.4 Factors that affect the current records management practices.....	243
7.1.5 Challenges faced by municipal officials in managing records.....	246
7.2 Contribution of the study to the body of knowledge	246
7.3 Conclusions and summary of findings	249
7.4 Suggestions for future research	251
7.5 Recommendations	252
7.5.1 Records storage facilities	253
7.5.2 Fire detection and suppression system	253
7.5.3 Qualifications in records management	253

7.5.4 In-house training in records management	254
7.5.5 Top management and political office bearers' support and buy-in	254
7.5.6 Auditing of records management programmes.....	255
7.5.7 Records management policy awareness.....	255
7.5.8 Review of records management policy.....	256
REFERENCES	257
APPENDICES	295
Appendix 1: Request for permission to undertake research.....	295
Appendix 2: Letter of Introduction: Thabazimbi Municipality.....	296
Appendix 3: Letter of Introduction: Vhembe District Municipality.....	297
Appendix 4: Letter of Introduction: Tubatse/Fetakgomo Municipality	298
Appendix 5: Letter of Introduction: Ephraim Mogale Municipality	299
Appendix 6: Letter of Introduction: Mopani District Municipality	300
Appendix 7: Letter of Introduction: Mogalakwena Municipality	301
Appendix 8: Approval to conduct research from SALGA.....	302
Appendix 9: Ethical Clearance letter	303
Appendix 10: Questionnaire for registry clerks.....	304
Appendix 11: Interview schedule for Records Managers	318
Appendix 12: Interview schedule for Municipal Managers.....	322
Appendix 13: Consent form.....	329
Appendix 14: Letter from the editor	332

LIST OF TABLES

Table 5.1: Demographic data	133
Table 5.2: Methods used to provide training.....	142
Table 5.3: Reasons for the problem of missing records.....	150
Table 5.4: Types of electronic records created	159
Table 5.5 Format of electronic records created	160
Table 5.6: Electronic records management	161
Table 5.7: Demographic profile of the records managers n=6	173

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Names and geographical location of Limpopo municipalities.	9
Figure 2.1: Records Life Cycle	41
Figure 2.2: The Records Continuum Model.	47
Figure 5.1: Records management policy	136
Figure 5.2: Awareness of records management policy	137
Figure 5.3: Regular review of records management policy	138
Figure 5.4: Managing records according to the records management policy	139
Figure 5.5: Types of records created	140
Figure 5.7: Records creation training	142
Figure 5.8: Records filing system	143
Figure 5.9: Frequency of filing of records	144
Figure 5.10: Storing of records	145
Figure 5.11: Access to the records storage areas	146
Figure 5.12: Control of the access to records storage areas	146
Figure 5.13: Methods used to request files	147
Figure 5.14: Availability of records when required	148
Figure 5.15: Method used to distribute records	149
Figure 5.16: Experience of missing records	149
Figure 5.17: Equipment used to control temperature and relative humidity	151
Figure 5.18: Availability of fire detection and suppression system	152
Figure 5.19: Availability of disaster management plan n=86	153
Figure 5.20: Pest infestations experienced in the record storage area	154
Figure 5.21: Pests that were found in record storage area	154
Figure 5.22: Control of pest infestations in the record storage area	155
Figure 5.23: Records disposal policy	156
Figure 5.24: Guide in determining which records to destroy	157
Figure 5.25: Authorisation for the destruction of inactive records	158
Figure 5.26: Where records with permanent retention value kept	158
Figure 5.27: Storage of electronic records	161
Figure 5.28: Highest level of education	163
Figure 5.29: Formal qualification in records management	164
Figure 5.30: In-house training in records management	164
Figure 5.31: Frequency of training in records management	165
Figure 5.32: Rating of records management practices in the municipality	166
Figure 5.33: Factors contributing to the current records management practices .	167
Figure 5.34: Appreciation of the role of records	168
Figure 5.35: Relationship between records management and clean audit outcome	169
Figure 5.36: Value of sound records management as key to a clean audit outcome	170

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADM	: Amathole District Municipality
AG	: Auditor-General
AGSA	: Auditor General of South Africa
CoGSTA	: Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs
DAC	: Department of Arts and Culture
ESARBICA	: East and Southern African Regional Branch of International Council on Archives
ICA	: International Council on Archives
ICTs	: Information and Communication Technologies
IDP	: Integrated Development Plan
IFAC	: International Federation of Accountants
IMF	: International Monetary Fund
IPM	: Integrated Pest Management
ISO	: International Organization for Standardization
IRMT	: International Records Management Trust
MASP	: Municipal Audit Support Program.
MFMA	: Municipal Finance Management Act
NARSSA	: National Archives and Records Service of SA
PAIA	: Promotion of Access to Information Act
SAICA	: South African Institute of Chartered Accountants
SALGA	: South African Local Government Association
SASA	: South African Society of Archivists
SPSS	: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TVET	: Technical and Vocational Education and Training
VERS	: Victorian Electronic Records Strategy
UKZN	: University of KwaZulu-Natal
UL	: University of Limpopo
UN	: United Nations
USA	: United States of America

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.0 Introduction and background of the study

The purpose of this study was to examine records management practices in selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province, South Africa. The first underlying principle of the study is that government departments and municipalities in South Africa are obliged by legislation and regulations to implement an organised approach when managing public records. The second underlying principle of the study is the Auditor General's (AG) expressions of concern over poor records management practices of municipalities in the Limpopo Province which had caused audit outcomes to regress. Ngoepe (2012:1) established that "one of the contributing factors to the perilous financial state is often cited in the media as a lack of proper record-keeping, which causes monumental embarrassment to the affected governmental bodies". In acknowledging the benefits of sound records management practices in government, the South African parliament established the National Archives and Records Services (NARSSA) Act (Act No 43) of 1996 to regulate records management functions in government entities. While much research has been undertaken on the records management practices in private organisations and government departments in particular, it is not known how records are managed in the municipalities of South Africa.

According to Ngoepe and Ngulube (2014:135), "there is consensus among researchers that proper records management plays a significant role in the auditing process". Similarly, Marshall (2006:1) reports that "records management provides one platform in which government officials can be held liable for their actions". In view of the above, this study sought to unveil these issues by establishing what the current records management practices in municipalities of the Limpopo Province were. The study also unveiled the challenges that are faced by municipalities in managing records. At the time of Ngoepe's (2012:190) study, it was discovered that "records management functions in most governmental bodies were teetering on the brink of collapse and were on a life support machine as they were unable to contribute positively to the auditing process".

The current study also took note of the recent outrage that the South African society faced in the form of violent service delivery protests. In this regard, Ngoepe (2012:193) further discovered that “municipalities in South Africa are continuing to receive disclaimer opinions which contribute to many service delivery uprisings in municipalities”. In support of this, the AGSA 2014-2015 Audit Report on South African municipalities revealed that the audit outcomes in Limpopo were unsatisfactory. Lack of clean audit outcomes in the province was due to weak government leadership and accountability and, more relevant to this study, due to poor records management. In terms of the latter, the AGSA identified records-keeping as the main cause of the poor audit outcomes of the municipalities. This underscores the fact that since records document the business operations of the municipalities, they serve as significant evidence which auditors need in order to give an opinion.

The AGSA also encouraged politicians in provinces to re-emphasise the value of noble governance in all municipalities as the main factor to build a conducive atmosphere for improved delivery of services, and continued good record-keeping practices. Poor records management practices also lead to increased audit risks, affect the whole accounting process and make it difficult for municipalities to get clean audits. For municipalities to increase their chances of getting clean audits, it is essential that they ensure effective records management. Furthermore, the ability of any government entity or organisation to effectively perform its duties depends on the accessibility of relevant and comprehensive information. Hence, it is important for municipalities to ensure that their current records management practices provide them with a basis on which to perform their duties effectively.

The huge level of corruption and maladministration and the absence of accountability and transparency have become endemic, and are a cause for concern in many municipalities in the country. Driven by the growing need for effective administration, improved audit reports, accelerated service deliveries, the upholding of democracy and law and order, municipalities in South Africa are beginning to realise the importance of records management. Increasingly, there has been mounting criticism about poor services delivery in many municipalities. These disastrous trends cannot

be overlooked since they affect the lives of the underprivileged and the population at large. The researcher agrees with Williams (2006:1) who asserted that “records are indispensable for the efficient, transparent, and accountable management of organisations but are often under-valued, ignored or misunderstood”. Ngulube and Tafor (2006:57) observed that “public records and archives contain information which is the cornerstone of holding government accountable and fostering good governance”.

Through their daily activities, municipalities create large volumes of records. This is confirmed by Blunt (1995:7), who opined that “government entities are the largest records generating entity in many African states”. All the records created by municipalities must be properly managed and preserved for future use. However, Venter (2004:1) established that “record-keeping in government departments including municipalities has declined to the point where it is seriously hampering the conduct of government business and undermining basic accountability to the public”. Despite the important role played by records management in ensuring clean audits, accountability and good governance, there is consensus among researchers that government departments and municipalities do not pay adequate attention to the management and care of records (Sejane, 2004; Ngoepe and Van der Walt, 2010; Munetsi, 2011; Cheterera, 2013). However, it is clear that municipalities have no option but to improve on their current records management practices. Before that can happen, one needs to establish the current records management practices, which was the focus of this study. Wamukoya and Mutula (2005) argued that ineffective records management can result in information cracks that cause insufficient records and the loss of organisational memory. The need for all institutions, including municipalities, to keep proper records cannot be overemphasised.

Communities often express their unhappiness and frustration with poor service delivery, maladministration and corruption through protests which have been occurring regularly across the country. The number of community service delivery protests in South Africa is increasing every year. According to Municipal IQ (2016), the rise in the number of such protests is worrisome. Municipal IQ (2016) reported

that for the first four months of 2016 (up until April 30), 70 service delivery protests were reported in SA. The Municipal IQ further indicated that “if the rate of service delivery protests continues at the same rate for the rest of the year, it would reach a record peak of 210, compared with 164 in 2015 and 191 (the highest so far) in 2014”. In further analysis, it has become obvious that the huge number of protests in the country is a clear indication that municipalities have failed to provide communities access to basic services. Ondari-Okemwa and Smith (2009) stated that South Africa has encountered a surge in service delivery demonstrations, prompted by a growing demand for accountability and openness about the use of public funds and the detection of anti-competitive behaviour. However, Mamokhere (2019) believed that lack of access to information is also a contributing factor behind service delivery protests within Greater Tzaneen Local Municipality areas. The prosperity of any municipality largely relies on the basic services provided to its local communities.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), states that public administrators must be efficient and accountable to the citizens. The World Bank (2000) also argues that record management is an essential responsibility of public administration without which there can never be transparency and accountability. Lusuli and Rotich (2014) stated that “records management plays a crucial role in the operations of any organisation since it enhances transparency and accountability, which is mostly lacking in public entities”. It should be kept in mind, as observed by the researcher, that record-keeping problems are common in the majority of municipalities in the Limpopo Province, which was the focus of this study. In a nutshell, the daily operations of the municipalities depend on the availability of accurate, authentic and reliable information presented timeously, hence the need to maintain an effective and efficient record-keeping system.

It is thus important for municipal officials to ensure proper records management for the purposes of accountability and transparency. According to Ngoepe and Ngulube (2014:136), “the significance of quality records management for auditing purposes in the public and private entities cannot be overemphasised”. Furthermore, the World Bank Report (2000) noted that “record-keeping is a fundamental activity of public administration without which there can be no rule of law and accountability”.

Introduction and background of the study and outline of the research problem are discussed in this chapter. The chapter also provides the research objectives, research questions and theoretical framework underpinning the study and a preliminary review of related literature. It further presents the research methods used, the rationale, significance and delimitation of the study. Furthermore, definitions of key terms linked to the study are presented as well as the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Outline of the research problem

This section provides the basis of the study by presenting the outline of the research problem. As emphasised above, records are an important asset in making sure that organisations are appropriately governed and held answerable. However, records management is not an isolated concept. Information and knowledge are vital assets for all organisations. Information is drawn from records, and knowledge is modelled from the information. Without proper records management, it is difficult for officials to make information available for decision-making purposes and to generate knowledge. Also, as emphasised, poor records management leads to increased audit risks, affects the whole accounting process and makes it difficult for municipalities to get clean audits. Put in the words of Ngoepe (2014:1), one of the contributing factors to the perilous financial state is often cited in the media as a lack of proper record-keeping, which causes monumental embarrassment to the affected governmental bodies. It is worth noting that municipalities are aware of the fact that in order to increase the likelihood of getting clean audits, they need to improve their record-keeping practices.

South Africa has a three-sphere type of government which entails national, provincial, district and local government levels. Local government in South Africa consists of local and district municipalities. This is the sphere of government that is nearest to the people, and is not only concerned with service delivery but is also the cornerstone of service delivery. The primary responsibility of municipalities in South Africa is to ensure that their residents receive basic services to the level of their satisfaction. However, some municipalities fail to provide effective and efficient services due to various reasons, particularly poor records management. The AGSA's

(2015) report has also expressed concern over the “rot” in municipalities in Limpopo, which has caused audit outcomes to regress in the province. The lack of clean audits in the province is due to weak government leadership and accountability, and poor records management. Records management is vital in ensuring the proper management of organisations, particularly in the public sector where officials must be accountable and transparent to the citizenry. Mnjama (2004) stated that sound records management plays a crucial role in fighting corruption by facilitating smooth investigation and providing evidence of transactions. This is echoed by Ngoepe (2016:340), who reported that “government records are not only key instruments in fighting corruption, improving efficient administration and planning, but are also the means by which citizens hold government officials accountable”.

Numerous studies have been undertaken on records management practices in organisations, including those in the public sector (Chinyemba, 2003; Nycyk, 2008; Coetzer, 2012; Kalusopa, 2012; Mutero, 2014; Marutha, 2016; Molepo and Cloete, 2017). However, as stated previously, the literature on records management practices indicates that these practices have not been given much, if any, attention in municipalities. In terms of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), the aim of the local government is to provide basic services to communities. Furthermore, the Constitution also stresses that all levels of government must provide effective services. Sound records management ensures that municipalities can document basic services and promote transparency and accountability. However, despite the legislation, many municipalities in the country have neglected records management as one of their strategic objectives. Thus, while there is increased recognition of the vital role that records management plays in promoting accountability, transparency and good governance in the public sector, there are challenges that have hindered records management practices. While the study will place the spotlight on municipalities, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the records management challenge is not necessarily confined to municipalities.

According to Ngoepe and van der Walt (2010), challenges faced in records-keeping in public entities include poor planning for records management and the absence of records management toolkits. The National Archives of Australia (2004) highlighted

that sound record-keeping is important to the business of governments and promotes accountability and transparency. However, Orayo (2013: iii) noted that “the management of records poses great challenges to many organisations and government departments all over the world”. Orayo (2013: iii) further stated that “the efficient management of records has tremendous and great potential for making work easy, enhancing working relations, improving the corporate image as well as increasing productivity, besides enhancing efficiency and effectiveness”.

Ngoepe (2013) emphasised that good records management is the basis of the government in its provision of services to accomplish its commitments for accountability to its inhabitants and to protect their (the inhabitants) privileges. Unfortunately, this appears to not be the case in South African municipalities as Nevhutalu (2016) held the view that records management in municipalities of South Africa is in a very bad state and this makes it difficult for the AGSA to conduct auditing. Nevhutalu (2016) further perceived that records management is not reflected as one of the strategic objectives in most municipalities. It is obvious from the above that although records management plays a significant role in municipalities, it is not given the attention it deserves. Abuki (2014), for example, noted that sound records management promotes good public services in many ways, including regulatory compliance, curbing graft, minimising risks of litigation and promoting accountability. To stress the significance of records management, Cox and Wallace (2002) asserted that transparency and accountability cannot be achieved without sound records management. To corroborate this view, Lusuli and Rotich (2014) argued that improper records management practices weaken accountability and transparency, and open the doors to corruption or collusion.

While the current study draws from a wealth of literature in “the field of records management in the public sector, less research has been conducted in the municipal context”. Subsequently, the outcome of this study will be particularly beneficial for records management practices in municipalities. Therefore, this study sought to establish the current records management practices in the municipalities of the Limpopo Province. Moreover, the large amount of violent and destructive service delivery protests in the country is a cause for concern and a disturbing development.

Every effort should be made to investigate the causes of these protests and in view of the demonstrated connection between records management and improved services delivery, this study could be seen as one such effort.

1.1.1 Research setting

The setting of the research involved municipalities in South Africa based in the Limpopo Province. Previously known as Northern Province, the Limpopo Province is found in the northern part of South Africa, and borders on Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Botswana. The province is named after the Limpopo River that streams along its northern border. The province is characterised by municipalities that are considered to be rural settlement patterns, with enormous backlogs in basic services and poor infrastructure. According to the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) (2016), Limpopo Province has a total of 27 municipalities: five district municipalities, namely, Capricorn, Sekhukhune, Mopani, Vhembe and Waterberg; and 22 local municipalities, namely, Blouberg, Lepelle-Nkumpi, Molemole, Polokwane, Ba-Phalaborwa, Greater Giyani, Greater Letaba, Greater Tzaneen, Maruleng, Elias Motsoaledi, Ephraim Mogale, Fetakgomo/Greater Tubatse, Makhuduthamaga, Collins Chabane, Makhado, Musina, Thulamela, Bela-Bela, Lephalale, Modimolle-Mookgophong, Mogalakwena and Thabazimbi. (Figure 1.1)

The Structures Act (1998) makes provision for the “division of powers and functions between district and local municipalities”. The Act assigns “district-wide functions to district municipalities and most day-to-day service delivery functions to local municipalities, which are responsible for the provision of basic services to communities”. District municipalities are made up of a number of local municipalities that fall under each district. According to the Education and Training Unit (2015), local municipalities are directly authorised by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa to render basic municipal services within their areas of jurisdiction and to ensure sustainability of such services like water and sanitation, waste management, electricity reticulation, sanitation, roads, storm-water drainage, land use planning and control, and transport planning. The Constitution outlines the role of district municipalities as being responsible for the redistribution of resources within

a district according to need, assisting and capacitating local municipalities to enable them to provide basic services in their demarcated municipality, and to promote economic development in the district. It must be noted that in the current study, both local and district municipalities in Limpopo comprised the population from which the sample was selected.

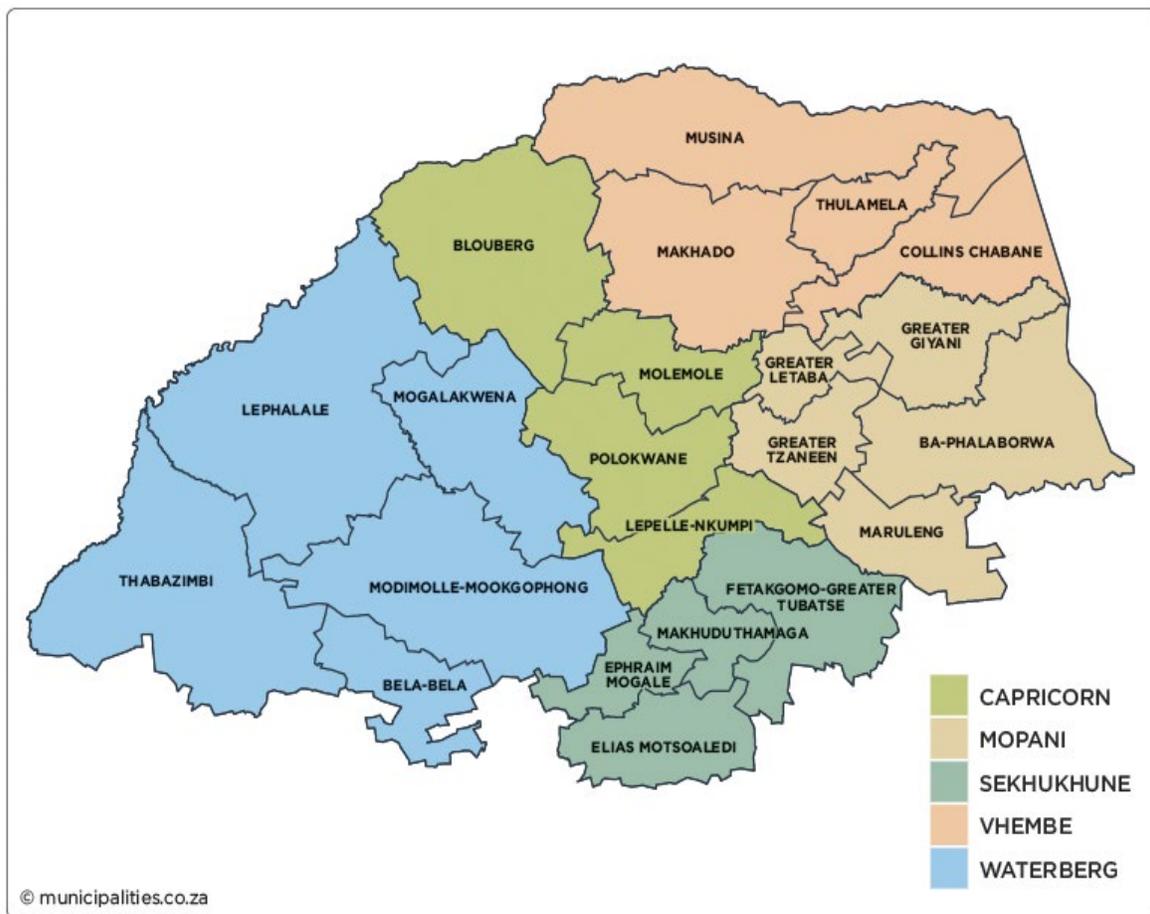


Figure 1.1: Names and geographical location of Limpopo municipalities.

(Source: Municipalities South Africa, 2017)

1.2 Statement of the problem

Despite the importance of records management in improving audit outcomes in municipalities, it seems that records management practices in South Africa municipalities are poor. The AGSA (2016) annual audit reports affirmed that municipalities are essentially struggling with records management. Masegare and Ngoepe (2018) proffer that poor corporate governance in municipalities has resulted in negative outcomes such as the local government's loss of credibility in the eyes of the communities it serves, investors' minimal interest in financing municipalities, service delivery protests, maladministration and unexpected changes of leadership in municipalities without succession plans in South Africa. Numerous municipalities in the Limpopo Province, i.e. Modimolle, Mogalakwena, Elias Motsoaledi, Ephraim Mogale and Makhuduthamaga are not performing as expected because of a host of problems, one of which is poor records management practices. Poor records management virtually contribute to poor audit outcomes. Ngoepe (2012) found that where it concerns the audits of records management functions, an audit can only be conducted if government bodies have proper records in place to support the financial statements that have been compiled, to begin with. In this sense, this study regards records management as a powerful tool to improve audit outcomes, fight against corruption and maladministration, and ensure accountability and transparency in municipalities. The premise of the study is that good records management leads to accountability and good governance.

Records management occupies a strategic position in the effective and efficient management of organisations, particularly in the public sector where officials have to be accountable and transparent to the citizenry. As with all government departments, records (both paper and electronic) that are created and received in municipalities have increased significantly over the years, and these municipalities stand the risk of losing their heritage if records are not well managed. Yet, in many municipalities around the country, records management systems are unable to cope with the growing mass of newly produced records. This is despite the increased recognition of the important role that records management can play in improving audit outcomes, promoting accountability, transparency and good governance in the

public sector. If this challenge is not dealt with, service delivery protests are likely to continue as will the lack of accountability, neglect of the rule of law and more corruption on the part of municipalities. Efficient records management is essential to protect the rule of law and to demonstrate equal treatment of communities.

South Africa has developed legislation and policies that guide public and private institutions, including municipalities, in the management of records. Despite this, there appears to be ignorance of the management of records in municipalities (Makhura, 2001; Kanzi, 2010; Nevhutalu, 2016). It is further revealed that records management practices in municipalities have been neglected. From the literature reviewed, globally and in South Africa, there seems to be a limited focus on records management practices in municipalities. Despite the importance of sound records management practices in achieving clean audits in South African municipalities, it is evident that municipalities are failing to implement such practices. Sound records management is important for accountability and transparency and to protect law and order within the communities. Within the context of good governance and accountability, there is the covenant that good record-keeping plays a prominent role in fighting corruption and maladministration in municipalities.

Corruption costs the public sector large amounts of money every year. According to Corruption Watch (2019), South Africa has lost R700 billions of public money to corruption since the advent of democracy in 1994. Communities often express their unhappiness and frustration with poor service delivery, maladministration and corruption through protests which, as mentioned, have been occurring regularly and increasingly across the country. Municipal IQ (2016) reported that for the first four months of 2016 (up until April 30), 70 service delivery protests were reported in South Africa. Furthermore, Municipal IQ (2016) indicated that the number of municipalities in financial distress had increased from 95 in 2012/13, to 125 in 2015/16, which was almost half of all the municipalities in the country. Mamokhere (2019) believed that the lack of access to information on the part of community members is a contributing factor behind service delivery protests against municipalities. According to Mdlongwa (2014), in many municipalities, corruption and maladministration have become endemic, and the lack of accountability and/or transparency in rendering services to

the people are a cause of service delivery protests. Mamokhere (2019) shared the same sentiment, pointing out that municipalities in South Africa have been seriously criticised for their poor administration which results in poor service delivery to the public.

The benefits of sound records management in enhancing service delivery, accountability and transparency cannot be overemphasised. The inability to comply with existing records management policies and procedures has resulted in ineffective and inefficient records management practices in the municipalities of South Africa. Given this, the study sought to establish the records management practices in the municipalities of Limpopo Province. As Venter (2004:1) attested “despite the numerous benefits brought by effective records management, record-keeping in the public sector has diminished to the point where it is seriously hindering the conduct of municipal administration, government business, and undermining basic accountability to the public”. For example, in acknowledging the importance of sound records management practices in the public sector, the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa passed the National Archives and Records Services Act No 43 of 1996 to regulate records management functions in government bodies. If municipalities fail to manage records properly, society will continue to witness numerous service delivery protests, lack of accountability and the rule of law, and more corruption. The purpose of the study was, therefore, to investigate records management practices in the municipalities of the Limpopo Province and to understand the sources and origins of the challenges faced with the intention of assisting municipalities in improving their practices. As a lecturer in the Programme of Information Studies at the University of Limpopo, the researcher has a keen interest in this topic and a desire to see municipalities improve their records management practices.

As alluded to above, South African government departments and municipalities are obliged by legislation to adopt and manage their records. Despite this, it appears that most municipalities in SA have failed to manage their records in accordance with the legislation. According to the AGSA (2014), a serious consequence of not having proper records and information management practices in municipalities is that some

municipalities do not submit their financial statements for audit purposes. More recently, the 2017/2018 AGSA report on local government audit outcomes, revealed that not a single municipality in the Free State, Limpopo and the North West provinces received a clean audit in 2018 and only 18 out of 257 of South Africa's municipalities obtained clean audits.

Makwetu (2019) stated that irregular expenditure among municipalities amounted to R25 billion. Without sound records management practices, it becomes impossible to retrieve records for informed decision-making. This is in agreement with the National Archives and Records Management Policy Manual of 2007, which confirms that proper management of records is important for good governance and administration. The manual states that the level of service that government departments deliver to their community is determined by "how well they can create, store, retrieve, use and manage relevant information in order to make informed decisions in pursuit of their business objectives" (NARSSA, 2007).

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine the current records management practices in selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province, South Africa. This was motivated by the concern that municipalities in South Africa are faced with the challenge of improving and promoting sound records management practices to deliver on their constitutional and legislative mandate. In order to achieve the purpose, a comprehensive literature review was conducted and, most importantly, various objectives were put forward.

1.3.1 Objectives of the study

The study sought to address the following objectives:

- a) To determine the current records management practices in selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province.
- b) To establish the level of knowledge about records management among staff in the municipalities.
- c) To establish the factors that contribute to the current records management practices in the municipalities.

- d) To identify the activities and strategies used to support records management practices in the municipalities.
- e) To identify the challenges faced by municipal officials in managing records.

1.3.2 Research questions

As stated by Alvesson and Sandberg (2013:128), “constructing and formulating research questions is one of the most important aspects of all research”. The authors also observed that regardless of their origin, research questions are never constructed and formulated in isolation, but always within the broader scientific fields and theoretical framework. In line with the purpose of the study, which was to investigate records management practices in selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province, the study attempted to answer the following questions:

- a) What are the current records management practices in selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province?
- b) How knowledgeable are staff members in the municipalities about records management practices?
- c) What are the factors that affect the current records management practices in the municipalities of the Limpopo Province?
- d) What activities and strategies are used to support records management practices?
- e) What challenges are municipal officials facing in the management of records in the municipalities?

1.4 Definition of key terms

In order to acquire and offer an overall understanding of the records management practices in municipalities, it is necessary to define various key terms that this study made use of so as to enhance the readers’ understanding of their meaning and to avoid confusion. This section provides the definitions of these terms as they were used in the context of the study. One of the most important reasons for the inclusion of a definition section in a study is to establish clear, precise and effective definitions of significant terms utilised. A second reason is to clarify the context in which the

terms are used in a study. Furthermore, the definition of key terms may remove any possible misunderstanding and ensure that the researcher and the readers have the same understanding of the terms used. The terms defined below are records, records management, practice, records management practices, municipalities and audit outcomes.

1.4.1 Records

Before providing clarification of the concept 'records management', the concept "record" needs to be fully defined. According to the IRMT (2009:22), a record can be defined "as a document, regardless of form or medium, created, received, maintained and used by an organisation (public or private), or an individual, in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business, of which it forms a part or provides evidence". The National Archives and Records Administration of the United States of America (USA) (2004), defines a record "as information regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by an agency in connection with the transaction of public business and preserved by the agency, or legitimate successor, as evidence of the organisation or other activities, or because of the information value". Records can also be defined as recorded information in either physical or electronic format created, received and processed by an organisation during its course of conducting business. For the purpose of this study, records were referred to as recorded information in either a physical or an electronic format created, received and processed by the institution throughout the course of conducting its business. According to ISO 15489-1 (2001:7), records should reflect the following:

- *Authenticity* – records must remain in the same condition as when created or received. To ensure the authenticity of records, any organisation should create policies, implement those policies and follow procedures that will standardise records creation, receipt, transmission, maintenance and disposal.
- *Integrity* – records must be complete and without any change. Any change on the record must be guided by the policies and procedures on the type of addition or annotation to be done on a created record. The guidance should

entail a detailed procedural process such as who is authorised to make changes, under what circumstances and these changes should be traceable.

- *Usability* – records must be traced, retrievable and understandable for their effective organisational use. The records should be able to represent the cause, context and content of their existence. They should have information that provides understanding of the what, when and how of the activities that led to their creation.

1.4.2 Records-keeping

According to Yusof and Chell (1999), record-keeping involves making and maintaining complete, accurate and reliable evidence of business transactions in the form of recorded information. For the purpose of this study, record-keeping is defined as the process of creating, capturing, organising and maintaining the records of an individual or organisation. The process of record-keeping is aided by the professional task of records management, which will be defined in the next section.

1.4.3 Records management

According to the NARSSA (2009), “records management can be defined as the management of information resources that makes information easily accessible, securely protected and stored, and correctly disposed of when necessary”. For the purpose of this study, this records management definition of the NARSSA was adopted. The University of Melbourne (2001) describes records management as the process that requires that data be “captured and maintained using accurate, complete, reliable and useable documentation of activities of an organisation in order to meet legal, evidential, accountability and social/cultural requirements”. Ngulube (2000:164) sees records management as “the process by which internally or externally generated physical or electronic records are managed from their inception, receipt and storage, all the way through to their disposal and archiving”. Records management is defined by Pearce-Moses (2005) as “the systematic and administrative control of records throughout their life cycle to ensure efficiency and economy in their creation, use, handling, control, maintenance, and disposition.

Another definition of records management, as presented by Williams (2015:38), is that it is a “specialised discipline that is concerned with the systematic analysis and control of information created, received, maintained, or used by an organization pursuant to its mission, operations, and activities”. A further definition is provided by Mutoni, Chege and Ng’eno (2017:516) from the perspective of the public sector. The authors refer to records management as “the application of systematic control of all recorded information in an organisation, which entails designing and directing a programme aimed at achieving economy and efficiency in the creation, use, maintenance and disposal of records”. Finally, records management can also be defined as a “field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records, including methods for capturing and preserving proof of, and information about business happenings and dealings in the form of records” (ISO 15489-12001).

In some countries, the term “record-keeping” is used instead of “records management”. For example, a study in Nigeria by Abdul-Rahamon and Adejare (2014) defined record-keeping as the identification, classification, storing, safekeeping, receipt, sharing, preservation and disposal of records. Millar (2003) from Canada, also used the concept “record-keeping” instead of “records management”. According to Millar (2003:3), “the process of record-keeping is aided by the professional task of records management, which can be defined as a consistent and coherent process of managing records from the time of their creation (and before, through the design of record-keeping systems) through to the preservation and use of records for operational purposes and as publicly accessible archives”. It is for these reasons that the current study used the terms ‘records management’ and ‘record-keeping’ interchangeably.

The central theme in all the definitions given above is that records management involves the systematic control and management of records from when they are created, received, used and maintained up to the final stage when they are disposed of. Consequently, these created records should remain authentic through all the stages of the retention period. As noted above, the records management definition of the NARSSA was used for the purpose of this study. In terms of this definition,

records management is defined as “the management of information resources that makes information easily accessible, securely protected and stored, and correctly disposed of when necessary”. According to the NARSSA, “sound records management ensures that all the records that municipalities created in the conduct of their official business are, and remain, authoritative and authentic”. For this reason, (amongst others), municipalities must ensure the sound management of their records. It must be emphasised that rigorous records management is central to good governance and proper government.

1.4.4 Practice

According to Cambridge English Dictionary (2018), practice is defined as a method, procedure, process, or rule used in a particular field or profession; a set of these are regarded as a standard. For the purpose of this study, practices will refer to the procedure and process to be followed, particularly when records are managed or kept in the selected municipalities.

1.4.5 Records management practices

In simple terms, records management practices entail a combination of all the processes and procedures to be followed when managing and/or keeping records. For the purpose of this study, records management practice is defined 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 and procedures to be followed when capturing and maintaining the evidence of, and records about, business activities and transactions. Records management practices are an important function in any organisation as they ensure that records are systematically managed. In an era where accountability and transparency are mandatory in public services, effective records management tends to be overlooked. Hence, it is essential to redefine the role of records management in achieving organisational goals and objectives. In order to benefit from sound records management practices, organisations need to ensure that records are managed in a planned and methodical way.

A more conventional explanation offered by An and Fiao (2004), is that records management practices encapsulate processes from the point of the record's creation, classification, capturing, use, storage, access, tracking, transfer to the point of its disposal phase. To ensure that records are properly managed, organisations must follow proper records management practices and processes from the day records are created to the day they are disposed of. Records management practices include having in place a framework of policies, procedures and practical guidelines so that everyone within the organisation understands their roles and responsibilities in managing the records and documents effectively and efficiently. The definition of records management practices as stipulated in Section 4 of the ISO 15489-1:2001 (ISO, 2001) alludes to the setting of policies and standards, assignment of responsibilities and authorities, establishment and promulgation of procedures and provision of guidelines for a range of services relating to the management and use of records. According to Mwangi (2017), records management practices are important because they harness records that are important resources in institutions. Ngoepe (2008:1) affirms that "practising proper records management leads to good public management because government activities are based on access to information contained in records".

1.4.6 Municipality

According to Venter, Van der Walt, Phutiagale, Khalo, Van Niekerk and Nealar (2007), a municipality is referred to as an organ of state within the local government, and exercises legislative and executive authority within an area determined in terms of the Local Government: Municipal Demarcation Act. A municipality consists of political office bearers who are the councillors, management, and the communities residing in that municipal area. According to Sebola (2015:9), the current political and management system of South African municipalities emanates from the complete transformation of the pre-1994 municipal administration system which was characterised by division and fragmentation. Landsberg and Graham (2017:161) state that "in the South African context, municipalities refer primarily to the 226 local municipalities, 44 district municipalities and eight metropolitan municipalities which collectively ensure wall to wall services coverage in South Africa". This indicates that

municipalities in South Africa are divided into three categories, namely, metropolitan (referred to as category A), local (category B) and district (category C); together, they comprise the local sphere of government. The primary responsibility of municipalities in South Africa is to ensure the provision of basic services, namely, water, sanitation, housing and electricity. In summary, a municipality is the local face of the government as it provides government services to people living under its jurisdiction. The local municipalities have councils which have decision-making authority. Staff members are employed to ensure the implementation of the decisions taken by the municipal councils.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa stipulates that the three spheres of the government in South Africa are the national, provincial and local, respectively. For the purpose of this study, the definition of a 'municipality' provided by the SALGA (2015), that is, municipalities as organs of state that consist of political structures, the administration of the municipality and the community within (residents inhabiting) the municipal area. The current study selected municipalities irrespective of their categories. This decision was the result of the study being guided by the AGSA Municipal Audit Report, which viewed all municipalities as equal. Furthermore, the municipalities, irrespective of their category, were viewed as part of the local government and were governed by the same legislation.

1.4.7 Audit outcomes

The AGSA conducts yearly audits in all South African municipal and governmental entities. The audit report is compiled and studied, and an assessment of the financial statements is conducted, thereby bringing forth the municipalities' financial standpoints. Fahami, Pordanjani and Mahmoudi (2016) define an audit outcome as "the auditor's published statement of his opinion of the state of the financial statements. The International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) (2001), on the other hand, defines an audit outcome as "an element (or function) of audit quality and a communication from the auditor – usually in the form of a written opinion to the auditee. In other words, an audit outcome is an opinion that the AGSA expresses about the municipality and is communicated to the concerned municipality. For the

purpose of this study, the definition by Fahami, Pordanjani and Mahmoudi (2016) above was preferred.

1.5 Delimitation of the study

The delimitations of a study are aimed at assisting the researcher to set boundaries that control the range of the study. They are specified before any study is carried out in order to establish the specific population to be studied, the time necessary to be able to study the population and the space that will be used to carry out the study. Powell and Connaway (2004) succinctly argue that the researcher should always guard against too large or too expansive populations as this could negatively affect the execution of the research. This study was delimited to municipalities in the Limpopo Province, which has a total of 30 municipalities. For the purposes of this study, six municipalities were selected using purposive sampling. These municipalities were relevant to the research as they, like many other municipalities in South Africa, had been unable to obtain clean audits from the AG. Thus, the study comprised six municipalities that were in similar situations to other municipalities in other provinces.

As indicated earlier, the AG revealed that the audit outcomes of municipalities in Limpopo have been disappointing. He reported that poor records management is one of the aspects that result in poor audit outcomes. This study focused on those municipalities regarded as being in the red zone. These were municipalities that had received disclaimer or adverse audit opinions in the AGSA 2015/2016 report. The AG's report provided a list of all municipalities that received disclaimer and adverse audit opinions. This study was undertaken at a time when the SALGA launched the Municipal Audit Support Programme (MASP) which was aimed at improving municipal audit outcomes. Municipalities had to maintain a balance between audit outcomes and basic service delivery.

1.6 Rationale and significance of the study

This study was prompted by previous research on records management in the public sector in SA that revealed poor record management practices, negligence of records, and a shortage of skills in records management in the sector. The preliminary review of literature attested to this. For instance, Mnjama (2007) observed that records

management programmes in most African countries (including South Africa) are mainly characterised by either collapsed systems or are in a state of disarray. Ngoepe (2008) confirmed that even though management had revealed commitment to, and leadership for records management programmes in the public sector, the support had been characterised by a lack of skills in records management functions on the part of management. This was a further reason why the researcher chose to examine records management practices in municipalities.

The motivation to conduct this study was derived from the inability of the current literature on records management practices in government to provide credible answers to records management practices in municipalities. A review of the literature revealed a scarcity of research done on records management practices in municipalities in South Africa, particularly in the Limpopo Province. This is the case, despite the AGSA Audit Report on South African municipalities for the 2014-15 financial year revealing that the audit outcomes of municipalities in the Limpopo Province had been disappointing. The AGSA reported that records management was one of the aspects that resulted in poor audit outcomes in municipalities. As Ngoepe (2012) attested, records management programmes in many government departments were wavering on the brink of collapse and the lack of proper records management was one of the contributing factors to “unclean” audit reports. By exploring the current records management practices in municipalities, this study highlighted how municipalities could improve their audit outcomes by ensuring effective records management.

It is also acknowledged that effective records management enables municipalities to accurately document procurement processes, thereby improving the distribution of services and promoting accountability and transparency. Against the backdrop of the increasing significance of records management in government, municipalities are confronted with the challenges of refining and endorsing good records management practices in order to deliver on their constitutional and legislative mandates. A deeper understanding of records management practices was, therefore, imperative. It was hoped that this study would enable municipalities to improve their records management practices. The outcomes of the study would also be able to point to the

level of knowledge of records management held by staff in the selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province.

Numerous studies have been previously undertaken with the primary focus on records management practices in provincial and national governments. The major gap identified was that there is limited research on records management practices in municipalities in general and in the Limpopo Province in particular. While research conducted in South Africa has predominately concentrated on records management practices in national and provincial government services, only a few studies have explored records management practices in municipalities. For example, Makhura (2001) conducted a study on records management in the Polokwane Municipality of Limpopo Province, while a later study on records management in the Vhembe District Municipality was conducted by Nevhutalu (2016). Thus, while research has been conducted on records management practices in the public sector, there has been no specific study of records management practices in a number of municipalities in the Limpopo Province – the focus of this study. Further examples of previous studies are Ngoepe's (2008) study on records management in the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) and Marutha's (2016) investigation of records management in a public hospital in the Limpopo Province.

Given the lack of research on the subject, this study, consequently contributed to filling the knowledge gap on records management practices in municipalities. Although it is known that municipalities are facing tremendous challenges in the management of records, little is known about their present records management practices and the causes of these challenges. Furthermore, findings from this study should help to inform records managers, municipal managers, registry personnel and auditors in municipalities of the Limpopo Province on the records management practices of, and the challenges faced by the municipalities. On the basis of the results, recommendations were made to improve records management practices and, consequently, municipal audit outcomes.

As stated by Creswell (2013), a study's importance is guided by how it fills observed deficiencies or gaps in existing scholarly literature; how it heightens awareness and creates dialogues of experiences which have been forgotten and overlooked; and how it leads to better understanding or insights to something, leading to improvements in practice. In the same vein, it was expected that the results of this study would contribute to the improvement of records management practices in municipalities. Furthermore, the study was necessitated by the high level of corruption and maladministration, and the absence of accountability and transparency on the part of municipalities in providing basic services to the communities. These occurrences have become endemic and are a cause for concern in many municipalities in South Africa. The study was founded on the grounds that records in municipalities in South Africa are not properly managed. This has been confirmed by the aforementioned audit report of the AGSA which indicates that poor record management is the main reason why most municipalities are unable to obtain clean audits. This study would, therefore, propose strategies to assist municipalities to improve records management practices. This may well assist municipalities in promoting accountability and audit outcomes. While records management has a significant part to play in all spheres of government, the national and provincial levels of government (Ngoepe, 2008; Legodi, 2011; Marutha, 2011; Marutha, 2016) have been the attention of most of the research in records management practices and this study, with its attention on municipalities, was an attempt to rectify this imbalance.

A further intention of the study was to highlight for academics and policymakers the critical role that records management plays in all spheres of government. It is envisaged that the study will serve as an agent of change, assisting in the creation and implementation of records management strategies and policies in the municipalities of South Africa. Coordination of the current body of knowledge in support of records management practices presented an opportunity to deliberate on the dynamics of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of records management practices. It was also anticipated that this study could benefit residents in the country as they would be in a position to know how records are managed in their respective

municipalities. Government departments like the Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs (CoGSTA) and the SALGA, whose main responsibility is to oversee municipalities, could also benefit from the study as they will have a better understanding of the current records management practices and challenges in municipalities. It was also anticipated that the study could be the catalyst for further studies of records management practices in municipalities. The recommendations of this research, if executed, could improve records management practices in the municipalities of the Limpopo Province. When studying the relevant literature, it was realised that no wide-ranging study had been done which dealt precisely with the practices of records management in municipalities.

Literature also showed that some attempts had been made in the past to establish records management practices in the public sector. However, these studies did not offer real solutions to improving and promoting sound records management practices in municipalities. This study, therefore, attempted to offer solutions to records management issues faced by municipalities in South Africa. The study also highlighted the challenges that municipal officials encountered in terms of the management of records in the municipalities of the Limpopo Province. In addition, the study can be seen as an attempt to provide solutions to the factors that influence current records management practices in municipalities in Limpopo. Findings obtained from this study could thus assist municipalities to advance their records management practices and promote accountability and transparency.

The study also added to the prevailing body of knowledge on records management practices and records management theory. In doing so, the study proposed strategies to be utilised to promote records management practices in municipalities so that basic services can be provided effectively and efficiently. The study's findings have the potential to assist in the creation of records management policies in municipalities. Furthermore, the study has provided a deeper understanding of the various records management models that can be used to manage records in municipalities. Lastly, it was expected that the study would help create awareness among politicians and municipal managers of the significance of records management in promoting transparency, accountability and good administration.

1.7 Theoretical framework

An extensive discussion of the theoretical framework used in the study is presented in Chapter Two. This section provides an introduction to the framework used. The Records Life Cycle and Records Continuum models were deemed essential for this study. According to Kemoni (2008:106), “various records management models have been developed by national archival institutions, archives in schools, international professional records and archives management organisations, and records and archives management scholars”. However, Ngoepe (2014:3) posits that “one of the factors that result in the poor implementation of proper records management programmes is the absence of relevant records management models”. This could be due to all the theoretical frameworks available in the literature being developed in foreign countries and thus, arguably, not being entirely applicable to South Africa. Nonetheless, the Records Life Cycle and Records Continuum models were adopted as the relevant models for this study. In order to clarify and place the use of the theories in perspective, the concepts of records creation, classification, maintenance and disposal were used throughout the study.

The researcher considered it important to examine the creation, maintenance and disposition stages of records. A record is created, received, classified and utilised in the business of an organisation. When the record is no longer relevant to the organisation, it is disposed of or, alternatively, sent to an archival institution. The current records management practices in municipalities and factors that contribute to these practices formed part of the research questions. The Records Life Cycle Model could, however, not accommodate electronic records management. For this issue to be adequately addressed, the study adopted the Records Continuum Model as well.

This study was motivated by the need for municipalities to ensure compliance with the records management legislative framework in South Africa and by so doing, promote accountability and good governance. As noted earlier, the National Archives and Records Services Act (Act No 43) of 1996 was passed to regulate records management functions in government bodies, including municipalities. Records management sections in municipalities are aimed at ensuring that all public records

are given appropriate care during all the phases of their life. Furthermore, the main purpose of records management in municipalities is to ensure an integrated record-keeping framework to guarantee the safety, dependability, genuineness and comprehensiveness of records. In this respect, the study intended to establish the records management practices in municipalities which would enhance the attainment of accountability and good governance. The researcher sought to clarify issues related to records management practices throughout all the records management phases. Furthermore, he acknowledged the need for records managers in municipalities to energetically partake in the management of records during the life of a record. The researcher also recognised the problems of managing digital records in municipalities from the creation, maintenance and preservation stages.

An underlying assumption of the study was that municipalities in the Limpopo Province are struggling with managing records, hence the need to understand current records management practices. In light of this, the Records Continuum Model was deemed essential for this study. While the Records Life Cycle Model focuses on ensuring that the records created in government entities, including municipalities, are appropriately managed from creation and maintenance to disposition, it was equally important to use the Records Continuum Model to ensure that the management of both paper and electronic records was “covered”, as municipalities generate both formats of the records.

1.8 Research methodology

The research methods and design which were utilised for this study are briefly outlined in this section. The research methodology will be presented in full in Chapter Four. The major purpose of this study was to gain a holistic overview of the state of records management practices in the municipalities of the Limpopo Province. In doing so, the study was guided by the post-positivism paradigm. It is worthwhile to note that since the post-positivism paradigm was adopted for the study, a quantitative method supplemented by a qualitative method was used as it is known that such a design goes well with this paradigm. Thus, the research adopted the quantitative approach and supplemented it with the qualitative approach in order to establish records management practices in the municipalities. Although this study used both

approaches to research, the approach adopted was, in the main, a quantitative one which was supplemented by the qualitative research approach.

The use of both methods assisted in improving the value of the research by minimising the bias and the limitations of each approach. In using both qualitative and quantitative methods, the weaknesses of each approach were compensated for by the strengths of the other. The selection of the research approach was mainly influenced by the objectives of the research, the target population, sampling method, and data collection instruments. This approach would also amplify the statement of the problem, research objectives, as well as provide answers to the research questions. Furthermore, this approach has been utilised in many similar studies (cf. Webster, Hare and McLeod, 1999; Makhura, 2005; Ngoepe, 2008; Kemoni, 2009; Ndenje-Sichalwe, 2010; Marutha, 2011; Nevhutalu, 2016).

The study adopted the survey method to establish records management practices in the municipalities of the Limpopo Province. The survey was considered appropriate to this research because it has been used in similar studies of record management practices (e.g. Kalumuna, 2000; Ndibalema, 2001; Chinyemba and Ngulube, 2005; Ngulube and Tafor, 2006; Coetzer, 2012). Using the survey method, the researcher collected data on records management practices in the local municipalities of the Limpopo Province. Six municipalities in the Limpopo Province were selected using purposive sampling. The selected sample comprised, in total, 86 registry officers who dealt with the management of records, six records managers and five municipal managers.

As stated above, the study used both a quantitative and qualitative approach. The quantitative approach was considered relevant for collecting data from the registry officers and municipal managers, while the qualitative approach was found to be convenient to collect data from records managers. The collection of data was done using a structured interview, a semi-structured interview and a questionnaire. To ensure a clear provision of checks and balances concerning the pitfalls of the instruments used to collect data, more than one data collection instrument is considered vital. Collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics supported by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) data analysis software.

The findings were presented using figures, tables and graphs. Qualitative data were analysed using Thematic Content Analysis.

1.9 Limitations of the study

While the delimitation of the study was described earlier, limitations became apparent during the progression of the research and such limitations are presented in this section. The study cannot in any way claim to have exhausted and made “fool proof” findings on all the important issues regarding records management practices in the municipalities of the Limpopo Province. Several gaps have been identified in the study and for this reason, suggestions are made below and in subsequent chapters for further research in records management practices. The study was limited to only six municipalities. Currently, with the merging of some municipalities, the Limpopo Province has a total of 27 municipalities and similar studies are recommended in other municipalities in order to provide a holistic picture of records management practices in the municipalities of the province.

The researcher intended to interview all six municipal managers from the six selected municipalities. However, one municipal manager refused to participate as he/she was in an acting position. The tight schedule of municipal managers was also a limiting factor as it was difficult for the researcher to schedule appointments with municipal managers. Nevertheless, with persistent follow-ups on the participants by the researcher, five municipal managers participated in the study. The issue of protocol related to public relations made it difficult for some participants (the registry officers) to participate in the study as they had to first get permission from the Municipal Communication Manager, even though permission had been granted to conduct the research. Some of the participants exercised their rights and refused to partake in this study, while some were not fully committed to participation due to political pressure and the fear of victimisation.

“

1.10 Structure of the study

This section presents the structure and organisation of the dissertation. The study is divided into seven chapters as follows:

Chapter one: Introduction and Background to the Study. This chapter presented the introduction and background to the study. It discussed the research problem, purpose, objectives and research questions. Definitions of the key terms used in the study were provided. The chapter also presented the rationale for, and significance of, the study and gave a brief insight into the theoretical framework and the research methodology utilised. Finally, the delimitation of the study was outlined.

Chapter two: Theoretical Framework. This chapter deals with the theories underpinning the study. In addition, some of the other existing records management theories developed by records and archives management professionals are also discussed. Among these theories are the Records Life Cycle and the Records Continuum models, the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy Model, and the National Archives of Australia Records Management Model.

Chapter three: Literature Review. This chapter presents a comprehensive review of relevant literature related to the subject of records management practices. It includes previous studies done on records management practices in organisations, the public sector and municipalities. The chapter determines the main challenges faced by organisations and the public sector in creating, classifying, maintaining and disposing of records. The chapter highlights the knowledge gap concerning records management in a municipal context and by so doing, further justifies the need for this study.

Chapter four: Research Methodology. In this chapter, the research methodology adopted for the study is examined. The chapter presents the research design, research approach, research paradigm, population of the study, sampling procedure, validity and reliability, data collection instruments and procedures, and data analysis. It ends with an outline of the ethical considerations of the study.

Chapter five: Presentation of Findings. This chapter presents the findings of the study as determined by the analysis of the data collected.

Chapter six: Discussion of Findings. Chapter six discusses the findings of the study as presented in the previous chapter and in terms of the relevant literature and theoretical framework.

Chapter seven: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations. In this chapter, a summary of the study is presented, the conclusions and recommendations are put forward based on the findings of the study. The contribution of the study to the body of knowledge is elucidated, limitations of the study are outlined, and suggestions for further research are presented.

1.11 Summary

This introductory chapter provided the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose and objectives of the study, research questions, and definitions of key terms. A brief discussion of the theoretical framework on which the study was based, namely, the Records Life Cycle and Records Continuum models, was provided. The chapter also briefly described the research methodology and the delimitation of the study. Furthermore, the significance of, and rationale for the study was discussed. The chapter ended with an outline of the structure of the dissertation. A key issue that emerged in this chapter is that municipalities are required by legislation to embrace an orderly and organised approach to the management of public records.

The next chapter will discuss in detail the theoretical framework upon which the research was built.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides the theoretical framework on which the research has been grounded as well as a brief description of other theoretical frameworks used in research on records management and archival studies. The study was conducted within the records management and archival field. Several models and theories in the field have been proposed to establish records management practices. The current study on records management practices in selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province was premised on the Records Life Cycle and Records Continuum models, and the rationale for choosing these models as well as the shortcomings of the models are presented. The presentation of this chapter is guided by Creswell (2009) who is of the view that the theoretical framework should be separated from the chapter on the literature review. The author further asserts that the theoretical framework chapter presents the theory which explains why the problem under study exists, hence it should be organised to cover all major variables of a study. Thus, as advocated by Creswell (2009), the theoretical framework for this study is discussed in this chapter while the relevant literature is reviewed in detail in Chapter Three.

Once the researcher identified the research problem and questions, it was imperative to decide what theories and ideas exist in relation to the subject. The theoretical framework provides an understanding of the phenomena being researched and also improves the quality of the research to be conducted. A theoretical framework leads the researcher by shaping what will be measured, and what statistical connections to look for in research. According to Sinclair (2007:39), "A theoretical framework can be referred to as a map or travel plan". The author further reported that "when planning a journey in unfamiliar territory or country, people seek as much knowledge as possible about the best way to travel, using previous experience and the accounts of others who have been on similar trips" (Sinclair, 2007:39). The same analogy applies to conducting research. In other words, the theoretical framework guides the researcher, organises his or her ideas and directs him or her to the important questions.

The researcher will also look at the theories that other researchers used to conduct similar studies. Sinclair (2007) emphasises that at the beginning of a research study, it is crucial to identify relevant theory underpinning the knowledge base of the phenomenon to be researched. The development of theories unique to records management and archival studies is essential for the growth of a young field of study such as this. A theoretical framework is usually the starting point of research since it puts the research in context and guides the researcher to form opinions and conclusions. It is, therefore, vital that research projects are underpinned by a theoretical framework from which the researcher can draw conclusions and put the research into context. Grant and Osanloo (2014:12) distinguish between a theoretical framework and a conceptual framework. The two authors report that the two concepts are neither interchangeable nor synonymous. In their own words, they report that :

A theoretical framework is derived from an existing theory (or theories) in the literature that has already been tested and validated by others and is considered a generally acceptable theory, while a conceptual framework is the researcher's understanding of how the research problem will best be explored (Grant and Osanloo, 2014:12).

Kombo and Tromp (2006) refer to a conceptual framework as a mechanism that is developed to help to improve consciousness of the investigated problem. On the other hand, the "theoretical framework is the standard or benchmark by which a researcher measures variables in a study" (David, Ngulube and Dube, 2013). Sejane (2017:18) emphasises that the "purpose of a theoretical framework is to make research findings meaningful and generalisable". Despite its obvious importance in research, Vosloo (2014) points out that one of the challenges facing many researchers is the difficulty in relating to and understanding the role and importance of theory in research. Archives and records management models and theories have helped researchers to understand the way records are created, preserved, classified, organised and managed in organisations. Therefore, theories provide the researcher with a platform to explain, predict and understand a phenomenon. In this study,

archives and records management theories assisted in understanding how records are managed from when they are first created to their final disposition.

According to Abuki (2014:11), “every academic research must be guided by some form of theoretical perspective, which provides a framework within which to respond to the question”. A study by Lester (2015:461) found that without a theoretical orientation, the researcher cannot generalise and provide clarification. Thus, theory enables researchers to make conclusions, expand action, and produce more sophisticated theories. Ngoepe (2014:3), in turn, posits “that one of the factors that culminate in the poor implementation of proper records management programmes is the absence of relevant records management models”. Lester (2005:461) concurs when he states that “without a theoretical orientation, the researcher can speculate at best or offer no explanation at all”. Kilemba (2016:19) asserts that the “theoretical framework is important in a research journey because it helps the researcher to construct the study and not only to make meaning of the subsequent findings but also to invite conclusions”.

In light of the discussion above, it can be concluded that no research can be complete without being guided by a theoretical or conceptual framework. Grant and Osanloo (2014:12) state that the “importance of utilising a theoretical framework in research cannot be stressed enough”. The two authors further point out that a “theoretical framework is one of the most important aspects in the research process yet is often misunderstood by doctoral candidates as they prepare their research studies” (Grant and Osanloo, 2014:12). It is for these reasons that various theoretical frameworks used in records management and archival studies and which can underpin this study were identified and discussed in detail. The justification for choosing the theoretical frameworks will be discussed as will their identified shortcomings. Thus, the next section will present and discuss the theoretical framework supporting the present research and models that guided the research. A model is a descriptive tool that helps to impose some order on how variables are interrelated so one can begin to formulate questions aligned with the chosen framework. A model is developed within a framework. On the other hand, Kivunja (2018: 45) asserts that “a theory usually emerges from a long process of research

that uses empirical data to make assertions based on deductive and inductive analysis of the data”. Kivunja (2018:46) describes a theoretical framework “as comprising the theories expressed by experts in the field into which we plan to research, which we draw upon to provide a theoretical coat hanger for the data analysis and interpretation of results”. Furthermore, other models that were deemed to be relevant but did not directly inform the study will also be discussed.

2.1 Overview of records management models

With the increasing number of studies on records management and archival studies, there has been a need to develop models that provide frameworks for understanding records management. As Marutha and Ngoepe (2018:187) attest: “for records management to be implemented properly and to support organisational functions, it is highly dependent on the model used to manage the records”. It is for this reason that the present study examined various records management and archival models that could assist in supporting the current (and future) records management practices in the municipalities of the Limpopo Province. Over the years, various records management models have been developed and published locally and internationally. These have been developed by records management and archival professionals and scholars in organisations and institutions around the globe. According to Kemoni (2007), some of the examples of existing records management models are:

- The ICA Electronic Records Management Model;
- The National Archives of Australia Records Management Model;
- The National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Model;
- The Public Record Office Model;
- The Victorian Electronic Records Strategy Model (VERS);
- The University of Pittsburgh Electronic Records Management Model;
- The Italian Model for Records Management;
- The Records Life-cycle Model; and

- The Records Continuum Model.

Mokhtar and Yusof (2016:1266) assert that these models:

Help to facilitate understanding of something by displaying only the necessary components, to help in decision-making by simulating 'what if' scenarios, and to explain, control and predict events on the basis of past observations.

These varied views of models show the necessity for a close examination of the specific research environment before selecting one (or more) model(s) considered appropriate for underpinning a study. Shepherd and Yeo (2003) reported that all records management and archival studies models originate from the Records Life Cycle and Records Continuum models. It should be noted from the outset that the Records Continuum and Records Life Cycle models were found to be the most popular models used in studies in South Africa. This is best summarised by Chinyemba and Ngulube (2005) who reported that the Records Life Cycle and Records Continuum models are leading models in the archival and records management field. Ngulube and Tafor (2006:59) added that "in the eastern and southern Africa region, the Records Life Cycle Model is popularly used as a framework for the management of public sector records". Ocholla and Le Roux (2011) echo a similar sentiment, that is, Records Life Cycle and Records Continuum models are widely used in archives and records management research. However, the Records Continuum Model differs from the Records Life Cycle Model in various ways including its continuous life span. Other differences include record movement patterns, record-keeping perspectives, record management processes, principles for selecting records, time of evaluation, and the tasks and responsibilities of record-keeping managers. To establish current practices relating to records management in the selected Limpopo Province municipalities, it was necessary to discuss some of the models used in the field before moving on to the model(s) underpinning this study.

Literature reveals that various researchers in Africa (Ndenje-Sichalwe, 2010; David, Dube and Ngulube, 2013; Adu, 2014; Ajibade, 2014; Msibi, 2015) have used different records management and archival studies models as theoretical frameworks to underpin their studies. For instance, in the study by Ndenje-Sichalwe (2010) on “the extent to which records management practices fostered accountability in some government ministries in Tanzania”, the Records Life Cycle Model formed the theoretical foundation of the study. This was a result of the fact that most of the records in the government ministries of Tanzania have been created and maintained in paper format and that employing the model provided a fuller picture of the current records management practices – from the creation of the records to their final disposition. David, Ngulube and Dube (2013) identified the Records Continuum Model as a suitable theoretical framework for understanding issues regarding effective document management regimes. The authors reported that the reason why they used the model was that it promoted a pro-active approach that emphasised the effective management of the entire records continuum” (David, Ngulube and Dube, 2013).

Adu (2014) found the Records Life Cycle Model to be applicable to the study which investigated the records management practices among the administrative staff of the University of Education, Winneba-Kumasi. Ajibade (2014), on the other hand, adopted both models for a study on the role of records management in Small Micro and Medium Enterprises (SMMEs) in South Africa and its implications for business sustainability. According to Ajibade (2014:28), the Records Continuum Model does not limit the lifespan of records and provides record keepers with the opportunity to always keep records open irrespective of whether they are in paper or electronic formats. The Records Life Cycle Model, however, emphasise that records, irrespective of their format, go through various distinct phases which cannot be repeated.

Msibi’s (2015) study on “The preservation of public records and archives in Swaziland Government Ministries and the Department of Swaziland National Archives”, also used both the Records Life Cycle and Records Continuum models. According to Msibi (2015:13), “with the integration of both paper-based and

electronic records management systems in Swaziland, further clarity and understanding of the operation of these systems was premised on the two records management theories". A study by Maseh (2015) on "Records management in the Kenyan judiciary" was underpinned by the Records Continuum Model, the International Records Management Trust (IRMT) e-Records Readiness Tool and the Open Government Implementation Model. Maseh (2015:26) argued that "the three primary models addressed records management and open government which are central themes of the study and no single theoretical model was found adequate since the areas of records management and open government are relatively new and do not have firm theory to underpin their study".

The two models (Records Life Cycle and Records Continuum) have also been used in the international arena. For example, an international study from the University College of London by Luyombya (2010) adopted the Records Continuum Model, but this did not invalidate the usefulness of the Records Life Cycle theory, especially insofar as the management of paper-based records in organisations is concerned. All the examples referred to support the view that the Records Continuum and Records Life Cycle models are the commonly used ones in records management and archival studies whether used alone, together or in conjunction with other models.

The current study recognised the more influential records management models used in the records management and archival field. Each model has its own weaknesses and strengths. While the bulk of the records created in municipalities are computer-generated, print-based records are also generated and therefore, as has been stressed above, any model adopted for this study should be able to deal with both formats of records. The next section will discuss the two models that were deemed relevant and directly informed the study as well as two other models that were considered relevant. However, prior to discussing these models, cognisance needs to be taken of what the IRMT has put forward regarding the care of records. The IRMT (1999:5) maintains that "the care of records, particularly within the context of the public sector, is governed by four important principles or theories". These are:

- (1) that records must be kept together according to the agency responsible for their creation or accumulation, in the original order established at the time of their creation;
- (2) that records follow a life cycle;
- (3) that the care of records should follow a continuum; and
- (4) that records can be organised according to hierarchical levels in order to reflect the nature of their creation (IRMT, 1999:5).

2.1.1 The Records Life Cycle Model

According to Muemi and Rotic (2015:671):

The Records Life Cycle Model was first developed in the USA after the First World War by the then National Records and Archives Administration in response to the ever-increasing volume of records produced by organisations.

This model has been altered by authors such as Upward and Atherton. The Records Life Cycle Model is an important model in the records management and archival field and is widely accepted by professionals in the field. Ngoepe (2008:8) maintained that “since the late 1930s, the Records Life Cycle Model has been the main theoretical framework for managing records, especially in the paper-based environment”. This sentiment is shared by Yusof and Chell (2002:136) and Chachage and Ngulube (2006), who stated that “the Records Life Cycle is one of the core models in archives and records management. It is a way of looking at how records are created, received and used”.

The concept of records life cycle is at the forefront of many records management programmes in South Africa and, as mentioned, is widely accepted and used by records managers and archivists in the field. As articulated by Yusof and Chell (2002), the activities of records management programmes are based on this concept, which has several phases that explain the stages or status of records – from creation through use and maintenance to ultimate disposal. Chinyemba and Ngulube (2005:9) asserted that “the first phase of the Records Life Cycle Model involves the creation or receipt, classification, use, maintenance and disposition of records through destruction or transfer to archives, while the second phase involves

the archival stage of records”. The model suggests how records can be managed through all the stages to prevent the deterioration of the records in case they have to be moved to the archives phase. In terms of the model, records have a life cycle. Records are created or received, maintained and used. During these stages, records are active, and once records are not used, they become inactive and are either disposed of or sent to archives.

In short, by their nature, records follow a life cycle in that they are created, used for as long as they are needed and then disposed of by destruction or by transfer to an archival institution. This approach, as reported by Molai, Kyobe and Saile (2009:2), has been “useful in promoting a sense of order as it tries to define what a record is, what happens to it during the process and who will manage the record during each stage”. However, among the biggest shortcomings of the Records Life Cycle Model, as reported by Ngoepe (2008), is that the life cycle concept fits successfully into paper-based records management, but not in electronic records. The model is insufficient when employed on digital records, where records are unable to reach a definite inactive point but are instead migrated into new formats following developments in technology (Yusof and Chell, 2002).

The Records Life Cycle Model is believed to be all the definite stages followed by records from their creation to their disposal. According to the model, records are created, maintained, used and disposed. The life cycle of records is the fundamental principle of how to create a records management system. Chaterera (2013:8) argued that “any institution that applies effectively the Records Life Cycle Model procedures and proceeds will produce positive records management”. The organisation will be able to be accountable and transparent. This Life Cycle Model argues that records can be described through specific stages that are cyclical in nature and in generations (McKemmish, 2007). Figure 2.1 explains the stages of the Life Cycle Model.

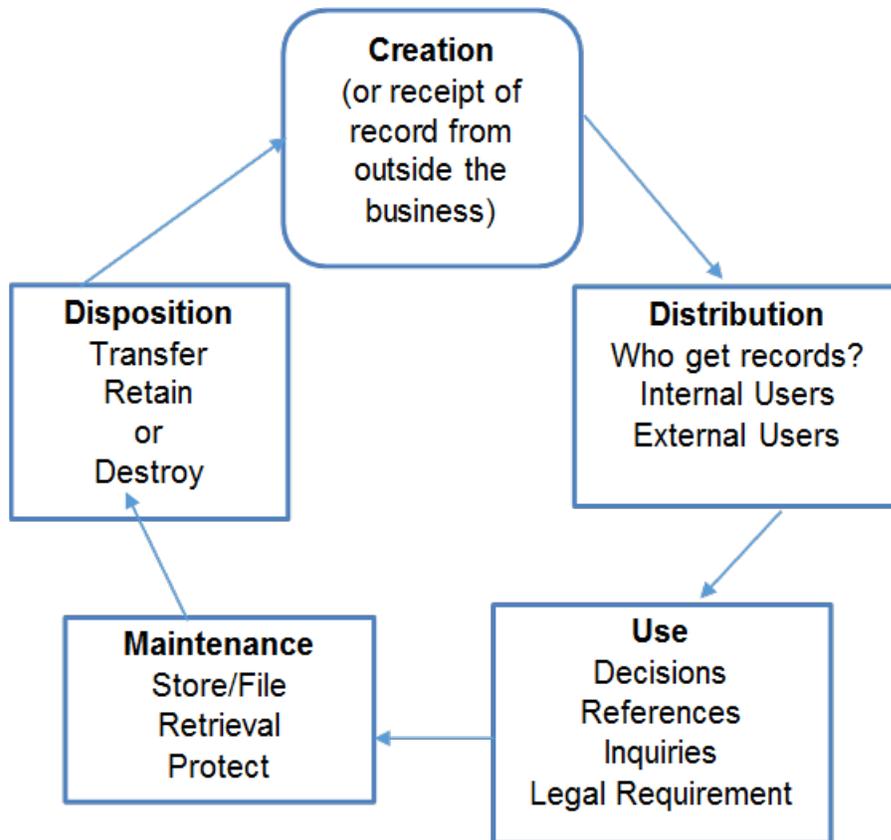


Figure 2.1: Records Life Cycle

Ngoepe (2008) reports that the Records Life Cycle Model has been used mostly for paper records and that paper records practices are still mainly used by the public sector, including municipalities. Volumes of records in both paper-based and electronic formats are created in municipalities on a daily basis and these have to be managed from the minute they are created until they are disposed of. The major shortcoming of the Records Life Cycle Model, as pointed to earlier, has been its inability to accommodate electronic records. This was the main reason why the model could not be used as a stand-alone theoretical framework for the current study. As mentioned, municipalities produce vast amounts of records daily and these records are in both electronic and printed formats. If this model was to be used alone for the current study, it would mean that the electronic records produced by municipalities would not be accommodated.

According to McKemmish (2001:4), “a life cycle process is similar to a biological organism. Records are created, maintained, used and then die or are sent to the archives”. The end of records happens when they are destroyed or disposed and, in some cases, records are archived and preserved for future use. Higgins (2008) reported that the records life cycle process is the beginning of the records management programme, and forms part of systems and procedures followed to manage each phase of the life cycle of records. Furthermore, Higgins (2008) stated that the Life Cycle Model requires the identification and planning of life stages. This should be done with the aim of implementing the necessary action to ensure the maintenance of authenticity, reliability and usability of the records.

Atherton (1985:44) notes that for many years, “the National Archives in Washington and the Public Archives in Ottawa have championed the life-cycle concept of the records management-archives relationship”. This, however, was before the significant development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) which took place over the last three to four decades. According to Atherton (1985:44), “this theory is based on the premise that it is possible to divide the life cycle of records into distinct, separate stages, starting with records management”. The first and second phases which are also known as the active and semi-active phases respectively consist of:

- the creation or receipt of information in the form of records;
 - the classification of the records or their information in some logical system;
 - the maintenance and use of the records; and
 - the disposition of the records through the destruction or transfer to archives.
- (Atherton, 1985:44)

The third phase which is referred to as the archival or inactive phase consists of:

- the selection/acquisition of the records by archives;
 - the description of the records in inventories, finding aids, and the like;
 - the preservation of the records or, perhaps, the information in the records;
- and

- the reference and use of the information by researchers and scholars (Atherton, 1985).

The current study only examined the first and second phases of the records (active and semi-active records), which together form the records management phase. It did not focus on the third phase of the records (inactive records), which is the archives phase of the records. The study found it appropriate to look at the creation, maintenance and disposition stages of the life cycle of records. An effective records management practice requires that records be managed according to the records life cycle concept. As noted by the IRMT (1999), without the records life cycle concept, vast quantities of inactive records clog up expensive office space, and it is virtually impossible to retrieve important administrative, financial and legal information. It is for this reason that the Records Life Cycle Model can be adopted to assess if records management practices in municipalities are in line with the records life cycle concept. This will ensure the promotion of a sense of order in records management in municipalities.

A record is created, arranged and organised, maintained and utilised daily in the business of the organisation. When the record loses its relevance to the organisation, it is then disposed of either by total destruction or sent to the archives if it is deemed to have value. Current records management practices in selected municipalities and factors that contribute to these practices in municipalities form part of the research questions underpinning the study. The majority of records created and maintained in the municipalities in South Africa are in a paper-based format.

The Records Life Cycle Model was found to be a useful framework to use for print records. Most municipalities in the Limpopo Province mainly use these types of records although they also use electronic records. For this reason, the Records Continuum Model was added as a framework for managing records which were in an electronic format in the municipalities. On its own, the Records Life Cycle Model was found to be relevant but insufficient for the study. It is for this reason that both the Records Life Cycle and the Records Continuum models were adopted to provide a complete picture of the records management practices in municipalities from

creation to their disposition. The Records Continuum Model is discussed under 2.1.2 below. The next section discusses the limitations of the Records Life Cycle Model.

2.1.1.1 Limitations of the Records Life Cycle Model

Every model has its strengths and weaknesses and the Records Life Cycle Model is no exception. Wamukoya (2000:27) reported that “the limitation of the Records Life Cycle Model is that it does not provide a way of differentiating between the various stages in the life cycle of records and does not offer the possibility that records can repeat stages”. What this means is that some records that are inactive can become active again at a later stage in life and this happens frequently in records management practices. According to this model, once a record has reached the inactive stage, it either gets disposed or is transferred to an archive. In the Records Life Cycle Model, the records manager and the archivist do not work together as they would do in the Records Continuum Model. A further limitation of the Records Life Cycle Model (and one which has been pointed to above) is that it cannot be utilised in the management of electronic records and needs augmentation with another model which can accommodate such records. Maseh (2015) opined that another limitation of the Records Life Cycle Model is that it has a sequence of interrelated but unconnected purposes and responsibilities, and is misleading because it ignores working relationships that exist between archivists and records managers.

Although the Records Life Cycle Model was found to be relevant to the current study, the above limitations (its inability to accommodate electronic records in particular) precluded it being used as a stand-alone theoretical framework for the study. It is in consideration of the above discussion that the second model, the Records Continuum Model, had to be adopted to address these limitations and it is to this model that the discussion now turns.

2.1.2 The Records Continuum Model

Although it was first developed and adopted in Australia in the 1980s, the Records Continuum Model, as reported by Bantin (2002), originated in Canada. According to An (2003), the Records Continuum Model as defined in the Australian Standard 4390, “is a consistent and coherent regime of records management processes from the time of the creation of records (and before creation, in the design of record-

keeping systems) through to the preservation and use of records as archives". According to Ngoepe (2008:9), "with the massive shift in information technology in the 1980s and 1990s, there was a proliferation in electronic records, leading to new archival and records practices". Ngoepe (2008:10) goes on to say that "this has resulted in debates that have challenged the relevance of the life cycle approach in managing records, and culminated in the continuum theory".

The Records Continuum Model is "a model of records management and archival science that emphasises overlapping characteristics of record-keeping, evidence, transaction and the identity of the creator" (Atherton, 1985:48). The model views records management as a continuous process (Upward, 2000:118; Yusuf and Chell, 2005:55). It is Atherton's (1985) belief that "the various stages of records are interrelated and create a continuum where both records managers and archivists are involved in managing the recorded data. Atherton (1985) further stated that the continuum concept focuses greatly on efficient administration. Records, instead of being stored for future use to influence decisions taken, to ensure accountability and to help future users, are only kept for current operational needs and later sent to the archives.

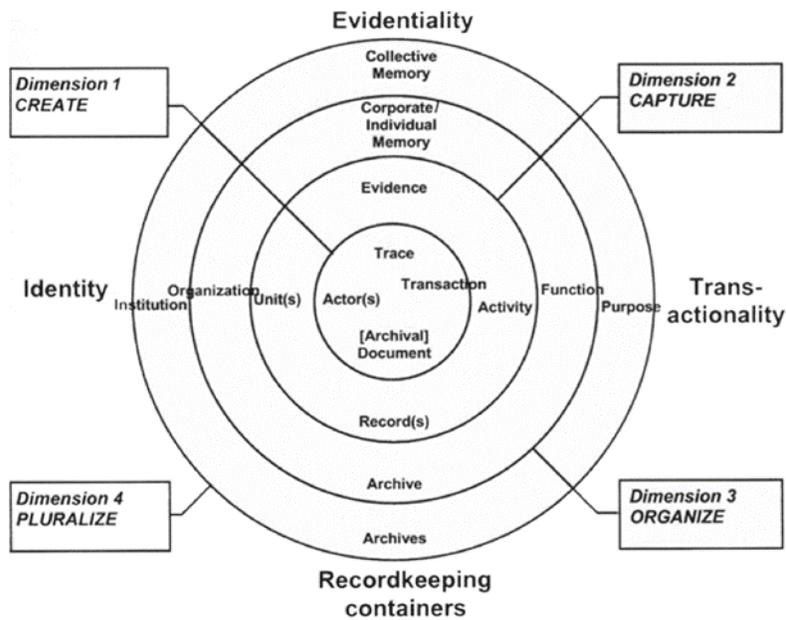
According to McKemmish (2001), the Records Continuum Model:

promotes record-keeping that connects the whole organisational functioning, and is stable enough to deal with a dynamic and changing context that can be influenced by legal, political, administrative, social, commercial, technological, cultural, and historical variables across time and space.

As Ngoepe (2008:10) attested, the "Records Continuum Model does not have boundaries between archives and records management responsibilities, as current records can also become archives right from the creation, instead of waiting for the final disposal to determine this". As McKemmish (2001) pointed out, the model shows that records, including archives, are formed and preserved for use and process, rather than as ends in themselves. On the other hand, Kemoni (2008:5) asserted that under the "Records Continuum Model, records managers and archival professionals are responsible for managing every stage in the life of a record". The

same sentiment is echoed by Ajibade (2014:27) who observed that the Records Continuum Model does not limit the exposure and lifespan of records, but provides records managers with the opportunity (or flexibility) to always keep records open, whether in a paper or electronic format. The model further promotes an integrated approach for records and archival management. Upward's (2005) Records Continuum Model created an intersection of the main records life-cycle processes (creation, capture, organisation and pluralisation) and dimensions of records. The four dimensions are:

1. Dimension 1 Create: This dimension focuses on the primary actors, the acts themselves, and the documents that record the acts and trace and represent the acts.
2. Dimension 2 Capture: This dimension focuses on the personal and organisational recordkeeping systems and the policies that ensure that records are captured in context and in sufficient detail for use as evidence.
3. Dimension 3 Organise: The third dimension focuses on the recordkeeping processes within an organisation. It ensures that the recordkeeping regime is sufficient to form an accurate memory of its business and social functions.
4. Dimension 4 Pluralise: The fourth dimension embeds the records into the society in which they reside.



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Figure 2.2: The Records Continuum Model.

Upward (2005) summarised the Records Continuum Model as a major transition in archival practice and the transition involves leaving a long tradition in which continuity was a matter of sequential control. Electronic record-keeping processes need to incorporate continuity into the essence of record-keeping systems and into the life-span of documents within those systems. Atherton (1985) was of the view that a major concern of the Records Continuum Model as a whole is administrative efficiency. As pointed out above, records are not created to serve the interests of some archivist, or even to document for posterity some significant decision or operation. They are created and managed to serve immediate operational needs (Atherton, 1985).

As mentioned earlier, a record is used for so long as it has continuing value, and is then disposed of by destruction or by transfer to an archival institution. The Records Continuum Model, however, reminds us that records are created and maintained for use as a result of business and administrative functions and processes. According to Ndenje-Sichalwe (2010), there are no strict boundaries between archives and records management responsibilities in the Records Continuum Model, as current records can also become archives right from creation, instead of waiting for final

disposal to determine this. Again, according to the Records Continuum Model, there are no separate phases in records management. The model sees records management as an uninterrupted process where one component of the continuum passes seamlessly into another.

As stated by Ndenje-Sichalwe (2010) (and emphasised above), the Records Continuum Model is relevant to records, irrespective of whether they are in paper or digital form. Mckemish and Parera (1998) further assert that the Continuum Model (and various parts are noticeable) therefore presents a series of interchangeable elements. Put simply by Chachage and Ngulube (2006), the Records Continuum Model puts more emphasis on the continuing value placed on a record's life span. Furthermore, as noted, the model allows for records management flexibility and is applicable to both manual and electronic records. Feather and Sturges (2003) asserted that the Records Continuum Model is a variation of the Records Life Cycle concept, and that it takes a higher-order intellectual view of records, since it follows an integrated model rather than one made up of stages.

The model emphasises the need for both records managers and archivists to be involved from the earliest stages of creating records. In addition, the model is known to be flexible and inclusive. These attributes made it appropriate for the current study because municipalities service the residents on a daily basis. The ability to apply the Records Continuum Model to the management of records, both printed as well as digital, added to the model's acceptance as a theoretical framework for the study. Municipalities create both paper and paperless (electronic) records and this necessitates the adoption of the Records Continuum Model. The researcher thus identified the Records Continuum Model as an appropriate model to be utilised as a theoretical framework for establishing records management practices in selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province. Although the model was found to be relevant for the current study it was, as with the Records Life Cycle Model, found to be unsuitable as a standalone model to underpin the study.

2.1.2.1 Limitations of the Records Continuum Model

While the Records Continuum model is key in records management studies, it must be used with caution. It is worthwhile to once again acknowledge that every model has limitations, and the Records Continuum Model is no exception. The major concern with the Records Continuum Model, as reported by Atherton (1985), is its administrative efficiency. The author states that records are not created to help future archivists or historians, but are created and managed for instant operational needs. It is now becoming apparent that another limitation found in the model is that the integration of records management and archival activities in municipalities poses a challenge as municipalities do not have archives and archivist positions. It is therefore difficult to integrate the two activities as the archival component is not applicable in municipalities. It does need to be borne in mind that the NARSSA legislation does, in fact, allow for integration of the registry offices with the archival component in that it prescribes that the provincial archivist must work together with the municipal records managers. It must be noted that provincial government is a separate sphere of government with its own particular mandate and responsibilities and the provincial archivists do not have control over what is happening in the municipalities and vice versa.

As has been stressed above, the two models provided the theoretical framework underpinning the study. Before discussing the relevance and contextualisation of the framework for the study, two further models which were considered are briefly discussed, namely, the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy Model and the National Archives of Australia Records Management Model.

2.1.3 Victorian Electronic Records Strategy Model

Another model used in records management and the archival profession is known as the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy Model (VERS). The VERS is a “records management framework developed for the State Archives of Victoria, Australia. VERS was formed in 1995 by the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) in response to the important test of preserving electronic records produced by Victorian Government agencies”. The VERS Model was developed to support organisations in managing and preserving records and authentic digital records. The long-term

management of electronic records is an enormous challenge for any organisation where records must be kept for longer periods, and the VERS is a leading model that comprehensively addresses this challenge. However, Katundu (2001:179) reported that “coping with the management challenges affecting paper-based records continues to be more important and relevant to most records managers”. Thus, information professionals in developing countries devote most of their time to the paper-based format rather than wasting their energies in exploring electronic records.

According to Waugh (2006:3), VERS was designed to preserve electronic records for very long periods. The VERS Model also ensures the economical and lasting protection of electronic records. While the bulk of the records created in municipalities are computer-generated, print-based records are also generated and therefore, as has been stressed above, any model adopted for this study should be able to deal with both formats of records. However, it is evident that the main focus of the VERS Model is on electronic records which, in the context of municipalities in Limpopo which produce records in the print format as well, made its consideration as a framework for this study problematic. Furthermore, to sustain the continued adoption, implementation and compliance of VERS, as reported by Quenault (2004), municipalities will require continuing expert advice on the VERS standard and implementation models. A further crucial point against the adoption of the VERS Model as a framework for this study is that the preservation and management of electronic records are critically technology dependent. This is not a problem in a developed country such as Australia with its well-developed technological infrastructure. In contrast, the infrastructure and technologies needed for the model are simply not found in most municipalities in the Limpopo Province given their rural nature. Thus, after careful consideration, this model was found to be inapplicable to the current study and therefore not used.

2.1.4 National Archives of Australia Records Management Model

According to the State Records of South Australia (2004), the National Archives of Australia Records Management Model is based on the Australian Standard AS ISO

15489 2002. The State Records of South Australia (2004) reveals that some of the key elements of the National Archives of Australia AS ISO 15489 2002 are:

- Records-creation to archive;
- Planned management of official records;
- Designing and implementing a records system;
- Record-keeping metadata;
- Creating, capturing, classifying, storing, finding and managing access to records;
- Appraisal, and disposal of records;
- Records management policies, procedures and practices;
- Records management training; and
- Disaster management.

According to Kemoni (2008), the National Archives of Australia Records Management Model is most suitable for studies investigating how records are managed in organisations during their active life, while the current study intended to establish records management practices in municipalities. The standard relates to the management of records in all designs or media, created or received in the performance of an organisation's activities, and provides instruction on the design and implementation of a records system. The National Archives of Australia Records Management Model develops strategies and policies to deal with the different designs of records created in the organisation. Another crucial point against the adoption of the model as a framework for this study is that it was designed for Australia and its application in the South African context, particularly the rural municipalities in Limpopo, would be difficult. Although this model was found to be relevant, it is in consideration of the above discussion that the model could not be used as an underpinning theory in the current study.

2.2 Relevance and contextualisation of the theoretical framework for the study

As reported earlier, the Records Continuum Model views records management as an uninterrupted process in which records pass seamlessly through the various components of the continuum from the registry to the archives. This means that the usefulness of active, current and semi-current records cannot be isolated. According to Garaba (2010), the Records Continuum Model requires that records and archives professionals meet current and future community expectations and at the same time meet the operational requirements of the organization. This view is particularly important for municipalities as records created and received by the municipalities have to be managed from the day they are created or received, until the day they are disposed of. There can never be a stage in the life of the records where one can say they are less important and cannot be taken care of. On the other hand, the Records Life Cycle Model recommends how records can be managed throughout all the stages to prevent the deterioration of records in case they have to be moved to the archive phase.

As its name suggests, the Records Continuum Model emphasises that records are continuous in nature. Some of the records created in municipalities are of permanent value and have to be sent to the archives, and this model promotes continuity. As reported by Atherton (1985), the Records Continuum Model consists of four stages, namely, creation, classification, scheduling and maintenance, and use of information. Garaba (2010) pointed out that once records have been created and selected as having continual value, the need to provide a continuum of care and access remains paramount. Both the Records Life Cycle and Records Continuum models play an important role in this regard. Flynn (2001:85) has postulated that “the Records Continuum Model is well-adapted for the management of electronic records. As Upward (2000) opines, the model is more “in tune” with electronic communications and technological change than the life cycle view. As reported by Kemoni (2008:5), the Records Continuum Model is generally known for managing records and archives both in electronic and paper forms.

Most of the records created in municipalities in print and electronic formats need to be preserved in that same format, hence the need for the study to use both of the

models. Municipal records include records such as title deeds, water and lights accounts, taxes and rates bills, and levies. The Life Cycle Model was found to be a useful framework for print records that still prevail in municipalities in the Limpopo Province. One of the significant features of the model is its suitability for municipalities' records going through various developmental stages or cycles. Notably, the Records Life Cycle Model encourages records procedure manuals being in place that will guide the distribution and use of records in the organisation. However, the need to look at records from a continuity perspective was also acknowledged, hence the Records Continuum Model was found to be relevant to the study as records are considered to have continual value. The Records Continuum Model looks at record-keeping as a whole enterprise and while the model differs from the Records Life Cycle Model, it does complement it. Records continuum activities can happen sequentially or simultaneously in a real or virtual environment.

According to Ngoepe (2010), the Records Life Cycle Model has been the popular theoretical framework for keeping records, particularly in the printed environment since the late 1930s. The number of stages or phases in the Records Life Cycle differ from one study to another (for example, in the USA, there are five stages and in the United Kingdom, there are three stages) in accordance with the viewpoint of the researcher concerned (Yusuf and Chell, 2005:52-55). For the purpose of the study, three stages were identified, namely; the active, semi-current and inactive, respectively. Active records are those records that are used more often; semi-active records are those that are still in use but not used as frequently as active records; while the inactive records are not used but have to be kept for historical value and future use. This approach is shared by Kemoni (2007:64) who stated that "the Records Life Cycle Model passes through three stages, namely the active, semi-active and none-active stages, and throughout the three stages, it is important to ensure that proper preservation measures are applied to the records". Active print records are mainly kept in the registry where they are readily accessible while electronic records are kept at different locations within the municipalities, ranging from offsite storage and servers to shared drives and personal computers.

Municipalities produce records on a daily basis and all these records have to be kept safe irrespective of their stage. Even if the records are not active, a need may arise to retrieve inactive records. It is thus important that these inactive records are available in a condition which allows for perusal and use. In support of this, Makhura (2005:46) states that “irrespective of the format or stages, records need to be managed and maintained well to ensure that they are kept in their original format and secured at all times”. It must also be emphasised that inactive records may be needed to authenticate or validate active or semi-active records. For example, in cases where the rates and taxes accounts are in dispute, the municipalities may need to retrieve inactive records to check how the resident has been paying his or her bills, or to compare the water or electricity consumption for a particular period.

The inception of this study was guided by the municipalities’ need to guarantee compliance with the records management legislative framework in South Africa, thereby promoting accountability and good governance. Records management sections in municipalities are aimed at ensuring that all public records are provided the appropriate attention during all the stages of their life. The main functions of records management in municipalities are to ensure that the records are properly managed and to ensure the reliability, genuineness and comprehensiveness of the records. Both the Records Life Cycle and Records Continuum models provide mutual, considerate and steady standards, and incorporate best practice criteria and interdisciplinary tactics in records management and archiving processes for both printed and electronic records. It is also important to note that the two models can complement each other to ensure and guarantee improved records management practices in municipalities. In this respect, the current study sought to investigate records management practices in municipalities to enhance proper practices, thereby contributing to accountability and good governance. The researcher acknowledges the need for both records managers in municipalities and provincial archivists to be actively engaged in the management of records throughout the records’ life cycle and continue to be part of the management of records even after they have been transferred to archives. Both the Records Life Cycle and Records Continuum models contributed to the construction of the framework of the study.

Literature seems to suggest that the Records Life Cycle and Records Continuum models appear in more research studies in records management and archival studies than any other models in the field. Chachage and Ngulube (2006) concur when they maintained that the two models are the dominant theory in the archival and records management field. In view of this, the Life Cycle and the Records Continuum models were deemed essential for this study. The models were adopted to establish the records management practices in selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province. While the Records Life Cycle Model focuses on ensuring that records generated in municipalities are properly managed from the creation phase to disposition, the Records Continuum Model ensures that the management of both paper and electronic records are continuously taken care of even after they have been used.

2.3 Summary

This chapter discussed the main theoretical frameworks relevant to the study. Four relevant records management and archival models considered to be able to contribute to a better understanding of the research problem of the study were discussed. Included in the discussion were the limitations associated with each model. The Records Life Cycle and Records Continuum models were adopted as the theoretical framework underpinning the study and the reasons for doing so were discussed. As mentioned, there is no single model or theory of records and archives management that could be wholly relevant to the current study. It was therefore important for the researcher to use more than one model to cover the study. It was also necessary to adapt and align the theoretical framework underpinning the study with the study's research questions.

Despite the potential contribution of other records and archives management models in explaining the research problem of this study, the Records Life Cycle and the Records Continuum Model were found to be the most relevant and suitable for this study. While the former focuses on ensuring that records created in public offices are appropriately managed from creation and maintenance to disposition, it was equally important to ensure the proper management of both printed and electronic records, as municipalities generate both types of records. The choice of these models as the

underpinning theoretical framework guiding this study was justified by its relevance to the research questions and the objectives of the study. Furthermore, the successful application of the models in previous related studies also contributed to the decision to use the models for the current study and by so doing, helped to establish current records management practices in the municipalities of the Limpopo Province.

The next chapter will comprise the review of the literature related to the topic of records management practices with reference to the research problem.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the research in the field of records management conducted by other researchers that is relevant to the study. Mouton (2001:87) maintains that “a literature review identifies and compares earlier studies, and also helps to avoid duplication and unnecessary repetition”. Reviewed literature in this study consisted of books, journal and newspaper articles, research reports, legislation, regulations, policies, theses and dissertations. The focus was on records management practices in organisations, municipalities and the public sector, from both local and international perspectives. The geographic coverage of the literature reviewed followed a funnel – literature from an international perspective was followed by the African and South African perspectives.

The review of literature provides an in-depth understanding of records management practices in organisations from both the private and the public sectors. The research questions as outlined in Chapter One, constitute the basis for the review. Records management practices as a theoretical discipline are fairly new and, as a consequence, academic research within the discipline has, until recently, been scarce. However, there is a growing interest in the field of records management with a concomitant increase in literature on the subject. Like most organisations, municipalities create, receive, maintain and dispose of records on a daily basis. However, despite efficient management of these records accelerating service delivery, timely decision-making and increased accountability of decision-makers, records management practices in municipalities are generally unknown. While much of the literature available concerns records management practices in private organisations and the public sector more broadly (Chinyemba, 2005; Ambira, 2010; Tsabedze, 2011; Coetzer, 2012; Kalusopa and Ngulube, 2012; Ajibade, 2012; Katuu, 2015a; Ambira; 2016; Luthuli, 2017) comparatively little has been published on records management practices in municipalities (Makhura, 2001; Kanzi, 2010; Nevhutalu, 2016). It is thus clear that records management practices at the municipal level of the public sector in South Africa have not been adequately studied.

3.1 The importance of the literature review

According to Neuman (2006), no research can be conducted in an intellectual vacuum, no matter how innovative the topic or the procedure. All research studies are conducted within the setting of a prevailing knowledge base of other research. Every research project provides a review of the relevant literature and it is considered a very important aspect of any research. It demonstrates that the researcher knows the field of study, and justifies the reason/s for the research. By undertaking a literature review, the researcher is able to critically summarise the current body of knowledge in the area under study. It also assists the researcher to identify gaps, strengths and weaknesses in previous studies, so helping the researcher to show potential weaknesses in the field of study, whilst bringing to the fore potential strengths. Ambira (2016) referred to the literature review as the scrutiny of prevailing literature on the topic of the research. In other words, every study conducted is guided by, and grounded on, the review of previous studies by other researchers on the subject under research.

Struwig and Stead (2001:38) offered a related explanation by stating that “no research work has to be seen as an entity unto itself, but as a continuation of already completed research of the same type of related research”. The significance of a literature review lies in its presentation of the various interpretations, similarities, dissimilarities and developments of thought on the subject, and the increased comprehension and understanding of the problem at hand. Various researchers have reported on the importance of the literature review in research (for example, Birley and Moreland, 2014; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 2012; Badenhorst, 2007; Hofstee 2013). Badenhorst (2007:155) reiterated the point that “in an academic context, all research is based on previous research”. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (2012:46) concurred and maintained that it is important that the researcher reviews the existing literature to create a sense of rapport with the readers and to broaden the horizons of the researcher. The literature review allows the researcher to establish what research has been conducted in the field so as to avoid duplicating or reinventing the wheel. In order to help in the possible improvement of records management practices in municipalities, it was vital for the

researcher to conduct a comprehensive literature review to establish current records management practices in municipalities.

The analysis of existing relevant literature on records management practices paved the way for the researcher to avoid duplication with similar studies. Therefore, the researcher reviewed the existing literature on records management practices in order to identify gaps in the existing body of knowledge, to propose a theoretical framework for the study and to provide a detailed context for the study. Birley and Moreland (2014:24) encapsulated the achievements of the literature review when they pointed out that it:

Assisted in the achievement of a critical analysis of the existing literature in the proposed research area, in clarifying and framing research questions as it discovered what has been done and not done, prior to the proposed research, and in the provision of a comparative account of the suitability, advantages and disadvantages of particular research methodologies chosen in the past, which are relevant to the study.

Records management is known to play a prominent role in ensuring that municipalities fight corruption and promote accountability and transparency. Therefore, without appropriate records management, it is difficult for municipalities to be accountable and transparent. In order for municipalities to increase their chances of getting clean audits and being transparent and accountable, it is important for them to ensure effective (and efficient) records management. Given the above, it is clear that the literature review is the foundation of any research, providing a researcher with a basis from which to start.

3.2 The importance of records management in organisations

Like staff, buildings and assets, records are vital to an organisation, and they thus deserve the same status as other resources. It is imperative for organisations to ensure the sound management of resources including records. However, according to the World Bank (2010), record-keeping in many countries has been neglected and has progressively worsened. This has gone largely unnoticed and the availability of records is still taken for granted. Having said this, Nwankwo (2001) asserted that the efficient and effective management of records benefits serious participants as well

as administrators in the institutions who need records to enable accurate and timely decisions. Fust and Graf (2002) posited that the sound management of records is fundamental to the public sector for the provision of basic services. In the same vein, Marshall (2006:1) reported that “records management provides one mechanism by which organisations and government officials can be held accountable for their actions”. From the above discussion, it is clear that proper records management is crucial in providing basic services to the community. Given this, the deterioration of record-keeping in many counties, as pointed to by the World Bank (2010) above, is cause for concern.

Researchers and records management professionals agree that managing records plays a crucial role in organisations. Any organisation that fails in records management practices cannot be accountable and transparent to its citizens. The National Archives of Australia (2004) stated that good record-keeping is essential to the core business of governments, promotes accountability and enhances the public's understanding of the role of government and its relationship with the people. It is for these reasons that municipalities need to manage their records properly in order for them to be accountable and transparent. Evidently, therefore, records should be properly managed to ensure that they are easily accessible when needed and in an appropriate format, and this means executing proper records management practices to protect the records.

Bakare, and Issa (2016:51) opined that “the day-to-day operations of any successful organisation depends entirely on its records, and records are important, without which an organisation simply cannot function”. Popoola (2000) elaborated by arguing that records constitute an essential instrument of administration without which operational processes and functions cannot be executed in organisations, and they are barometers for measuring the performance of an organisation. In addition to the above, Omenyi (2001) “asserted that the importance of records management includes fulfilling legal mandates, improving records access and accountability, reducing costs for the retrieval of records, ensuring the creation and management of accurate and reliable records, and reducing the costs of storing records. This means

that for an organisation to be successful in executing its duties, records management practices must be very good.

According to Basil (2005), for any organisation to function efficiently and effectively and carry on with its services there must be one form of record or another. Similarly, Adu (2014) claimed that managing records is important in any organisation and that the municipalities are no exception. Furthermore, Adu (2014) stated that the primary function of records management is to facilitate the free flow of records through the organisation to ensure that information is rapidly available where and when it is needed. In support of the above assertion, Seniwoliba, Mahama and Abilla (2016) declared that properly managed records will ensure they are taken care of for good administration and be used as an indication of the organisation's activities. On the other hand, as reported in a study by Matasio (2017:179), "the poor records-keeping practices in the Friends Church in Kenya contributed to time wastage, overspending, conflicts, loss of vital information and low productivity". These findings underscore the importance of good records-keeping practices assisting in financial savings, among other benefits, for the organisation. They also point to the negative repercussions of poor records-keeping practices.

Organisations create records daily as evidence of business activities. Nevertheless, if records are poorly maintained, this will result in institutional memory loss. Seniwoliba, Mahama and Abilla (2016:31) posited that:

Effective management of records brings the following additional benefits: supports an institution's business and discharge of its functions; promotes business efficiency and underpins service delivery by ensuring that authoritative information about past activities can be retrieved, used and relied upon in current business.

The authors pointed to further benefits of effective records management, namely, that it "supports compliance with other policies, enabling compliance with policies and other rules and requirements, and cost-effectiveness by ensuring that records are disposed of when no longer needed" (Seniwoliba, Mahama and Abilla, 2016:31)

Cox and Wallace (2002) stated that “accountability and transparency cannot be achieved in an environment where information is not available. In a study by Makhura and Ngoepe (2006:101), it was reported that “effective and efficient records management is a must in organisations and that records should be treated like all other organisational assets”. Municipalities cannot be exempted from this. In other words, effective records management not only helps protect organisational records but also improves an organisation’s operational efficiency and taking of decisions. In stressing the benefits of records management in organisations, Kanzi (2010:20) concluded that “effective records management ensures that records are available for use when needed, that privacy and confidentiality are maintained, that redundant records are destroyed and that records ultimately contribute towards sustaining service delivery”.

However, in the view of Orayo (2013: iii), “the management of records poses great challenges to many organizations and government departments all over the world”. Orayo (2013: iii) added that the “efficient management of records has tremendous and great potential of making work easy, enhancing working relations, improving the corporate image as well as increasing productivity besides enhancing efficiency and effectiveness”. One of the main issues that came to the fore in the study by Maseh (2015) was that the successful implementation of government programmes “requires a records management regime that ensures accuracy, integrity, authenticity and reliability of data, and that records are a major source of information and are the only reliable and legally verifiable data source. Thus, as has been stated previously, if records are not properly managed, the government will fail in programme implementation. It is, therefore, clear that records management plays an important part in ensuring the delivery of services, transparency and accountability. A further reason for records management is that the preservation of records serves as evidence of transactions. The World Bank (2010) reported that in the absence of proper records management, important audits cannot be conducted. In this regard, it is imperative to note that one of the benefits of good records management is the usability of the records when they are required.

In his study, Abuki (2014:16) revealed that:

Good records management will promote efficient and effective public services in ways such as ensuring regulatory compliance, curbing graft, minimising litigation risks, supporting the making of informed decisions by providing timely and sufficient information, and promoting accountability, among others.

In view of the demonstrated relationship between records management and public sector management, the current study examined record management practices in the municipalities of the Limpopo Province. The difference between this study and that of Abuki (2014) is that the latter considered the role of records management in improving public service delivery while this study focused on records management practices in municipalities. Although there is an increased acknowledgement of the vital role that records management plays in promoting accountability, transparency and good governance in the public sector, there is literature to support the argument that records management has been neglected. This means that while records management is recognised as important, it continues to be neglected. Moreover, good records management practices in municipalities need to be established.

Despite their being regulations underpinning record-keeping in municipalities, there seems to be ignorance in some municipalities concerning the management of records. Studies by Makhura (2001), Kanzi (2010) and Nevhotalu (2016) have indeed revealed municipalities' ignorance regarding records management programmes. There is clear evidence that while organisations, including municipalities, appreciate the significance of records management, they have neglected records management functions. It must be noted that any organisation that is plagued by deficiencies in its records management practices cannot be accountable to its citizens. Ngoepe (2008), similarly, confirms that even though the public sector in South Africa has shown assurance and leadership in records management functions, this support has been characterised by an absence of knowledge of such functions. It is for this reason that the researcher decided to establish what the records management practices in municipalities were. It is

evident, given the above, that the significance of records management in organisations cannot be overemphasised.

According to the National Archives of Australia (2004), good record-keeping is indispensable to the core business of governments, promotes accountability and enhances the public's consideration of the role of government and its connection with the people. Red Deer College (2009) also maintained that records management assists organisations by reducing costs, risks or uncertainty, protecting privacy, adding value to existing services and preserving organisational memory, knowledge and intellectual assets. Ironically, despite the importance of records management in organisations and governments all over the world, the literature reveals that there is poor management of records in many organisations, more particularly in the developing and under-developed countries. According to Ngoepe and Ngulube (2014:135), “there is a consensus among researchers that proper records management plays a significant role in the auditing process”. In view of the above statement, it is clear that records management plays a crucial role in enhancing accountability, transparency and the rule of law. Such evidence underscores the need to establish what the records management practices in municipalities are.

3.3 Legislative framework governing records management globally

This section deals with the numerous studies on the legislative frameworks governing records management internationally. Internationally, record-keeping is seen as essential for various reasons including audits, legal issues and preservation. It was important for the researcher to understand international trends regarding legislative frameworks. Governments the world over have continually recognised the significance of records management in fighting corruption and maladministration and promoting accountability and transparency by passing legislation and regulations in this regard. The way to changing any society usually starts with putting together a legislative and regulatory framework and this is often precarious in the records management fraternity. Records are valuable assets for the functioning of the state and need to be managed properly to enhance effectiveness, accountability and transparency. For this to occur, a legislative and regulatory framework is needed. Countries across the globe have enacted archives and records regulations to

establish the legal and administrative base that assigns functions, supremacy and responsibilities.

The Secretary-general of the United Nations (UN) promulgated the UN *Records Management Policy Guidelines* in 2003 for ensuring the effective and efficient management of the UN's own records and archives. The *Guidelines* provide guidance to personnel in relation to the creation, usage, organisation and management of information and records in the organisation. Similarly, other international organisations like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have put in place legislative frameworks for managing records. According to the World Bank (2000), record-keeping is a fundamental activity of public administration without which there can be no rule of law and no accountability. It is for this reason that it developed a legislative framework in the form of "Management of records policy – procedure. The determination of this policy procedure was to assist employees of the bank responsible for documenting activities and choices to apply simple records management principles, standards and practices in the performance of their duties (World Bank, 2000).

In the United Kingdom (UK), the Public Records Act (1958) forms the main legislation governing public records. It established a cohesive regulatory framework for public records at the Public Record Office and other places of deposit. Just as in the UK, the State Records Act (1998) of Australia makes provision for the creation, management and protection of the records of public offices of the state and provides, amongst other provisions, for public access to those records and the establishment of the State Records Authority. The Act also stipulates that "each public office must ensure the safe custody and proper preservation of the state records that it has control of and keep full and accurate records of the activities of the office". The Act covers all departments and agencies of the central government as well as the records of government ministers created or received as part of their official duties.

The Public Records Act of New Zealand (2005) requires that the "National Archives of New Zealand develop and support government record-keeping to enable the government to be held accountable by ensuring full and accurate records of the affairs of central and local government". The mandate to ensure sound records

management practise in all government entities in New Zealand is comparable to that of the USA. The Federal Records Act (1950) of United States federal law “provides the legal framework for federal records management, including record creation, maintenance, and disposition”. The Act requires each federal agency to “establish an ongoing programme for records management and to cooperate with the National Archives and Records Administration in records management programmes”.

An important observation from the reviewed literature above is that countries around the world have enacted records management legislation to guide the private and public sector on how to deal with records management and provide legal frameworks for records management. The biggest shortcoming of all the legal frameworks on records management is the lack of enforcement in cases where the legislation is not being followed. There are also differences in terms of interpreting how the legal frameworks on records management provide guidance. What emerged strongly from all the legal frameworks (of both international organisations and countries) is the need for accountability, transparency and public access to the records. There is also a need for strong, integrated and effective legislation and policies for the development of effective records management practices which would allow governments and organisations to fulfil their mandates effectively and efficiently.

3.4 Legislative framework governing records management in South Africa

Among its objectives, the current study sought to establish whether the current records management practices in municipalities comply with the legislation that regulates the management of records in South Africa or not. Records management in South Africa is governed by a legislative framework which, among other things, assists in preventing records from going missing, being tampered with and misfiled. These legislations, policies and guidelines can assist municipalities in managing records. Management of records in municipalities is thus guided by a sound legislative framework. In South Africa, business activities, whether private or public, are controlled by the government through acts, regulations, standards, policies and procedures. As has been shown previously, all municipalities strive to give effect to the accountability, transparency and service delivery values contained in the legal

framework established. However, that can only be achieved if municipalities improve their records management practices by complying with the legislative framework governing the management of records.

Marutha (2018) argued that legislative frameworks are at the heart of the achievement of business goals in all business sectors, the health sector included. According to Katuu and van der Walt (2016), the key to transforming any society often begins with complying with its legislative and regulatory framework. It is for these reasons that municipalities must ensure that their records management processes comply with the appropriate legislation governing records management in South Africa. It was therefore imperative that the researcher put the legislative framework governing records management in South Africa in context. Furthermore, an underlying principle of this study was that government departments and municipalities in South Africa are forced by legislation to implement a systematic and organised approach in the management of records. This approach is thus informed by legislation and, importantly, the acknowledgement of the value of records management in government departments and municipalities.

There are various regulations in place to allow municipalities to fulfil their mandate effectively and efficiently. Records management is presented and highlighted in these regulations with the aim of ensuring endorsement or acquiescence. Nearly all statutory frameworks have units that deal precisely with the necessity to manage records appropriately. The main drive is to make sure that individuals account for their engagements in the organisations. One thing is clear from this discussion and that is municipalities have no choice but to manage their records as regulated by legislation. The South African legislation is discussed below.

3.4.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996

Section 195 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa advocates the efficient use of resources in the public sector. The section also “provides, amongst others, for the effective, economical and efficient use of resources and provision of timely, accessible and accurate information”. Furthermore, Section 195(1) (f) of the Constitution requires municipalities to provide the Office of the Auditor-general with information concerning its financial transactions. Section 32(1)(a) and (c) of the

Constitution promulgates that “the public has the right to access information held by the State or by another person when that information is required for the exercise or protection of any right”. Furthermore, the Constitution provides for the public services of South Africa to be accountable to the citizens. Section 41 of the Constitution emphasises that while national, provincial and local government levels are interdependent and interrelated, they are also autonomous.

It is clear from these sections of the Constitution that municipalities are obliged to manage records and, accordingly, to uphold the Constitution. According to the Constitution, one of the aims of local government is to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner. The Constitution also instructs that all ranges of government and organs of state must offer effective, transparent, accountable and rational government for the Republic as a whole. However, it must be noted with concern that the Constitution does not provide any form of advice on non-compliance. People do not always comply with records management as stipulated in the Constitution and no punitive measures can be taken against those who fail to comply. Operative records management allows municipalities to document the delivery of services and to promote accountability and transparency. To accomplish this the government developed specific legislation to deal with records management and this legislation is described below”.

3.4.2 National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Act (No. 43 of 1996)

In acknowledging the importance of sound records management practices in the public sector, the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa passed the National Archives and Records Service Act (No 43 of 1996) to regulate records management functions in government entities. The Act provides the legal framework according to which records management practices are regulated. The National Archives and Records Service was mandated by legislation to ensure the proper management of records in the public sector. The mission of the service is the fostering of national identity and the protection of rights by preserving a national archival heritage for use by the government and people of South Africa and to promote an efficient, accountable and transparent government through the proper management and care of government records.

The aim of the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Act (No. 43 of 1996) is to guide the National Archives and Record Service on the proper management and care of the records of governmental bodies, the preservation and use of the national archival heritage and related matters. Public bodies, including municipalities, are required to designate an official as their records manager, orchestrating compliance with the archival legislation. Section 13 of the Act provides the National Archivist with powers to pursue effective records management in the public sector. The National Archivist is charged not only with ensuring the effective management of records but also that records are accessible to the state and to the public. Most importantly, the National Archivist has to approve any decision regarding the management of records in government bodies. Section 13 of the Act provides for the National Archivist to determine which record-keeping systems should be used by governmental bodies and to authorise the disposal of public records or their transfer into archival custody. The Act refers to government entities, and not municipalities. This leaves room for misinterpretation as some municipal employees believe that they work for municipalities and not for government entities.

3.4.3 Limpopo Province Archives Act (No. 5 of 2001)

The Limpopo Province Archives Act (No. 5 of 2001) was presented with the aim of leading the management of records and archives in the Limpopo Province. Schedule 5 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa promulgates provincial archives other than national archives, as functional areas of “exclusive provincial legislative competence”. The Limpopo Province Archives Act was passed to regulate records management functions in the province. The Act stems from the National Archives Act No. 43 of 1996. The Limpopo Province Archives Act emphasises that municipalities must manage their records in a well-structured record-keeping system, and to put the necessary policies and procedures in place to ensure that their record-keeping and records management practices comply with the requirements of the Act. The Act also stipulates that records received or created by the municipalities in the performance of their functions, irrespective of their format or medium, are managed in such a manner that they will promote good governance and comply with appropriate legislation.

The management of records of public bodies in South Africa is shared between the National and Provincial Archives Services. All records that have national value fall under the functional area of national legislative competence, while records that have provincial value are managed in accordance with the provincial legislative competence. In recognising the value of records management, municipalities have to manage their records in accordance with the broad policy guidelines contained in both the Limpopo Province Archives Act and the National Archives and Records Service Act. Increasingly, municipalities have to develop and implement their own records management policy in order to link their own unique processes and procedures to the requirements of the National Archives and Records Service Act. While this Act was aimed at assisting provincial governments and municipalities, it is clear that most provincial archives are not properly functional. The same applies to the Limpopo Provincial Archives.

3.4.4 Municipal Finance Management Act (No. 56 of 2003)

The Municipal Finance Management Act (No. 56 of 2003) is one of the most significant pieces of legislation enacted by the democratic government in South Africa to deal with the management of municipal finances. According to the Act, “all municipalities are required to prepare annual financial statements within two months after the end of the financial year to which the statements relate, and submit them to the Office of the Auditor-General”. The objective of the Act is to secure sound and sustainable management of the financial and fiscal affairs of municipalities. The Act seeks to ensure that financial resources allocated to municipalities are directed at providing basic services and the general welfare of the community, thereby preventing corruption and fraud. Effective records management contributes to combating corruption and fraud. Records management systems also allow for verification of the completeness and accuracy of data reported in financial statements and assist in the compilation of the audit process. The municipalities must ensure timely availability of records at all the times as this is important to ensure verification.

According to Section 61(2) (b) of the Act, “an accounting officer may not use the position or privileges of, or confidential information obtained as, accounting officer

for personal gain or to improperly benefit another person”. Section 62(b) of the Act “stipulates that municipalities must take reasonable steps to ensure that full and proper records of the financial affairs of the municipality are kept in accordance with prescribed norms and standards”. The Act also argues that poor financial record-keeping creates opportunities for fraud, leads to loss of revenue, impedes fiscal planning and hinders the delivery of services to the public. It also gives a directive to the municipalities to ensure that financial records are properly managed for accountability by the accounting officer of that municipality. This Act makes it clear that municipal managers are tasked as the accounting officers responsible for taking reasonable steps to ensure that full and proper records of financial affairs are maintained in the municipalities.

3.4.5 The Promotion of Access to Information Act (No. 2 of 2000)

According to Marutha (2018), one very important piece of legislation that affects the management of records in South Africa is the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) (No. 2 of 2000). The Act “gives effect to the constitutional right of access to any information held by the State and any information that is held by another person and that is required for the exercise or protection of any rights”. The purpose of the PAIA is to promote effective access to information through which people are able to fully exercise and protect their rights. Furthermore, according to the PAIA, “the government must respect, protect, promote and fulfil, at least, all the rights in the Bill of Rights which is the cornerstone of democracy in South Africa”. A further objective of the PAIA is “to promote the right of access to information and to foster a culture of transparency and accountability in South Africa. If municipalities are to be accountable and transparent, this Act must be fully complied with. Fust and Graf (2002) posited that the sound management of records is the basis needed by any government for the provision of public services, to fulfil its obligations of accountability towards its citizens, and for economic development. The PAIA (2000) is “aimed at encouraging an open democracy where individuals from all walks of life are empowered to engage with government and participate in decisions which affect their lives”. This helps the public to keep track of the activities of the government and to be part of the decision-making process. However, it is important to note that the

Act also stipulates that for security, administrative and financial reasons, public bodies may request to be exempted from provisions of this Act". As noted by Marutha (2018), the PAIA ensures proper service continuity.

There have been challenges in the implementation of the PAIA. One such challenge has been the inability to retrieve the records when required. This could be as a result of poor records management practices or, in some cases, as a result of a record holder's refusal to provide access to information. The failure of information holders to grant access to, and release information, is compounded by the limited avenues available to requesters for seeking redress. This is mainly seen in government departments where the information contained in the records may implicate some of the employees. Recently, many forensic investigation reports have been withheld by municipalities despite requests, through the PAIA, for access to the reports. Submitting a request is made particularly difficult by the failure of municipalities to prepare and update manuals providing contact details of the holders of information. These difficulties result in significant time delays, waste resources and cause considerable frustration for anyone requesting information. The lack of information officers to deal with the requests has also been identified as a problem.

3.5 Records management practices

Records management practices refers to a combination of all the processes and procedure to be followed in managing records. This section examines the records management practices around the globe, Africa, South Africa and in municipalities.

3.5.1 Global trends in records management practices

In order to give a sense of records management practices in South Africa, it is important to first present records management trends in the international arena. This section will, therefore, provide an analysis of records management practices in the international arena. The analysis of existing literature on records management practices shows that the practices vary from one country to another. According to Tagbotor, Adzido and Agbanu (2015), the essence of proper records management cannot be overemphasised. The International Council on Archives (ICA) (2008) points out that good records management is fundamental to a well-functioning organization since it supports business activity and provides a basis for efficient

service delivery. The International Records Management Trust (IRMT) (2004) stresses that:

Public officials in various organisations around the world lack the requisite skills concerning the nature of records and record-keeping, and about why they need to exist, why the records need to be managed, and what the officials' responsibilities are in the management of such records over time.

According to Adu (2018), "the effective management of records and archives throughout their life cycle is a key component of national development for the UK. The author emphasises that poorly managed records mean that government does not have ready access to authoritative sources of administrative, financial and legal information to support sound decision making or the delivery of programmes and services. Marsh, Deserno and Kynaston (2005:33) pointed out that "records creation and retention in countries like the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia have always been recognised as an unavoidable result of business activities, but the quality of record-keeping and compliance with regulations has varied widely". According to the World Bank (2000), "record-keeping is a fundamental activity of public administration all over the world without which there can be no rule of law or accountability". Yet, as reported by the World Bank (2000), "in many countries around the world record-keeping systems are unable to cope with the growing mass of unmanaged records". To do so, according to Smith (2018:78), "in the United Kingdom, government departments and public agencies are moving quickly towards the creation, storage, maintenance and retrieval of their records and information solely in electronic form". This suggests that the trend in records management in the UK now comprises a focus on electronic records.

Shepherd (2006) opined that organisations that are unable to properly manage their records are hindered and the rights of stakeholders may be compromised. Fong (2014:334) posited that "in the past, records management was often viewed as unnecessary or low in business priorities, but increasing demands for effective management of records, protection of vital information and rising compliance issues have confirmed the need for better systems.

He further argued that companies in Indonesia, Singapore and China have adjusted to alterations in records management developments”.

Given the above, it is obvious that there is a necessity for improved records management practices in organisations internationally, including Asia. In terms of the latter, a study by Yusof (2008:229) on “Nurturing attitudes for records management in Malaysian financial institutions”, revealed that institutions in Malaysia are aware of the existence of relevant laws and regulations relating to the retention of records, but fail to manage records according to those laws and regulations. On the contrary, Kemoni and Ngulube (2008:121) stated that “the National Archives and Records Administration in the USA helps to preserve the nation’s documentary heritage through the implementation of a proper records management programme of all federal records”. In Australia, a report by the Australian National Audit Office (2012) postulated that management of records by Australian Government agencies is integral to the effective administration of programmes and services and should be undertaken in accordance with a broad range of legal, policy and other requirements.

Spain has in recent years, as reported by de Mingo and Cerrillo-i-Martínez (2018), witnessed the growing importance of fostering policies of transparency in public administration, leading to the passing of a number of regulations and legislation on records management. In Australia, the rapidly evolving information technology environment, coupled with the lack of a standard method of managing records, presents a number of unique and complex challenges for records managers in that country. As indicated by the National Archives of Australia (2003), sound records management is indispensable to the central business of governments, as it promotes accountability and enhances the public's awareness of the purpose of government. In as much as we believe that developed countries do not have problems in managing records, it is clear from this discussion that there are some challenges in developed countries similar to what is being experienced in developing and under-developed countries.

According to Archives New Zealand (2014), the:

Public sector cannot function without trustworthy evidence of business activity. The authoritative information contained in credible records can also be used within the public sector, and potentially reused by businesses, social organisations and individuals to generate new and added economic, social and cultural values.

The IRMT (2011) declared that:

Openness, a key aspect of the international agenda for increasing transparency and accountability, for reducing public sector corruption, and for strengthening economic performance, rests on the principle that citizens have a right to know what their governments are doing and to benefit from using government information.

However, the IRMT (2011) raised “the issue of lack of the requisite skills concerning the nature of records and records management”. It is clear from the above discussion that records management plays an important role in fighting corruption and promoting accountability and transparency.

3.5.2 Records management practices in Africa

According to Akussah and Asamoah (2015), records management in government has been debated in Africa for many years. Nevertheless, Mnjama (2004) reported that poor management of records as a resource was evident in many African and Central American countries. Phiri (2016:203) expounded that “although research reveals that the overall recordkeeping in the various countries has slightly improved compared with the situation other researchers found ten years ago, it remains unsatisfactory and disjointed from governance”. Therefore, African countries have a mammoth task of improving their records management practices to a satisfactory level. A study carried out by Malemelo, Dube, David and Ngulube (2013) investigated “The management of financial records at the Marondera Municipality in Zimbabwe”. Findings demonstrated that records were not effectively managed in the municipality. Furthermore, the study found that while the municipality did have an incorporated outline for records management, the storage area was clogged as a result of the

absence of a vigorous disposal policy. The study concluded that municipalities must ensure they implement records management policies to improve current records management practices.

Still in Zimbabwe, a study by Chaterera (2016) revealed that delays and failure to access services due to missing or misplaced records from public institutions is a common phenomenon in Zimbabwe. In a recent study by Ncube and Rodrigues (2017), it became clear that “the record-keeping practices of estate agents in Zimbabwe were inadequate. Shortcomings included inadequate storage facilities for their records; haphazard filing and ad hoc records management practices; an absence of records management procedure manuals for both paper records and electronic records; and random disposal practices and non-existent disposal and retention schedules.

In a study conducted by Tsabedze (2011) in Swaziland, it was found that the “government ministries do not practise sound records management in line with the Swaziland National Archives Act (No. 5 of 1971), and there was no uniformity with respect to filing methods and the manner in which records were destroyed or deleted”. Tsabedze (2011) came to the conclusion that the lack of records management practices, directly and indirectly, affects the information flow within the ministries. One of the key matters that came to the fore in research done by Nengomasha (2009) in Namibia was that records management practices in the public service of Namibia was poor, there was an absence of clarity on records management, and an inadequate legal and regulatory environment.

The poor conditions of record management practices in the Botswana public sector were described by Keakopa (2013:38) who maintained that “record-keeping practices remain marginally developed with only a few organisations making efforts to design records management policies and procedures in Botswana”. The researcher reported that the “literature reflects growing concerns about the shortage of policies and procedures which are important in instigating records management strategies”. Keakopa (2013:38) argued that “records management functions in any

organisation should be placed strategically if records are to play a meaningful role in organisational strategic directions and overall national development". Also in Botswana, a study by Keorapetse and Keakopa (2012) established that records management programmes in the public sector in that country were in a state of disarray. In Lesotho, the overall findings of a study by Sejane (2005) revealed that government entities in Lesotho were not managing their records adequately. Lekoeke (2012) was equally, if not more, critical asserting that Lesotho was behind in records management practice and lacked a clear understanding of the importance of records.

Unegbu and Adenike (2013:240) in Nigeria, maintained that "the issue of records management practices in the government was in need of more consideration and must be handled as urgent". Kemoni (2007) reported that record-keeping in Kenyan ministries was not proficient and operative, thus affecting public service provision. It was also established from his research that although the existing records and archives legislation in Kenya had certain strengths, it also had weaknesses which hindered the effective management of records in that country. What stands out from a study by Abuki (2014) in Kenya is that proper records management promotes capable public services in many ways. However, Abuki (2014) was critical of the situation stating that public services in Kenya have not implemented records management practices and they lack a clear record management programme that is supported with guidelines, procedures, policies or standards and responsibilities of the staff. Njeru, Chege and Ng'eno (2017:516) continued in the same vein, pointing out that in Kenya, "apart from a few government agencies that have functional records management programmes, most organisations do not have a well-established records management practice". In Ghana, as in South Africa, the legislation makes it compulsory for organisations to keep records and maintain sound records management (Seniwoliba, Mahama, and Abilla, 2016).

In a study conducted by Luyombya (2010) entitled "Framework for effective public digital records management in Uganda", it was found that there was a lack of clear policies, guidelines and procedures and that the Uganda National Records Centre

and Archives legislation was not fully implemented or properly enforced. Still in East Africa, research by Mohamed, Rasheli and Mwangike (2018) on the “management of records in Tanzania”, argued that “records management is a corporate function similar to other organisational functions like human resources, finance and estates management to name a few and, therefore, it should be recognised as a specific corporate function within an organisation.

From the literature reviewed above, there is a clear indication that records management practices in African countries are poor and have, arguably, caused serious impediments in providing service. The results from the various studies cited above indicate that there has been negligence in records management in a number of countries on the continent. There seems to be no improvement as the study conducted over 20 years ago by Thurston and Cain (1996:11) found that poor records management practices in African countries had hindered the application of public sector transformations in Africa. Just over a decade later, Mnjama (2007) reported that records management practices in Africa were mainly characterised by either distorted systems or were in a state of disorder. According to Nengomasha (2013:3), “the problems of managing records seem to apply to a great number of sub-Saharan countries such as Botswana, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland and Tanzania, just to name a few”. As emphasised earlier, the ability of any government, be it at a national or municipal level, to carry out its mandate successfully is determined by the availability of relevant and comprehensive records.

Against this backdrop, it could be concluded that records management practices in Africa are in a poor state and of concern is Nengomasha’s (2013) view that the problem of poor records management practices in Africa continues to increase. The researcher does, however, take note of the trends that have taken place in some countries, particularly in South Africa, with regards to the improvement in records management practices. It is to South Africa and the state of records management in this country that the discussion now turns.

3.5.3 Records management practices in South Africa

Countries around the world have recognised the importance of effective records management in upholding noble governance, accountability and transparency, and South Africa is no exception. The situation in South Africa is little, if any different to countries to the north, as studies have shown that records management practices have been neglected. Katuu (2015a:1) pointed out that “the management of records in South Africa has been the subject of extensive and rigorous discussion over several decades”. Owing to the need for municipalities to improve governance, accountability and transparency, it is important for records management and archival services professionals to understand current records management practices in municipalities. The aforementioned South African National Archives and Records Service Act (No. 43 of 1996) requires that government departments and bodies “manage their records in a well-structured record-keeping system, and to put the necessary policies and procedures in place to ensure that their record-keeping and records management practices comply with the requirements of the Act”.

As noted, the management of records of public bodies in South Africa is shared between the National and the Provincial Archives Services. Also as noted, all records that have national value fall under the functional area of exclusive national legislative competence, while records that have provincial value are managed in accordance with the provincial legislative competence. Records in municipalities must consequently be managed in line with the policy guidelines enclosed in both the provincial and national acts. Furthermore, municipalities have to develop and implement their own records management policy in accordance with the requirements of the National Archives and Records Service Act.

As outlined in Chapter One, the number of service delivery protests in South Africa has been increasing every year. According to Municipal IQ (2016), the increase in the number of demonstrations is worrisome. Municipal IQ (2016) reported that from 01 January to 30 April 2016, 70 service delivery protests were reported in South Africa. Municipal IQ further stated that “if the rate of service delivery protests continues at the same rate for the rest of the year, it would reach a record peak of 210, compared with 164 in 2015 and 191 (the highest so far) in 2014”. The large

number of these protests in the country is a clear indication that municipalities have failed to provide communities with access to basic services and is a cause for concern. According to Mahlaba (2015:7), “delivery of services to communities appears to be the leading cause of protests around South Africa, with communities turning to protest action to vent their anger at the lack of services they experience”. Therefore, one can conclude that the increasing number of services delivery protests in South Africa is because of the municipalities’ failures to provide basic services as entrusted in the Constitution.

Questions have been raised as to what are the root causes of the failure on the part of municipalities to adequately provide for basic service delivery. While this cannot be causally linked to records management, it is evident that poor records management has made it possible for some officials to hide the corruption and maladministration taking place in the municipalities. A study by Mampe and Kalusopa (2012) revealed that poor records management programmes in Botswana were affecting the management of records for effective service delivery. As a consequence, one cannot turn a blind eye to the possibility that the current records management practices in municipalities in South Africa may well be contributing to the disillusion with service delivery amongst residents. Ngoepe (2012:9) noted that:

Due to failure of these municipalities to implement corporate governance, many of them face consequences such as not enough interest from investors, no credibility, increasing demands from communities for better service delivery, investigations into maladministration or unexpected change of leadership without having a succession planning system in place, as is the case in South Africa.

The success of any municipality mainly rests on the quality of basic services provided to its local communities. The World Bank (2000) reported that record- keeping is a fundamental activity of public administration without which there can be no rule of law and accountability. It is evident from the above that good records management practices are needed for municipalities to provide basic services and to promote accountability and transparency.

According to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), public administrators must be efficient and accountable to the citizens. Furthermore, South African government departments and municipalities are obliged by legislation to adopt and manage their records. However, despite the legislation, it seems that most of the municipalities in South Africa have been unable to manage their records effectively and efficiently. Literature reveals, among other factors, poor records management, an inadequate number of qualified records management officials, poor storage facilities for records and the lack of financial investment in records management (Venter, 2004; Abuki, 2014; Ngoepe, 2016; Nevhutalu, 2016). Therefore, there is a need for more research on records management practices in municipalities to determine the cause of these poor practices.

A study by Ngoepe and Van der Walt (2009) which explored “records management trends in the South African public sector” discovered that there was an overall absence of sound records management in the sector. The study also found that factors contributing to the present records management practices in South Africa were the scarcity of records management policies in government departments, the absence of top management support, a lack of consciousness of the significance of records management, and the lack of relevant skills amongst records management practitioners. Schellnack-Kelly (2013) in her study argued that the effective application of the National Archives Records Management Policy would ensure that all public bodies adhere to and observe rules concerning the creation, management and disposition of all information sources. Research thus shows that records management practices in many public bodies in South Africa are poor and in disarray.

The poor state of record management in South Africa was also affirmed by Ngoepe (2008) who reported that record-keeping systems in South Africa were on the verge of collapse. A study five years later by Garaba (2013:76) established that “archives as resource centres are in a state of neglect, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.” Similarly, according to Nengomasha (2013:3), “the problem of managing records seems to apply to a great number of sub-Saharan countries such as Botswana, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland and Tanzania, just to name a few”. Also

emerging from the above study was the fact that the problem seems to continue unabated in most countries and institutions. The apparent absence of sound records management practices in South Africa provided a rationale for revisiting some of the municipalities in order to establish their records management practices as well as establish the factors that were contributing to those practices.

Cook (1999) reported that sound records management starts with the establishment of policies, procedures and standards. In a similar vein, Pearce-Moses (2005) stated that activities, policies and procedures within an organisation, according to which it implements records management, are the constituent parts of a records management programme. Also underscoring the importance of policies, Garaba (2015), in his survey of records management practices in religious institutions in KwaZulu-Natal, recommended that organisations should have a records management policy in place that gives authority to the record-keeping programme, outlines staff and management responsibilities, and ensures that the records management function is given due priority. Equally important is the need to have suitably qualified records management and archival professionals to implement records management policies. Hence, one of the objectives of the current study was to establish the knowledge level of personnel involved in records management functions in municipalities with regard to records management practices.

Although the Limpopo Provincial Government acknowledges its responsibilities for keeping information resources in order to support its operations as well as to fulfil its legal and other obligations through sound records management practices, it has not done enough. This is evident in the findings of the various studies that have been undertaken on the records management practices in the public sector in Limpopo Province (Legodi, 2011; Marutha, 2011; Marutha and Ngulube, 2012; Nevhutalu, 2016). The findings from these studies seem to suggest that the public sector in Limpopo Province is lagging behind in records management practices. Marutha (2011:21) pointed to the benefits associated with correct records management stating that “organisations that manage their records correctly are compensated with several benefits, such as professional administration and accountability, simple recovery and accessibility of records, [and] the ability to prevent and track fraud and

corruption". As noted in Chapter One, the AG has expressed concern over the poor records management in municipalities in Limpopo, which has caused audit outcomes to regress in the province. The lack of clean audits in the province is due to weak government leadership, the absence of accountability, and poor records management. From this discussion, it is evident that records management practices in the Limpopo Province, both in the government departments and in the municipalities, require some attention. Therefore, this study intended to establish the records management practices in the municipalities of the Limpopo Province.

Records management inhabits a strategic position in the effective and efficient management of organisations, particularly in the public sector where officials have to be accountable and transparent to the citizenry. This sentiment is shared by Mnjama (2004) who stated that good records management plays a vital part in fighting corruption by facilitating smooth investigation and providing evidence of transactions. This is also echoed by Ngoepe (2016:340), who reported that government records are not only important tools in efficient administration and planning, they are also the reasons why citizens can hold government officials accountable. Therefore, records management practices must be improved in all government institutions in order to fight corruption and hold government officials accountable for any action they take.

It is also worthwhile noting that communities in the Limpopo Province have, on many occasions, failed to hold officials accountable due to a lack of records as a result of poor records management. For example, in the Sekhukhune District Municipality, R5.5-million disappeared from the municipal account because there were no records on how the money was used. Due to the lack of records, no-one was held accountable. The records management trends seen in municipalities are similar to those of records management in government departments. In terms of the latter, Ngoepe (2016) in his study of "Records management models in the public sector in South Africa" postulated that "records management functions in most governmental bodies in South Africa were teetering on the brink of collapse and were essentially on a life-support machine, as they were unable to contribute positively to the auditing

process. This is indeed of great concern and underlines how crucial it is to address the issue of proper records management.

3.5.4 Records management practices in municipalities

The previous section deliberated on the records management practices in South Africa. In this section, the researcher discusses the records management practices in municipalities. Through their daily activities, municipalities generate large volumes of records. All these records must be managed and preserved for future use. Municipalities are also legally bound to retain and preserve records systematically, and to adhere to policies and procedures. The application of proper records management practices can lead to a number of benefits for municipalities. The ability of a government body, such as a municipality, to perform its obligations effectively rests on the accessibility of relevant and comprehensive information.

Municipalities in South Africa are confronted with developing and encouraging proper records management practices so as to deliver their constitutional and legislative mandate. There is ample research on the significance of records management in organisations. Organisations, including municipalities, create and produce records every day in carrying out their business activities. However, if these records are not properly managed, the chances are that these organisations would lose them and their organisational memory. In other words, organisations such as municipalities can only benefit from records if they are properly managed. It goes without saying that if there are no records or if they are not properly managed then there will be no good governance, no rule of law and no accountability and transparency.

As part of its responsibility to provide basic municipal services in South Africa, the government has developed policies and regulations to address this responsibility. Records management is one mechanism by which municipalities can be accountable and transparent to the people they serve. As reported by Marshall (2006:1), records management provides one instrument by which government officers can be held liable for their actions. Effective records management enables municipalities to document procurement processes, thereby improving the provision of services and promoting accountability and transparency.

To achieve what is stipulated in the Constitution, the National Archives and Records Services Act (No. 43 of 1996) was promulgated to control records management programmes in the public sector, including municipalities. The Act provides for a national archive to ensure “the proper management and care of the records of governmental bodies, and the preservation and use of a national archival heritage”. The Limpopo Province Archives Act (No. 5 of 2001) also requires that municipalities “manage their records in a well-structured record-keeping system, and to put the necessary policies and procedures in place to ensure that their record-keeping and records management practices comply with the requirements of the Act”. The Act stipulates that “the records, that are received or created by the municipality in the performance of their functions, irrespective of the format or medium thereof, are managed in such a manner that they will promote good governance and comply with appropriate legislature”. Good governance and accountability of municipalities can arguably only be achieved when there is transparency, which in turn can only happen when there are authentic and reliable records to support this.

According to the NARSSA (1996):

Sound records management is fundamental for good governance, effective and efficient administration of any government bodies. The information contained in municipality records needs to be managed systematically in order to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the municipalities in carrying out their constitutional mandate.

Municipalities should recognise their responsibility to the public by implementing and maintaining sound records management practices. The NARSSA (1996) further stipulates that municipalities should “ensure that records management receives the attention it deserves, it should be a strategic objective in the strategic and business plans of municipalities”. Furthermore, municipal managers should also ensure that they budget for the records management function and that the necessary financial, human and technological resources are allocated to support the function.

The records management units in municipalities are responsible for the management, creation, maintenance, use and disposal of records to achieve

efficient, transparent and accountable governance. The South African Constitution also states that the municipalities' responsibility is to ensure the delivery of basic services to the communities. These services include water and sanitation, housing, refuse removal, burial sites, electricity supply, roads and drainage, street lighting and parks. All these services can only be provided if proper records management is taking place in municipalities. Makhura (2005) reported that records management is a significant element of office administration; hence it is necessary for municipalities to give priority to records management. According to Kanzi (2010), the capacity of any municipality to achieve its mandate in an excellent manner is determined by the accessibility of its records. Similarly, Schellnack-Kelly (2013) posited that information found in the records of municipalities is needed to meet service delivery and planned development ventures of municipalities. Magee (2014) on the other hand, asserted that records management has a key role in government at all levels.

Bakare and Issa (2016:51) stated that "proper records management practices in entrenching good governance, especially at the municipal level, cannot be over-emphasised if the municipalities are to make a significant impact on grassroots governance". The above discussion demonstrates that it is important for municipalities to manage their records. A key issue observed in the literature that covered the importance of managing records in municipalities was that records management is crucial to service delivery and accountability. In light of this, due to its importance, the proper management of records in municipalities has to be given prominence.

As noted above, the South African Constitution states that it is the duty of municipalities to ensure the provision of basic services. These basic services have an immediate impact on the quality of the lives of the people in these communities. However, these services can only be provided if there are well-structured record-keeping systems which include the preservation of official municipal records. The importance of records management in municipalities providing basic services cannot be overemphasised.

According to Marutha and Ngoepe (2017), most professions such as accountants, auditors, doctors and lawyers depend on the power of records management to

complete their responsibilities. Chachage and Ngulube (2006:2) asserted that “records are kept for administrative, historic and archival values”. However, as contended by this study, it is the responsibility of every municipality to apply the required policies and procedures to ensure that their records management practices are in accordance with the requests of the National Archives and Records Services of South Africa Act (No. 43 of 1996). In a study by Shepherd (2006), it was found that records were regarded as valuable resources and assets that should be protected and preserved as evidence of actions. Shepherd (2006) reported that in organisations where records are not properly managed, records will often be inadequate for the purposes for which they are needed, records will often be lost, some records will be destroyed prematurely and others retained unnecessarily.

The high level of corruption and maladministration, and the absence of accountability and transparency in providing services to the community have become endemic and are a cause for concern in many municipalities in South Africa. The poor state of municipal records management is a well-documented phenomenon. Effective records management allows municipalities to document procurement processes, thereby advancing the delivery of services and encouraging accountability and transparency. Without effective records management in municipalities, there can be no rule of law, service delivery, accountability and transparency. Through their daily activities, municipalities generate large volumes of records. Municipalities, like other government bodies, are legally bound to retain and preserve records systematically, and to adhere to policies and procedures.

Municipalities in the Limpopo Province, like many other municipalities in South Africa, have recognised the relationship between good governance and effective records management. However, that is not sufficient unless there are well-trained officials in municipalities responsible for records management. Municipalities are the sphere of government closest to the people, and are not merely tasked with the delivery of basic services to communities – they are actually the cornerstone of service delivery. The primary responsibility of municipalities in South Africa is to ensure that they deliver basic services to the community. However, some

municipalities are failing to provide effective and efficient service delivery due to various reasons, one of which is poor records management. Records are important assets to any organisation and contain important information for proper decision-making.

Municipalities get their funding from three sources. First, they raise some of their own revenue by charging owners of property (such as land, houses and businesses) rates based on the value of their property. The second way they raise funding is by charging for the services they provide like water, electricity, refuse removal and the use of municipal facilities such as halls and sports grounds. The third funding source for municipalities comes from the national government. A great percentage of the national budget is allocated to municipalities to deliver basic municipal services such as water, health, housing and electricity. According to the National Treasury (2018), local government was to be allocated approximately 9.2% of the total 2018/2019 budget of around R1.2 trillion. Despite this huge budget, there is still an inadequate supply of water and electricity. This study has been conducted at a time when municipalities in South Africa are faced with violent service delivery protests.

Nevhotalu (2016) holds the view that records management in municipalities in South Africa is in a very bad state, and that this makes it difficult for the AG to conduct audits. A study by Kanzi (2010) on “The role of records management with specific reference to the Amathole District Municipality” found that there was “ignorance with regard to the management of records in the Amathole District Municipality”. The study also revealed that although the Municipality had a records management policy, it was not adhering to the policy. Makhura (2001) reported that municipalities are still unsure about the role that records management plays in their daily operations. Based on the research findings described above, it can be said that records management in municipalities in South Africa is not seen as a priority.

Schellnack-Kelly (2013) conducted a study entitled “The role of records management in government-based evidence, service delivery and development in South African communities”. The findings from this study revealed that the South Africa public sector records management practices are evidence of the nonchalant demeanour

and the Cinderella status of the public sector information sources as recorded evidence of the narratives of post-apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, Schellnack-Kelly (2013) argued that the information sources, including the lack thereof, reveal narratives of corrupt individuals, mismanagement of funds, resources and trust, poor security of information required to protect the state and individuals, misappropriations of funds and state resources, breakdown of trust and interest and poor or no service delivery. Such adverse trends do not bode well for the citizenry of South Africa in terms of the delivery of services. Unless poor record management is addressed, service delivery will continue to be negatively affected and the service delivery protests may well increase.

The administration of municipalities in South Africa leaves much to be desired. The ability of any government department, municipality or any other institution to effectively carry out its duties is controlled by the accessibility of appropriate and comprehensive information from records. Marutha (2011:21) stated that “organizations that manage their records properly are rewarded with several benefits including, but not limited to, professional administration and accountability, easy retrieval and access to records, ability to prevent and track fraud and corruption”. Venter (2004:1) reported that “record-keeping in government departments in South Africa has declined to the point where it is seriously hampering the conduct of government business and undermining basic accountability to the public”.

3.6 Knowledge of staff about records management practices

Records management practices can only be successful if it is led by staff knowledgeable in records management. With the large number of records created every day, it is important for staff to be able to deal with those records. That can only happen if staff have the necessary knowledge and are properly trained to manage records. Training of staff is one of the important steps in implementing successful records management practices in municipalities. According to McLeod, Hare and Johare (2004), for good records management practices to take place, it is important that staff involved in records are well-trained. The World Bank (2000: 2) reported that

“in many countries around the world, record-keeping systems are unable to cope with the growing mass of records, and this is particularly true in countries where records managers lack training or professional development opportunities”.

The importance and benefits of records management in municipalities cannot be overstated. However, municipalities will never see the benefits if they do not have qualified staff or train their staff in records management. In spite of the abundant benefits of sound records management in municipalities, many municipalities have not realised this because of the lack of trained staff in records management. Thus, a key factor in seeing the benefits of records management in municipalities is the provision of training for municipal employees. Without trained staff, there is no future for records management. Training generally covers the importance of creation, preservation, storage, protection and disposal of records. Lack of training increases the risk of mismanaging the records. Smith (2018) suggested that staff members directly engaged in the records management function should receive the appropriate training and all other staff should be aware of their record management responsibilities. Phiri (2016), referring to the university context, contended that well-trained record-keeping staff would ensure that the university’s record-keeping system worked well.

Good record management is essential to well-run municipalities. However, that can only be achieved if municipalities employ qualified people. According to Kanzi (2010: 56), “the training of staff who deal with the management of records is crucial to maintaining sound records management practices”. A similar view was expressed by Ngoepe (2016:340), who reported that “implementing sound records management practices is a long and arduous journey that requires a combination of elements such as skilled people, resources, finance and mapped processes”. Therefore, successful record-keeping practices require well-trained registry clerks and records managers to face the growing number of records created daily. Through appropriate training, registry officers and records managers are able to expand on the current records management practices in municipalities. Hence, it is on this premise that among other issues, the training of staff in records management in

municipalities should be viewed as a crucial consideration and, as such, was investigated in this study.

Another factor that contributes to the current records management practices in South Africa has been the shortage of formally trained archivists and records managers (Keakopa, 2007). Although an institution can have good records management policies and procedures in place, if there are no qualified records managers, records management practices can still remain ineffective. This is evident in a study by Katuu (2009), which found that education, training and research could assist records managers and archival staff in dealing with the challenges of poor records management practices in municipalities. The situation was the same in Botswana, Tanzania and Namibia. Formal training in the records management and archival fields has been hampered by few universities providing training in these fields.

Prior to 2018, there were no universities in South Africa providing an undergraduate degree qualification in records management and archival studies. In that year the University of South Africa (UNISA), and the University of Zululand (UNIZUL) introduced an undergraduate degree in records management and archival studies. Prior to this, the only qualification offered in South Africa was a Postgraduate Diploma in Records and Archive Management offered full-time over a year (or two years part-time). Most universities only offer records management as a module in the library and information studies qualifications. Indeed, as Ngoepe (2011) attested, in South Africa archives and records management courses are condensed as an unimportant part of qualifications in information studies. In a study commissioned by the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) in South Africa (2010), it was revealed that “a number of archivists and records managers have learnt on the job or have attended short courses which barely provided them with the required educational background and competencies. This phenomenon has created a shortage of formally qualified records managers and archivists, leading to library and information services (LIS) professionals being employed in these positions.

3.7 Factors that affect the state of records management practices

The previous section discussed the trends in municipal records management in South Africa. Clearly, it provided a dark portrait of the present records management

practices in municipalities in the country. As a result, it is important to understand the factors that contribute to the present state of records management practices in the country. The general objective of this study was to establish the current records management practices in municipalities of the Limpopo Province. Arising from this was the key specific objective of the study, namely, to establish the factors that contribute to current records management practices in municipalities in the province. Of particular importance to the study was Ngulube's (2003) contention that research in records management practices can lead to an improved understanding of contributing factors to current record-keeping practices.

There are various factors that have contributed to, and affected, the records management practices in municipalities. The IRMT (2009) reports that:

Some of the contributing factors to the inadequate current records management practices in the East and Southern African Regional Branch of International Council on Archives (ESARBICA) region are the absence of organisational plans for managing records; low awareness of the role of records management in support of organisational efficiency and accountability; lack of stewardship and coordination in handling records; and absence of legislation, policies and procedures to guide the management of records.

The IRMT (2009) also revealed the lack of fundamental competencies in records management, the lack of sufficient financial resources devoted to records management and the absence of migration strategies for records as other contributing factors to the current records management practices. In the same vein, a study conducted by Chinyemba and Ngulube (2005) on "Managing records at the University of KwaZulu-Natal" revealed that policies for managing records in this institution of higher learning were poor and inadequate and that contributed to the state of records management. A study by Ndenje-Sichalwe (2010) found that the main contributing factor to the poor current records management practices in Tanzania was related to inadequately trained registry staff.

In addition to the above, Erima and Wamukoya (2012:37) identified some of the factors contributing to records management at the Moi University in Kenya. It was found there was an:

Absence of a records management programme to guide records management activities in the institution, lack of adequately trained records management staff, shortcomings resulting from the manual records management system in use, changing technologies and data security, among others.(Erima and Wamukoya, 2012)

Therefore, it suffices to conclude that there are numerous factors that affect the records management practices in organisations, including municipalities, and strategies must be put in place to deal with these factors. These factors are discussed below.

3.7.1 Top management support

An important factor in current records management practices is the support (or absence of support) for records management by senior management. According to Zwikael (2008), top management backing is seen to be an area that has a huge bearing on project accomplishment. In a study by Ngoepe and Van der Walt (2009), it was established that factors contributing to the unsatisfactory records management practices in South Africa were:

The paucity of records management policies in government departments, lack of top management support, lack of awareness of the importance of records management and lack of relevant skills amongst records management practitioners.

Adu (2014) opines that senior management should embrace the records management function to ensure its effectiveness and should be incorporated into their performance management targets. A study by Maseh (2015) on records management in the Kenyan judiciary revealed that top management in the judiciary did not accord records management full support and that has had an undesirable influence on the current records management practices in the judiciary. Phiri (2016: 78) asserted that “it is essential to make senior management aware that record-keeping is the life-blood of their organisation”. Ngoepe and Ngulube (2014) observed that most managers in the public sector do not view the organisation of records as being among their main concerns. This is a serious challenge as there can never be proper management of records if managers do not take records management

seriously. It is clear from the discussion that the top management plays an important role in ensuring improved records management practices in any organisation. Therefore, top managers in municipalities must be supportive of records management programmes.

3.7.2 Perceptions of municipal officials about records management

For records management practices to be successful, it is important that municipal officials adopt and accept the programme in question. Records management is one of those programmes that need to be adopted and accepted by all municipal officials before it can be implemented successfully. Records management is an important activity that all organisations must see as a priority. Without effective and efficient records management practices, organisations simply cannot function. Yet in many organisations, particularly in the public sector, records management has not been perceived as a priority.

Currently, the perception of municipal officials about records management is not known. While this was not part of the research questions underpinning the study, the researcher considered it important to also establish the perceptions of municipal officials concerning records management. One of the most important fundamentals in ensuring proper records management practices in municipalities is the buy-in of each municipal official. According to Atulomah (2011), “records management in developing countries has yet to attain the level of attention and support that it has received in the developed world”. Du Toit (2011:232) made the point that “The demand for knowledge workers is on the increase, yet little is known about their perceptions and attitudes towards the management of records in an organisation”. In a study by Karimanzira and Mutsagondo (2015), the National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ) found that public records practitioners have negative perceptions of NAZ records. The study further revealed that such negative perceptions signalled continued poor record-keeping in Zimbabwe.

The effectiveness of the delivery of basic services in municipalities is determined by the accessibility of correct and dependable information held in records. Yet in many municipalities around the country, there has been no implementation of sound records management practices as required by legislation. In many municipalities,

records management has remained a neglected area. Every effort should be made to ensure that this neglect is dealt with. Hence, one of the broader issues dealt with in this study was to establish whether municipalities (or more precisely, municipal officials) were treating records management as a priority or not.

3.7.3 Funding for records management programmes

Funding is vital to the accomplishment of any organisational programme including records management. In practice, limited financial resources for records management programmes sometimes mean that a programme seems to be impractical. Shepherd and Yeo (2003) reported that financial resources are a requirement for a successful records management service. Staff with specialist skills as well as storage and equipment will be needed, and that these requirements must be identified and costed. Similarly, Mnjama and Wamukoya (2007) opined that one of the key issues confronted by ESARBICA countries in record-keeping is the absence or insufficient allocation of financial resources for records management programmes. It is for this reason that most government departments and municipalities have been neglecting records management. Therefore, funding or increased funding of records management programmes could immediately improve records management practices. For municipalities to develop effective and sustainable records management programmes there should be clear funding arrangements. The inadequacy of funding poses additional challenges to records management programmes for municipalities.

The management of records in government institutions is a subject that has been of concern for some time. Records are some of the most valuable assets in municipalities and like other assets, they must be correctly managed in order to maximise their worth and minimise their cost. To ensure successful implementation of records management programmes in municipalities, there is a need to provide adequate funding. Yet, in many municipalities, records management is not seen as an important programme and so adequate funding has not been made available. Records management programmes always compete for resources with other programmes within the municipalities. According to the World Bank (2000), there is little incentive to assign sufficient financial resources for records management, and

for staff to maintain effective record-keeping systems. Given the above, it is evident that funding is necessary for sound records management practices.

3.8 Activities and strategies to support records management practices

Venter (2004:1) reported that record-keeping in government departments has weakened to the point where it is greatly hindering the performance of government activity and damaging accountability of officials to the community. It is for this reason that there is a need for improved records management in government departments including the municipalities. Therefore, there is a need for new activities and strategies to support records management practices, especially in municipalities. Public demands for improved service delivery, transparency and accountability confront public officials daily.

Despite the significance of records management in organisations, in his paper entitled “The role and trends of records management with specific reference to the Vhembe District Municipality, Limpopo Province”, Nevhutalu (2016) stated that records management functions do not receive the attention they deserve at the municipality. The findings of the study also revealed that even though the municipality acknowledges the importance of records management functions, it was clear that there was ignorance with regard to the management of records. In a study by Masimba (2014), it was found that:

NARSSA is unable to perform its duties in the public sector because its function is not recognised as vital to the pursuance of objectives in the public sector. Furthermore, the study revealed that records are not valued due to the lack of priority given to basic administrative activities, which has resulted in the neglect of records management.

3.9 Challenges faced by municipal officials in managing records

The challenges of record management in both government and the private sector have attracted enormous attention in the literature. Municipalities are not exempt from this attention. The literature reveals poor records management, the inadequacy of qualified records officers, poor storage facilities for records and lack of financial investment in records management as some of the challenges faced by municipalities (Venter, 2004; Abuki, 2014; Nevhutalu, 2016; Ngoepe, 2016).

According to Ndenje-Sichalwe, Ngulube and Stilwell (2011:264), “the current records management practices in government ministries of Tanzania contribute to the failure of ensuring that they (records) serve as an instrument of accountability”.

The records management practices in most South African municipalities have been experiencing a number of challenges. These challenges have impacted negatively on the municipalities in executing and delivering on their constitutional mandates. According to the SALGA (2015), municipalities in South Africa are faced with various challenges in improving and promoting sound records management practices so as to deliver on their constitutional and legislative mandates. Municipalities, like other government departments in South Africa, are experiencing growth and replication of records. One of the biggest challenges, as reported by the SALGA (2015), has been that records management is not seen as a key business issue by municipalities and there is consequently a lack of discipline in adhering to records management processes. Furthermore, the SALGA (2015) posited that neither political or administrative leadership are setting the tone from the top on records management.

A further challenge (referred to above under training) facing municipalities is addressing the lack of qualified and skilled personnel in records management. As noted by Chinyemba and Ngulube (2005), “in many African countries, human resources with appropriate skills, competences and attitude are not readily available to initiate, implement and sustain the digitisation project, and most African states are still lagging behind in technological and telecommunications infrastructure”. Municipalities will never see the benefits if they do not have qualified staff or train their staff in records management. According to Ngoepe and Van der Walt (2009), challenges of records management in government include, among others, the lack of proper planning for records management, and the absence of records management toolkits. Kanzi (2010) conducted a study on the role of records management at Amathole District Municipality. The findings revealed that there was much ignorance regarding the management of records among the staff of the municipality. One of the biggest challenges identified by Kanzi’s (2010) study was that records management was not incorporated in the organisation-wide strategic

plans and key performance areas of senior managers. For records management to be successful, there must be buy-in from senior managers.

Schellnack-Kelly (2013) in a study on records management challenges encountered in local government, found that while many municipalities have records management policies, the results revealed that records management policies and processes were not followed. This is a challenge, since if records management is not guided by records management policies, it may be haphazard. Furthermore, Masimba (2014) reported that in the public sector records are not valued due to the lack of priority attached to basic administrative activities, which has resulted in the neglect of records management. Masimba (2014) was of the view that “the challenges that the NARSSA is facing indicate a lack of funding and appear to be symptomatic of a disregard for the value and importance of records management in the public sector”.

A study done by Nevhutalu (2016) on the “Role and trends of records management with specific reference to Vhembe District Municipality, Limpopo Province”, revealed that the challenges faced by government departments were not unique to the municipalities. The author reported that the challenges faced by municipalities were, amongst others: old infrastructure, few people with relevant skills in records management, inadequate training of staff, absence of understanding of records management functions and poor leadership. In a related study conducted in Zimbabwe by Chiterera (2016:166), it was noted that “a major challenge that is being experienced in government is that records management is not perceived as a significant component of corporate governance”. Chiterera (2016) observed that as a result, records management had developed into an overlooked function playing no part in government administration. Also, in Zimbabwe, a study conducted by Katekwe and Mutsagondo (2017:405) on the “Challenges and prospects of records maintenance in public departments in Zimbabwe” revealed that the maintenance of records, inappropriately adapted buildings housing records, poor and inadequate filing equipment, skills and manpower were challenges faced in Zimbabwe. A factor that was quite discernible in all the studies reviewed was that there are various challenges faced in records management.

Given the above, it is apparent that municipalities face and will continue to face a number of challenges in the management of records. Undoubtedly, given these challenges, it will be difficult for municipalities to deal with the exponential growth and replication of records. If municipalities want to improve their records management practices, they first need to overcome these challenges. One of the objectives of the current study was to establish the challenges faced by municipalities in Limpopo in managing their records.

3.10 The role of records management in the auditing process

The role of good records management practices in the auditing process in government, and particularly in municipalities cannot be over-emphasised. In his report on South African municipalities' audit outcomes for the 2014-15 financial year, the AG (2015) revealed that the audit outcomes of municipalities in Limpopo had been disappointing. The AG also expressed concern over the "rot" in municipalities in Limpopo Province, which has caused audit outcomes to regress. According to the report by the AG (2015), one of the factors contributing to the poor audit outcomes of municipalities was poor records management practices. Poor records management was thus identified as hindering government departments and municipalities in getting unqualified audits and clean audits. Similarly, Ngoepe (2012: 190) opined that "lack of proper records management is one of the contributing factors to unclean audit reports". The AG (2015) encouraged political leadership in provinces to promote sound records management as a way of ensuring proper governance was the main instrument for creating a productive environment for good service delivery. Indeed, good records management practices in municipalities are essential for improved audit outcomes.

According to Mnjama (2004), "without meaningful financial records, audits cannot be carried out, fraud cannot be proven and those responsible for the financial management cannot be held accountable for their actions". Nell (2011) reported that every time the Auditor-General South Africa (AGSA) embarks on an audit process in an organisation, the first constraints faced are poor records management practices and records that either do not exist or cannot be retrieved. This underscores the importance of proper records management and, in this regard, a study by Chinyemba

(2003) revealed that records management supports accountability by providing accurate information and evidence of an event, as well as administration by providing an audit trail.

Ngoepe (2012) conducted a study entitled “Fostering a framework to embed the records management function into the auditing process in the South Africa public sector” and found that “one of often cited contributing factors to the perilous financial state of the public sector is the lack of proper record-keeping. The study also revealed that most governmental bodies have established internal audit units, audit committees and records management units, which do not work in unison, thus further hampering proper record-keeping. Indeed, Ngoepe and Ngulube (2014:135) concurred that there is an accord amongst researchers that sound records management plays a vital role in the auditing practice. Significantly, a study conducted in Zimbabwe by David (2017:67) confirmed “that there is a strong correlation between records management and audit opinions raised by the auditor’s reports”. The study also found that inadequate records management within government entities was associated with adverse and qualified opinions and, in some cases, unqualified opinions that placed emphasis on the matter.

In a similar vein, a study done in Botswana by Mosweu (2011) found that conducting public audits in Botswana has been a strenuous exercise for the Office of the Auditor-General, as the results are riddled with lamentations of poor records management. Through the mandate enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) and the National Archives and Records Services Act (No. 43 of 1996), municipalities and government bodies are legally bound to retain and preserve records systematically, and to adhere to policies and procedures. It is important to note that all these can only be achieved by the implementation of proper records management systems. Auditors rely on records to provide audit reports and if they are unable to obtain records or if the records are unreliable, the auditor would issue an adverse opinion or a disclaimer. It is clear from the discussion that municipalities, should they wish to improve their audit outcomes, need to put their houses in order insofar as records management is concerned.

3.11 Current records management practices in the registry offices of municipalities

This section discusses the literature on the current records management practices in the registry offices of municipalities. The NARSSA requires municipalities to manage their records in a well-structured record-keeping system. The registry offices were established to assist with records management. The registry offices ensure that all the records management practices are in place to support the organisation in managing their records. According to Stephens (2011), it is impossible to understand records management practices without understanding the role of registry offices. Indeed, a registry office is the nerve centre of records management in any municipality. No municipal records management section can function effectively unless the registry office is functioning efficiently. The registry office is also accountable for monitoring all means of communication, thus ensuring an institution executes its functions appropriately. According to Section 13 of the NARSSA (2003):

Municipalities are required to manage their records in a well-structured record-keeping system, and to put the necessary policies and procedures in place to ensure that their record-keeping and records management practices comply with the requirements of the Act.

The NARSSA (2003) emphasises that the registry office keeps all the records created, received and maintained by the municipality. The NARSSA identified the functions of the registry office referring to it as the administrative unit with the responsibility to receive, control, and maintain current records; to receive, record and distribute incoming and internal mail of all kinds; and to open, index, build-up and control file movement. A registry office, as noted by the IRMT (2001), is a unit in an organisation responsible for creating and maintaining records. According to the IRMT (2001), the essential functions of a registry office are the following:

- Receive, record and distribute incoming and internally created mail.
- Open and index records.
- Build up and control all officially registered records.
- Keep track of the location of all officially registered records.

- Provide storage, repository and reference services for all officially registered records.
- Record and arrange for the efficient and timely dispatch of all correspondence.
- Review and dispose of all outdated files or other records in accordance with retention periods.

Similarly, in the municipalities in South Africa, and as mentioned above, registry offices are also responsible for controlling all channels of communication and keeping all the records developed and/or received by the municipalities. Filing may be organised either in centralised or decentralised systems. Some municipalities prefer a centralised filing system, while others prefer a decentralised one. Some have no real preference, finding both systems acceptable. A centralised filing system is one in which all the records are stored and controlled in a single records storage area instead of allowing each department to file its own records. A decentralised filing system thus allows the various departments to keep records in their own offices. It is not clear which system is most beneficial for municipalities and it was anticipated that this study would shed some light on the issue.

The registry staff are responsible for the physical management of the records and filing of records and retrieve them when requested. This also explains the important role played by registry offices in ensuring sound records management practices. A study by Kanzi (2010) revealed that the registry office in Amathole District Municipalities is not receiving the attention it deserves and further to that, there was lack of support from senior management towards registry offices. Tsabedze (2011) observed that in Swaziland, staff appointed to the position of registry officers were not fully trained in records management and could therefore not be entrusted with managing government records during their entire lifecycle. A study by Nevhuthalu (2014) shares similar view that inadequate training of registry officers in municipalities was hindering the improvement of records management practices. Amini and Aliero (2019) posit that records in registry offices of institution of higher learning in Nigeria suffer from arbitrary or random destruction, unprotected from

disaster, and heaps of files without proper arrangement. In general, records management practices in registry offices seems to be in shambles.

3.12 Summary

This chapter comprised the literature review and was informed by the research questions. The literature reviewed consisted of various sources including theses and dissertations, books, journal articles, and conference proceedings. The review has shown that much has been written on records management practices in organisations. It has also revealed that the situation regarding records management practices internationally, in Africa, and in South Africa in particular, is of great concern. Based on the review of the global and local literature on records management practices in organisations, it is clear that more needs to be done to advance current records management practices. Through the review, a gap was identified, namely, that few studies have been conducted on records management practices in municipalities.

The literature review emphasised that sound records management practices in South Africa are not a choice for municipalities, but a “must-have” as they are regulated by legislation. Municipalities must, therefore, ensure that they adhere to records management legislation. The literature reviews also highlighted the importance of effective and efficient records management practices in both the private and the public sector. It revealed that despite the importance of records management in organisations, there is clear evidence that the records management function has been neglected. The review further outlined numerous challenges associated with records management in South Africa including a lack of formally qualified personnel to work in records management sections and archives and this has been one of the factors that have led to poor records management practices. The literature, in general, suggests that the usefulness of records management in promoting accountability and transparency cannot be over-emphasised. Much of the literature on records management practices were found to be concentrated on government departments and less on records management practices in municipalities. This validated the need for a study such as the current one. It is

anticipated that this study will add to the meagre body of literature on records management practices in municipalities in South Africa.

Chapter Four, which follows, outlines and discusses the research methodology adopted in the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a review of the relevant local, regional and international literature on records management practices. This chapter presents the research methodology applied to establish the records management practices in the municipalities. In the words of Leedy and Ormrod (2005:12), “research methodology is regarded as the general approach a researcher follows when carrying out a research project”. Ngulube (2005:128) opined that “key elements of a research design are defining the population and how it was obtained, sampling procedures, instrumentation used, procedures employed in gathering and processing data and the statistical treatment of the data”. Thus, this chapter describes and discusses the research paradigm, research design, research approach, population and sampling techniques, data collection including methods, instruments and procedures used, and data analysis. The reliability and validity of the research methods, ethical considerations and limitations and delimitations of the study are also discussed.

Ngulube (2015) stated that the research methodology is key to the research procedure; it is a reflection of the lens through which the researcher looks at the social phenomenon he is investigating and finding answers to his research questions. Understanding records management practices in municipalities and the applicability of existing records management and archival studies models is an important undertaking in order to improve records management practices in municipalities. The aim of this study was to generate knowledge and understanding of the current records management practices in selected municipalities in Limpopo Province. This was considered important in that the study will inform policies and strategies that can be developed or employed by municipalities to improve current records management practices. This chapter will explain the processes and procedures followed in collecting data to answer the research questions as listed in section 1.3.2 Research questions To begin with, the research paradigm underpinning the study will be discussed.

4.1 Research paradigm

The term paradigm originates from the Greek word *paradeigma* which means pattern and was first used by Thomas Kuhn in 1962 to denote a conceptual framework shared by a community of scientists which provided them with a convenient model of examining problems and finding solutions (Kuhn, 1970). Any research project is guided by philosophical beliefs commonly referred to as paradigms. According to Kuhn (1970), the term paradigm refers to a research culture with a set of beliefs, values and assumptions that a community of researchers has in common regarding the nature and conduct of the research. In simple terms, a paradigm has to do with universally recognised scientific beliefs that provide researchers with answers to their research questions. This sentiment is shared by Lather (1986:59), who opined that a “research paradigm inherently reflects our beliefs about the world we live in and want to live in”.

Johnson and Christensen (2008) contended that a research paradigm is a perspective that is based on a set of shared assumptions, values, concepts and practices. The authors added that the purpose of a research paradigm is to help the researcher to conduct the study in an effective manner. Thus, a research paradigm is a belief system that guides the way we do things, or more formally, establishes a set of practices on how to carry out research. A paradigm plays an important role in research because it gives direction to a study. The research process has three major dimensions: ontology, epistemology and methodology (Blanche and Durrheim, 1999). The authors argued that a research paradigm is an all-encompassing system of interrelated practices and thinking that define the nature of enquiry along these three dimensions. Whatever the case, it is clear that a paradigm serves as the foundation of any research which, if not properly done, can create problems in the comprehensive implementation of the research. Moreover, the success of any research project depends on the research paradigm as a foundation in answering the research questions.

There are various epistemological paradigms that can be used to underpin research. According to Ambira (2016:128), the four most popular research paradigms associated with research in records management and archival studies (and the

social sciences in general) are positivism, interpretivism, pragmatism and post-positivism. There has been widespread debate in recent years within the field of records management and archival studies on the use of research paradigms. Post-positivism was considered best-suited for this study as it gives the researcher the flexibility of mixing various research methods and it will be discussed below. However, it is equally important to discuss the other major research paradigms commonly used in research in the field in order to substantiate the paradigm selected for this study.

4.1.1 Positivism

Positivism was first developed in the 19th century by the French philosopher, Auguste Comte when he wrote his major work entitled *Cours de philosophie positive* in which he asserted that only scientific knowledge can reveal the truth about reality (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:21). Aliyu, Bello, Kasim and Martin (2014) argued that positivism is entrenched in the ontological principle that truth and reality are independent of the researcher. According to Jakobsen (2013), positivism, in general, refers to philosophical positions that emphasise empirical data and scientific methods. It alludes to the fact that certain “positive” knowledge is based on natural phenomena, their properties and relations and advocates for the importance of acquiring knowledge through scientific methods of enquiry. De Vos (2011:5) is of the view that human beings are not seen objectively and, as a result, social scientists look to different avenues to study human beings. In essence, positivists believe in the existence of absolute truth, encourage objectivity and strive to minimise bias.

In the words of Weaver and Olson (2006), positivism shares philosophical foundations with quantitative research. Thus, positivism follows the quantitative methodology and views people as suitable for the implementation of scientific methods. In this sense, positivism “may be seen as an approach to social research that seeks to apply the natural science model of research as the point of departure in investigations of social phenomena and explanations of the social world” (Vosloo, 2014). Positivists prefer quantitative research methods like surveys, structured questionnaires and official statistics because, in their view, these have good reliability and representativeness. Part of the reason why positivists prefer the

quantitative method is because the data collected can be quantified, and can uncover behaviour which can be analysed for patterns and trends. Positivism looks at the society as a whole in order to establish general laws which shape human action. In summary, numerical data collected through a positivist approach can assist the researcher to study and compare groups within the society, or to do cross-national comparisons. Hence, it is argued that the positivist paradigm is concerned with the quantitative research method.

4.1.2 Interpretivism

Unlike positivism, interpretivism is a research paradigm that prefers qualitative research methods like interviews, participant observation and documents analysis. From Mack's (2010) point of view, the interpretive paradigm contends that a research subject can never be fully understood from the outside, but is best understood through the direct participation of the observer in the subject's world. This paradigm uses qualitative data to uncover the meanings held by individuals and social groups because followers of the paradigm believe that each individual or group defines reality differently. In concurrence, Romm and Ngulube (2015) stated that the interpretive paradigm is associated with the qualitative research method. Goldkuhl (2012) also affirmed that the interpretive paradigm shares its philosophical foundations with the qualitative research method. In essence, interpretivism was developed to replace the positivist paradigm, hence some researchers label it anti-positivist.

Interpretivism is also referred to as a naturalistic enquiry that is softer and more subjective. In the words of Ambira (2016:129), "the objective in an interpretivism paradigm is to get the participants' views and to generate theories and patterns of meanings". In addition, Ambira (2016) declared that "a researcher who adopts the interpretivism paradigm, approaches research with an open mind, unclear what it may result in and therefore relies on feedback from the participants to construct ideas that will explain and support the existence of phenomena".

4.1.3 Pragmatism

According to Goldkuhl (2012:7), "pragmatism as a research paradigm is concerned with what has been called American pragmatism, as it emerged through the writings

of Peirce, James, Dewey and Mead, among others". The author further asserted that "pragmatism is concerned with action and change and the interplay between knowledge and action" (Goldkuhl, 2012:7). This makes it appropriate as a basis for research approaches intervening in the world and not merely observing it. Pragmatism has been seen as a viable alternative to the positivist and interpretivist paradigms. From Kuhn's (1962) point of view, pragmatism can be defined as a set of common beliefs and agreements shared between scientists about how problems should be understood and addressed.

According to the pragmatist paradigm, research questions are the most important determinants. Furthermore, the choice is guided by the fact that pragmatism is seen as a paradigm that provides the underlying philosophical framework for using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. As Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009:10) asserted, pragmatism places emphasis on the research problem and makes use of all available approaches to understand the problem. It needs to be noted that there is an increasing interest in pragmatism in records management within organisational and informational studies (Wicks and Freeman, 1998). According to Creswell (2002), the pragmatist research paradigm focuses on the "what" and "how" of the research problem. Indeed, as averred by Shannon-Baker (2016), pragmatism breaks the boundary between positivism and interpretivism and creates a connection between them by looking for what is meaningful from both positions. In order to establish "true" knowledge about records management practices in municipalities, the researcher objectively relied on registry officers, records managers and municipal managers to share their experiences and thus their realities in the records management environment. According to Feilzer (2010:8), the pragmatist worldview bridges the positivist-interpretivist or quantitative-qualitative divide by accepting that "there are singular and multiple realities that are open to empirical inquiry and that orient themselves towards solving practical problems in the 'real world'". Pragmatism, simply stated, is thinking of or dealing with problems in a practical way, rather than by using only theory or abstract principles.

It must be noted that pragmatism has also become popular in the field of records management and archival studies probably because of its more practical problem-

solving approach. According to Feilzer (2010:8), pragmatism is consistent with the contention that advocates the use of mixed methods in research, and therefore “sidesteps the contentious issues of truth and reality”. Because this study was not a mixed method one, pragmatism was not considered suitable. The study was mainly quantitative with a qualitative slant and therefore, made the pragmatic paradigm unsuitable for the present study.

4.1.4 Post-positivism

Littlejohn (2007) postulated that post-positivism arose because of criticism by anti-positivist scholars such as Max Webber and Heinrich Rickert who criticised the positivists for ignoring the fundamental experience of life and instead favouring mental and physical laws. Connecting the gap between the positivist-interpretivist divide is the post-positivist approach which conveys a much greater openness to different methodological approaches, including both qualitative and quantitative methods. According to Creswell (2014), post-positivists believe that research is a process of logically related steps drawing multiple perspectives from participants rather than a single reality. In other words, neither a quantitative nor qualitative approach can fully explore every social behaviour. The post-positivism paradigm guides the data gathering process as the research questions are posed to answer the research problem. Post-positivism assumptions entail beliefs about reality, knowledge and value in research. Simply put, post-positivists accept that theories, background, knowledge and values of the researcher can influence what is observed. In view of the foregoing discussion, the present study was based on the post-positivism paradigm. This was justified by the fact that it used a quantitative approach supplemented by a qualitative one. The post-positivism paradigm allows a simultaneous combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches which strengthened the study.

Creswell (2014) maintained that the post-positivism paradigm uses tools such as surveys and interviews as well as observation. In line with the paradigm, the researcher used questionnaires which were distributed to registry officers (a quantitative approach) and interviewed records managers and municipal managers (a qualitative approach) in the selected municipalities. The choice of this paradigm

was motivated by, as alluded to above, the fact that it allows for the integration of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Both these methods assisted the study to answer the research questions posed and find solutions to the problem. However, as noted, the study used a quantitative approach supplemented by a qualitative one and, therefore, it was not a mixed approach as such.

4.2 Research approach

The major purpose of this study was not only to establish records management practices in municipalities, but also to gain a holistic level of understanding of the current state of records management practices in municipalities. According to Creswell (2013), there are three types of research approaches that a researcher can follow. These are (a) qualitative, (b) quantitative and (c) mixed methods. The author argued that in planning a research project, researchers need to identify which type of approach they will employ. Furthermore, Creswell (2013) asserted that decisions about the choice of the research approach are influenced by the research problem and the issue being studied. In the words of Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007), “the research problem determines the research approach and the methods employed in relation to data needed to answer the questions”.

For the purpose of this study, the quantitative research approach, supplemented by the qualitative one, were employed. This means that both quantitative and qualitative research approaches were adopted in the study to investigate the records management practices in municipalities. However, it must be noted that the study used mainly the quantitative approach, and that the qualitative approach was supplementary. The use of the two approaches assisted in improving the quality of the research by minimising biases, limitations and weaknesses. In using both approaches, the weaknesses of the one approach were compensated for by the strengths of the other. The choice of the research approach was influenced by the objectives of the research, the target population, sampling method, data collection methods and the research process, among others. As Bertram and Christiansen (2017:41) pointed out, “data collection must match the kind of data that the researcher wants to collect and the type of data to be collected will be informed by the research questions and the style of research”.

The approach employed amplified the statement of the problem and research objectives and provided answers to the research questions. Similar studies have used both a quantitative and qualitative approach including those by Webster, Hare and McLeod (1999), Makhura (2005), Ngoepe (2008), Kemoni (2009), Ndenje-Sichalwe, (2010), Marutha (2011), Msibi (2015) and Nevhutalu (2016). The two approaches complemented each other and allowed for in-depth analysis. Understanding the difference between qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods in relation to the study helped the researcher to provide answers to the research questions. In the next section, the researcher will discuss the characteristics of each research approach in order to illustrate why a combination of approaches best-suited the study. The study used interviews and questionnaires to collect data. The study's use of interviews and questionnaires sits well with the purpose of this research, which aimed to explore the records management practices in the selected municipalities. These methods were found to be relevant to the study and were also used in other similar studies of records management practices (Kalumuna, 2000; Ndibalema, 2001; Chinyemba and Ngulube, 2005; Ngulube and Tafor, 2006; Coetzer, 2012; Tsabedze and Kalusopa, 2018).

4.2.1 Qualitative research approach

According to Payne and Payne (2004), a qualitative research method produces a comprehensive and non-quantitative account of small groups and seeks to interpret the meaning that people make of their lives in a natural setting. The underlying assumption is that social interaction forms an integrated set of relationships best understood by inductive procedures. It also involves the collection, analysis and interpretation of data through interviews, observation and document analysis. In addition, the qualitative approach employs interpretive data analysis through themes. In the words of Creswell (2013), qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. In other words, it puts more emphasis on understanding by looking closely at people's opinions. In qualitative research, the researcher collects personal experiences and words about the phenomenon of the study to answer the research question/s. Leedy and Ormrod (2001:147) pointed out that qualitative research

focuses on phenomena that occur in natural settings. The disadvantages associated with a qualitative approach are that the data-gathering techniques used, such as in-depth interviews, observation and content analysis, are time-consuming and associated with researcher bias. The type of data collected through a qualitative approach is descriptive in nature.

4.2.2 Quantitative research approach

According to Stangor (2015:15), “quantitative research, being expressive in nature, requires intense and formal measures of beliefs, attitudes, intentions, behaviour, questionnaires and systematic observation of behaviour that is subjected to statistical analysis”. The approach is primarily concerned with the measurement of issues and, therefore, collects numeric data, metrics and so on to measure concepts and how variables relate in order to derive meaning. This approach gives the researcher little room for flexibility because of the prescribed procedures that he or she has to follow. The variables being investigated are measured through the analysis of numerical data using statistical procedures. The quantitative research approach is deductive in nature. Data collection tools associated with this approach include questionnaires, structured interviews and tests.

Leedy and Ormrod (2010:95) postulated that “quantitative researchers seek explanations and predictions that will generalise to other persons and places”. According to Romm and Ngulube (2014), the quantitative approach is utilised when researchers are interested in providing numerical measures and applying statistical tests to materials being considered (relationships between variables). The authors contended that quantitatively-directed research is considered to be more at home within a positivist or post-positivist worldview. In summary, the quantitative research approach is concerned with quantity. In other words, the type of data collected through this type of approach is numeric.

4.3 Research design

Conducting sound research requires rigour and veracity. Therefore, research should be built on a sound research design. Selecting a sound (and thus relevant) research design is key to ensuring successful implementation and completion of a research project. According to Ndenje-Sichalwe (2010), designing a research study has often

been compared to designing a building. The importance of a research design lies in it ensuring that evidence obtained enables the researcher to effectively address the research problem logically and as unambiguously as possible. The aim of this study was to establish the records management practices in selected municipalities in Limpopo Province. To achieve this aim, the researcher needed to adopt a research design that answered the research questions.

Khotari (2010:31) proffered that “research design is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure”. Creswell (2009) concurred, “stating that research designs are procedures and plans consisting of decisions regarding broad assumptions and detailed methods of data collection and analysis. Yin (1994) defined a research design as “the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study’s initial research question and, ultimately, to its conclusion. On the other hand, Khothari (2010:40) argued that “a research design facilitates the efficient implementation of various research operations, thereby making research as effective as possible, yielding maximum information with minimal expenditure of effort, time and money”. In the words of Berg (2001), “the design stage of research is concerned with a series of important decisions relating to the research idea or question(s)”. Research design can thus be considered as an act or plan which directs the researcher from the start to the finish of the research.

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:75), there are various designs that attempt to answer different types of research problems or questions and that employ different combinations of methods and procedures to do so. This study used the survey design in the form of interviews and questionnaires to answer the research questions. The research questions of the study guided the choice of the research design in terms of the data needed and how the data were to be collected and analysed. This sat well with the aim of the research, which was to explore records management practices in municipalities in Limpopo Province. The design was thus considered relevant to the study in terms of answering the research questions. Furthermore, a survey design was also used in other similar studies of records management practices (Kalumuna, 2000; Ndibalema, 2001; Chinyemba and

Ngulube, 2005; Ngulube and Tafor, 2006; Coetzer, 2012). The survey is discussed in more detail below.

4.3.1 Survey

The current study used a survey research design to gather the data necessary to answer the research questions as well as to meet the research objectives. Babbie (2013) stated that the survey research method is one of the oldest research techniques and is probably the most frequently used research design across disciplines. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010:186), “survey research involves acquiring information about one or more groups of people about their characteristics, opinions, attitudes or previous experiences by asking those questions and tabulating their answers”. The survey design was used to gather data for the study through questionnaires and interviews. Among the advantages of surveys is that they “allow researchers to gain information quickly and require relatively little effort in gathering large amounts of data” (Edwards and Talbot, 1994:29). However, as Babbie (2009) reported, survey design has its own weaknesses such as being inflexible. Ondari-Okemwa (2006:144) criticised the survey design for its “considerable dependency on a respondent’s understanding of the situation as well as a possible subjective bias that both the investigator and respondent might introduce”.

Using the survey approach, the researcher collected data on the records management practices in local municipalities in Limpopo Province. When a researcher chooses to use the survey approach, he/she gathers data from many respondents at a particular moment to describe the nature of existing conditions (Bertram and Christiansen, 2017:46). The research was instigated by evidence that municipalities in South Africa are neglecting their records management functions and the management of records in municipalities is not given strategic priority. It was therefore imperative to explore this phenomenon by going into the field to collect data from people with knowledge of records management practices.

4.4 Population and sampling

A population is commonly a collection of individuals or objects that is the key focus of research. However, due to populations often being large in size, it is difficult, if not impossible, for the researcher to collect data from the whole population. It is therefore important for the researcher to draw a sample from the population. The concept of “sample” arises from the inability of researchers to collect data from the entire population when that population is a large one. In simple terms, sampling means a subset of the population.

4.4.1 Population

One of the most important steps in formulating a research design is to define the population according to the objectives of the study. This is supported by Ngulube (2005), who reported that one of the major steps in survey designs is to define the population. Ngulube (2005) further reported that it is important to define the population of a study prior to collecting data as an appropriate sample size will reflect the population as precisely as possible. Time constraints and limited financial resources make it practically impossible, in general, to study the entire population of a study.

The population of the current study was all the municipalities in the Limpopo Province and the participants were only those people who deal with the management and care of records in those municipalities. The participants can be divided into three categories. The first group represented registry officers, the second group were records managers and the third group comprised municipal managers. These groups deal with record-keeping and the creation and use of records in decision-making. Municipal managers were included in the study as they were deemed to have the knowledge and background to address the research questions regarding budgets and staffing. Interns, part-time staff and new staff who were recently employed from 01 January 2018 were not included in the population. This was based on the assumption that they either did not possess sufficient knowledge of records management or were inexperienced in their newly acquired jobs.

4.4.2 Sampling

As mentioned, it is often practically impossible to study the entire population of a study due to time constraints and limited financial resources and the current study was no exception. Sampling involved the selection of the respondents to be included in the study from a large population of employees in the municipalities. The purposive sampling technique was used to select six municipalities from the 30 municipalities in Limpopo Province. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2017:60), “purposive sampling means that the researcher makes specific choices about which people or group of objects to include in the sample”. In other words, the researcher targets a specific group as a sample even though the group does not necessarily represent the wider population. The population is chosen for a particular purpose and should meet particular criteria that the research is most interested in.

In terms of the study, the researcher identified six municipalities that had received adverse or disclaimer audit opinions in the AGSA Municipal Audit Report of 2015/2016. These opinions of the AGSA were given on the basis of the municipalities’ failure to substantiate information presented in their annual financial statements. This was considered a clear indication by the researcher that the municipalities had problems in providing the AGSA with the required records to support their financial statements. This, in turn, pointed to possible shortcomings in the municipalities’ records management practices, hence, it was the intention of the study to establish what those records management practices were. Municipalities that had received qualified or clean audit reports, did not form part of the study.

As noted above, the criterion on which the actual participants were selected was that their work involved working closely with records – their creation, receipt, maintenance and use – on a daily basis. Given this, the participants were also assumed to possess the requisite knowledge of the subject under study and thus to be able to answer the questions posed and contribute to the understanding of the problem being investigated. A total of 104 participants from the six municipalities met the criterion and by so doing comprised the sample – see Table 3.1 below. Of those, 97 actually participated in the study and they included 86 registry officers, six records managers and five municipal managers. It must be noted that only those municipal

officials working with records in the six selected municipalities were sampled to form part of the population. Those who were not working with records were thus excluded.

Data collection took place in the six sampled municipalities in the Limpopo Province. Data were collected from records managers and registry officers from all three sections of the sampled municipalities that deal with records, namely, General Records, Human Resources (HR) and Finance. In two municipalities, an additional section known as Town Planning was also included. All these sections keep their own records and have staff working with records. As noted, municipal managers in all sampled municipalities were interviewed. Table 3.1 below illustrates how the sample was constituted.

Table 3.1: Sample of registry officers, records managers and municipal managers.

Municipality	Registry Officers	Records Managers	Municipal Managers
Municipality 1	14	1	1
Municipality 2	12	1	1
Municipality 3	15	1	1
Municipality 4	14	1	1
Municipality 5	16	1	1
Municipality 6	21	1	1
Total	92	6	6

4.5 Data collection methods

One of the critical phases in any research is the data collection phase. During this phase, the researcher collects raw data from the sampled population to answer the research questions. Data are normally collected using either qualitative or quantitative methods or a mixture of both. As discussed above, both qualitative and

quantitative methods were adopted in the study. A questionnaire and two interview schedules were used as data collection instruments. It is important to note that all data collection instruments have advantages and disadvantages. However, the use of more than one data collection instrument is vital in order to provide checks and balances. Both types of instruments used in the study have different advantages, including the fact that they complement each other. Each instrument is discussed in detail below.

Data for the study was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected via the interviews and a questionnaire. Secondary data was collected from the review of the literature. As outlined above, in order to obtain views about records management practices in municipalities, records managers, registry officers and municipal managers formed part of the study. A semi-structured interview was used to collect data from the records managers, a self-administered questionnaire was used with the registry officers, and a structured interview was used with the municipal managers. These are considered useful data collection methods, especially during the exploratory stages of research. Data were thus obtained first-hand from the participants with a view to giving them an opportunity to offer their interpretations of reality.

4.5.1 Data collection instruments

Data collection instruments refer to the tools used for the collection of data in research. In the current study, the relevant data collection instruments were interviews and a questionnaire. The purpose of selecting the two data collection instruments was, as stated by Atkinson and Coffey (2004:420) “to increase the validity of the research”. Bertram and Christiansen (2017) reported that it is important to note that there are both advantages and disadvantages associated with all data collection instruments. The next section will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the data collection instruments that were used in the current study.

4.5.1.1 Questionnaire

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2006:130), a questionnaire can be defined as a “printed document that contains instructions, questions and statements that are compiled to obtain answers from respondents”. A questionnaire can also be defined

as a set of printed or written questions with a choice of possible answers, developed for the purposes of a survey study. Many of the questions posed in the questionnaire required very specific responses and therefore were closed-ended. However, where necessary, some questions that required the respondents' opinions on records management practices in municipalities were open-ended (Appendix 10). The choice of a questionnaire as one of the data collection instruments for the study was informed by the fact that the targeted group of respondents (registry officers) was large. Pickard (2013) argued that questionnaires can reach a large community at relatively low cost. In concurrence, Maree (2007:177) contended that a questionnaire is a data collection instrument most often used with a large group where the researcher waits while the respondents complete the questionnaire.

Questionnaires saved considerable time for the researcher as data was collected from many respondents within a short space of time as compared to the interviews which took a great deal of time. The questionnaire was thus used with the registry officers since it would have been a challenge to interview all the registry officers targeted. As reported by Kemoni (2007:139), the advantages of using questionnaires in research include allowing a wider range and distribution of samples, providing an opportunity for respondents to give frank answers and allowing greater economy of effort. However, Babbie and Mouton (2001) point out that the weaknesses of a questionnaire in research include a possible low response rate as people may take their time to return the questionnaires and secondly, a lack of control over the nature of responses, resulting in bias, inaccuracies or incompleteness. The study tried to overcome these weaknesses by using more than one data collection instrument.

A questionnaire with six sections was prepared (see Appendix 10). Section A of the questionnaire contained background information of the registry officers. Section B had questions on the records management practices in municipalities while Section C contained questions on the skills and knowledge of staff about records management practices. Section D of the questionnaire contained questions that targeted the strategies and activities in place to support records management. Questions in Section E addressed the factors that contributed to the current records

management practices. Questions in the final section (F) concerned the challenges that the registry officers were facing in managing records.

4.5.1.2 Interviews

According to Hartman (2011), amongst several available data collection instruments, interviews are regarded as the most powerful and most commonly used by researchers trying to understand their respondents. Interviews are used when a researcher wants to explore views, experiences, beliefs and motivations of individual respondents. Gill, Steward, Treasure and Chadwick (2008:291) stated that there are three fundamental types of research interviews, namely, structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. The authors asserted that structured interviews are, essentially, verbally administered questionnaires, in which a list of predetermined questions are asked, with little or no variation and with no scope for follow-up questions to responses that warrant further elaboration. Unstructured interviews, however, do not reflect any preconceived theories or ideas and are performed with little or no organisation. According to Gill et al. (2008:291), “semi-structured interviews consist of several key questions that help to define the areas to be explored, but also allow the interviewer or interviewee to diverge in order to pursue an idea or a response in more detail”.

Interviews can be very time-consuming and resource-intensive compared to other data collection instruments. However, the data collected can also be comprehensive and in-depth as compared to data collected through other instruments. The advantage of interviews is that they are useful in obtaining in-depth information about personal feelings and perceptions. The main weakness of interviews is interviewer bias. Interviews, however, did assist this researcher to clarify ambiguities and to follow-up on incomplete answers. Moreover, as noted above, a questionnaire was used in addition to the interviews. A further disadvantage of interviews is that analysing data collected can be difficult and time-consuming, particularly if the researcher is trying to identify and explore patterns.

Two interview schedules were designed for the different categories of participants in this study ([Appendix 11](#) and [Appendix 12](#)). One schedule was directed at the records managers, while the other was for the municipal managers. In terms of the type of

interview, a structured interview was used to collect data from municipal managers while a semi-structured interview was used with the records managers. The justification for using a structured interview with the municipal managers was that they have a busy schedule and would find it difficult to find the time for a lengthy interview. Semi-structured interviews were used with the records managers who hold valuable data on the current records management practices and challenges and who, arguably, were not under the same time constraints as their municipal managers.

When developing questions, the researcher incorporated the funnelling technique, which allowed him to form impressions of the situation from open-ended questions (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013). This technique allows for a transition from broad to narrow themes. In order to establish credibility and rapport, the researcher evinced a genuine interest in the responses and allayed any anxiety, fears, suspicions and tensions that might have emerged during the interviews. As noted, a structured interview was used to collect data from the municipal managers. This type of interview made the interview process efficient as all the managers answered the same questions thus allowing for easy comparisons and observations of trends and thus helping to ensure the reliability of the collected data.

Municipal managers are very busy personnel who are regarded as the accounting officers of the municipality. As noted, to save their time, the researcher used a structured interview ([Appendix 12](#)) to collect data. According to Terreblanche and Durrheim (2006), interviews are usually recorded by note taking, audio taking and video recording. The interview data was recorded using an audio recording tape after permission was obtained from each individual participant. Notes were also taken during the interviews. Data were saved in a safe place and kept confidential. The participants were informed about how the data were recorded, saved and processed. Various steps throughout the process were adopted to ensure the quality and integrity of the data. Each participant was given a typed transcript of his or her interview to ensure accurate reflection of what they said and that the data had been interpreted accurately.

4.5.2 Pre-testing of data collection instruments

Mouton (2001) points out that conducting research by means of a research questionnaire that has not been piloted will result in wasted efforts, ambiguous questions and vague wording. Guided by this contention, the researcher piloted the instruments, and during the pre-test, various aspects of the project were tested on a small scale. It is important to pre-test the data collection instrument before commencing with data collection. The questionnaire and interview schedules as data collection instruments were pretested on 12 respondents from Polokwane Municipality (which was not part of the sampled municipalities) prior to conducting the actual research. The questionnaire was pre-tested with nine registry officers, while the interview schedules were pre-tested with two senior managers and one records manager between 7 and 11 May 2018. The researcher purposively chose these participants based on their expertise, convenience and availability. Polokwane Municipality was selected because of its close proximity to the researcher, but it is also a municipality within Limpopo Province with the same characteristics as the sampled municipalities. A further reason for selecting the municipality was its fairly poor audit outcome.

Inputs and suggestions from the pre-test were used to improve the design, clarity and relevance of the contents of the questionnaire and interview schedules thus enabling more effective data collection. The data collection instruments were found to be fully representative of what the study aimed to measure and also appeared to be suitable to their aims. All corrections and suggestions made by those participating in the pre-test were strictly adhered to. The interview schedules and questionnaire were also reviewed by the UKZN Research Ethics Committee and the necessary amendments were made. Most of the questions on the interview schedules and questionnaire were adapted from previous studies (Ngoepe, 2012; Schellnack-Kelly, 2014; Marutha, 2016; Phiri, 2016) to ensure reliability and validity. The following changes were implemented based on the comments made during the pretesting of the data collection instruments.

4.5.2.1 Changes made to the questionnaire

The changes suggested by participants during the pre-test of the questionnaire were considered and implemented. Four questions that were found to be similar and repetitive were removed from the questionnaire and three new questions were added (based on the suggestions of the pre-test participants). The overall format of the questionnaire remained unchanged. Given the nature of the changes made the researcher considered it unnecessary to repeat the pre-test.

4.5.2.2 Changes made to the interview schedules

No problems were identified and no suggestions regarding the interview schedules were made during the pre-test. Given this, no changes were made to the interview schedules.

4.5.3 Data collection procedures

This section gives a detailed description of the procedures that the researcher followed prior to commencing with data collection. The researcher started by preparing the data collection instruments to be used during data collection, namely, the questionnaires (see Appendix 10) for the registry officers, and interview schedules for the records managers (see Appendix 11) and the municipal managers (see Appendix 12). Getting permission to conduct the research in the municipalities was a big challenge. However, with the help of the SALGA Limpopo Branch, permission was ultimately granted. A further challenge that the researcher faced during the study was access to the study population. Some of the respondents had to contact their political leaders to ask if they could respond to the questionnaire while others exercised their rights and refused to partake in the study. Another challenge was the lack of interest in the study in some of the municipalities. Furthermore, difficulties were experienced in scheduling and conducting the interviews and getting some of the questionnaires returned.

Once permission to conduct the research was obtained, the researcher was granted an Ethical Clearance Certificate (see Appendix 9) to allow for data collection to proceed. The researcher started collecting data between 04 June 2018 and 27 July 2018. As noted above, it was difficult to secure appointments with the municipal managers for interviews. However, regular telephone contact and email reminders

for interview requests yielded positive results. During the interviews, the researcher was also interrupted by some of the managers' cell phones that kept on ringing. In some cases, appointments were rescheduled even after confirmation of an appointment.

In order to ensure voluntary cooperation and participation of the participants, a covering letter seeking consent from participants was attached to every questionnaire (see Appendix 13). The letter explained the aims and objectives of the study and indicated that their participation was important in improving records management in municipalities. The participants were required to sign the consent form and were also informed that they were at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time. Telephone calls were made to municipal staff prior to delivering the questionnaires and the questionnaires were collected seven days after delivery. It must be noted that several challenges were also encountered during this data collection stage. For example, some of the respondents took longer to finish the questionnaires than expected. This meant that the researcher had to travel back to those municipalities to collect the remaining questionnaires. However, there were those who even after several attempts on the part of the researcher to get them to participate, refused to complete the questionnaire and provided no reasons for their refusal.

4.6 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of systematically applying statistical and/or logical techniques to describe and illustrate, condense and recap, and evaluate data in order to create meaning (Babbie, 2014). This means that the researcher takes a capacious amount of data and condenses it into certain patterns, categories or themes and then interprets this information by using some schema. The data analysis provides meaning to collected data thus allowing the researcher to answer the research questions. This section will discuss how the qualitative and quantitative data collected, using the various data collection instruments discussed above, were analysed.

Qualitative and quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire and interviews were captured and entered into a computer for analysis. Although the analysis and

presentation of qualitative and quantitative data were done independently of each other, data were integrated during the discussion in order to answer the research questions and draw conclusions. With both sets of data integrated, the researcher was able to establish the records management practices in selected municipalities in Limpopo Province. The researcher was assisted by a University of Limpopo statistician who is also a professional in quantitative research. The statistician provided advice on choosing the most suitable data analysis methods and how to use the SPSS software to analyse the data.

4.6.1 Quantitative data

For the purpose of the study, the SPSS statistical package was used to analyse the quantitative data. The data obtained from the questionnaires were edited for completeness and then cleaned. In doing so, the researcher critically examined all the data collected to check for any errors. This was followed by coding the data and transferring them onto the computer. Once entered into the computer, the data were subjected to descriptive analysis to generate percentages, frequency bar charts and cross-tabulations.

4.6.2 Qualitative data

Qualitative data collected from the interviews were analysed using thematic content analysis and were presented in narrative form. This allows the respondents to give their own opinions in their own words about the research free of the problems and restraints associated with fixed-response questions found in quantitative research. According to Creswell (2009), "qualitative data are too voluminous and effort should be made to reduce the data by identifying a coding procedure that assists in reducing the information given into themes or categories. As Creswell (2009) reported, thematic content analysis also produces and presents data more effectively, reflecting the reality of the data collected. Thematic content analysis offered an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing the voluminous qualitative data obtained. The objective of the thematic analysis was to identify themes in the data that are vital and use these themes to address the research questions. Thus, thematic analysis is used in qualitative research and focuses on examining themes within data. The presentation of qualitative data in the study was done by discussing

the themes and, in some cases, interview responses were reported verbatim. Themes in line with the research questions were created from the reviewed literature while others were created from the collected data.

4.7 Reliability and validity

According to Kimberlin and Winterstein (2008), the process of developing and validating a data collection tool is in large part focused on reducing error in the measurement process. The authors postulated that reliability estimates evaluate the stability of measures, the internal consistency of measurement instruments, and the reliability of instrument scores. In the words of Neuman (2011), reliability and validity are concepts that help to establish the truthfulness, credibility or believability of the findings of the study. This is done by ensuring that the instrument used to collect data is reliable and valid by eliminating questions that are not reliable and valid. Babbie (2014:153) asserted that reliability is a matter of “whether repeated application of a particular technique on the same object, produces the same results each time, whereas “validity is concerned with the level to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration”.

A data collection instrument is considered reliable when it can be used by various researchers under stable conditions with more or less similar results. Reliability can perhaps best be summed up by consistency and replicability of the data collection instrument. As noted above, the data collection instruments used for the current study were adapted from previous studies (Garaba, 2010; Makhura, 2001; Ngoepe, 2012; Schellnack-Kelly, 2014; Marutha, 2016; Phiri, 2016) on records management with the assumption that they had been tested already, thereby ensuring reliability and validity of the instruments. In addition to adapting questions from previous studies, the researcher also developed new questions related to the objectives of the research. To improve the validity of the data collection instrument, apart from the pre-test describe above, the researcher requested two staff members in the Information Studies Programme and the Records Manager at the University of Limpopo to review the questionnaire to ensure the important information was captured. All three staff members found the questionnaire easy to understand and

experienced no difficulty in completing it. Therefore, no corrections or changes were made to the questionnaire and it was considered “ready” for distribution to the registry officials.

4.8 Trustworthiness of data

According to Pilot and Beck (2014), trustworthiness of data refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation and methods used to ensure the quality of a study. Creswell (2014) put forward that the trustworthiness of qualitative research can be established by using four strategies: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability, which are constructed parallel to the analogous quantitative criteria of internal and external validity, reliability and neutrality. The interview data was recorded using an audio recording device and notes were also taken during the interviews. The researcher ensured trustworthiness of the qualitative data by clarifying ambiguities in the responses to interviews questions and by following-up on incomplete answers. Once the interviews had been transcribed, each participant was given a typed transcript of his or her interview. This ensured trustworthiness and that the transcription was an accurate reflection of what each respondent had said.

4.9 Ethical considerations

In the context of research, according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007), ethics refers to the appropriateness of the researcher’s behaviour in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of the study, or those affected by it. Gravetter and Forzano (2016:99) asserted that “considerations of ethical issues in research are integral throughout the research process in order to avoid collisions between the researcher and participants”. In addition, the researcher must ensure that the ethical guidelines on privacy, confidentiality and anonymity are emphasised and adhered to as a standard for research.

Accordingly, the researcher observed all the ethical procedures in terms of the UKZN’s Ethics Policy. The Ethics Committee of the UKZN Pietermaritzburg Campus assessed and approved the proposal. Ethical clearance documents were submitted to the Higher Degrees’ Committee for authorisation (Protocol reference number: HSS/2167/017D) (see Appendix 9). The researcher sought permission from various municipalities where the study was conducted. Institutional gatekeepers' letters

granting permission to conduct research (Appendices 1-7) were obtained. The data instruments were reviewed by the University Research Ethics Committee and, as described earlier, pre-tested to improve their validity. In accordance with the UKZN research ethics policy, permission to conduct the study was sought from the SALGA before data was collected. The clearance letters were shown to respondents so that they were comfortable with participating in the study knowing that their municipality and the SALGA were aware of the study. As outlined above, informed consent was sought from the participants by availing a letter introducing the researcher and explaining the purpose of the study (Appendices 1 and 13). Verbal and written informed consents were obtained from the participants. Completed forms have been stored safely to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. The researcher promised to make the research report available to the municipalities should they need it for organisational development and process improvement purposes.

The participants were duly informed and briefed about the purpose of the study before the questionnaires were administered and the interviews conducted, as recommended by Oliver (2003:28) who believes that participants should be fully informed about a research project before they take part. The respondents, also as noted above, were informed that participating in the study was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any stage without sanctions. The respondents were also reassured of their anonymity and that the data collected would be treated with confidentiality. Although there was some fear of victimisation from some of the respondents, the researcher assured the respondents that all data collected was to be used only for the purposes of the study after which it would be destroyed. No personal identification of participants was solicited for the purposes of the study and thus no names appeared in the study. Fear of victimisation was particularly evident with the registry officers, even though they were assured that their confidentiality and anonymity would be guaranteed. After some persuasion and emphasising that the study was purely academic, the registry officers agreed to participate in the study.

4.10 Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology adopted for the study and presented justification for the choice of research methods and approaches. The quantitative research method was used to collect data and this was supplemented by a qualitative one. The post-positivism paradigm was adopted to inform the study and reasons for choosing this paradigm were given. The chapter also deliberated on the population, sampling procedures and instruments used to collect data. The choice of the population and data collection instruments was also justified. The population of the study comprised registry officers, municipal records managers and municipal managers. Data was collected using a questionnaire and interviews. The questionnaire, the main research instrument, was distributed to registry clerks. A semi-structured interview was used with the records managers while a structured interview was conducted with the municipal managers. Finally, the chapter also discussed data analysis procedures. Quantitative data were analysed using the SPSS statistical package, while qualitative data from the interviews were analysed through thematic content analysis. Ethical requirements as set out by the UKZN research policy were strictly adhered to.

The next chapter will present the results of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

5.0 Introduction

According to Mouton (2009), the purpose of data analysis is to reduce the wealth of data that the researcher has collected to manageable proportions and identify the patterns and themes in the data. This chapter presents the results of the analysis of data that were collected from the questionnaires and two sets of interviews. The findings relating to the questionnaire survey of registry officers are presented first. The findings are presented in a variety of formats including pie charts, tables and graphs. Results from the interviews are then presented beginning with the records managers and followed by those of the municipal managers. The findings of the interviews are largely presented in narrative form. To provide a structure to the chapter the research questions, as specified in Chapter One, are used as headings under which the relevant findings are presented. The questions were as follows:

- a) What are the current records management practices in selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province?
- b) How knowledgeable are staff in the municipalities about records management practices?
- c) What are the factors that affect the current records management practices in municipalities in the Limpopo Province?
- d) What activities and strategies are used to support records management practices?
- e) What challenges are municipal officials facing in the management of records in the municipalities?

It must be noted that some of the research questions were answered by the registry officers only, while others were answered by records managers and municipal managers only, and certain research questions were answered by all the participants. The names of the municipal managers and records managers are identified by pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. The researcher rounded off the percentages to one decimal point and that resulted, in some cases, to the total percentage not adding up to 100 percent exactly.

After the questionnaires were completed, they were scrutinised to eradicate those that were incomplete. This procedure was immediately followed by the capturing of the data on a Microsoft Excel computer package. The Excel document was then imported into the IBM SPSS Statistics Version 25 where data was coded in preparation for data analysis. The data analysis involved several rigorous statistical tests such as reliability tests, correlation analysis, and mean score ranking. Data from the interviews, on the other hand, were transcribed and analysed using thematic and content analysis. Thus, the data obtained from both the qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were analysed separately but integrated in the discussion in Chapter Six. In terms of the latter, the qualitative responses from the interviews were used to complement the quantitative findings from the questionnaire. This is in line with the study having adopted a quantitative method supplemented by qualitative methods.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the response rates achieved.

5.1 Response rates

The response rate can be referred to as the number of successful responses to the request to participate in a study. According to Punch (2003), a response rate means the proportion of the selected sample who complete the questionnaire or interviews. Ngoepe (2012) asserted that most researchers are always concerned about the response rates achieved in their studies. As indicated in the previous chapter, a total of 92 questionnaires were distributed to registry officers in the six selected municipalities in Limpopo Province. Of the 92 questionnaires distributed to the officers, 86 were returned which yielded a response rate of 93%. With the interviews, all six record managers targeted participated (thus a 100% response rate) while five of the six municipal managers participated (a response rate of 84%). As noted by Babbie and Mouton (2001), a response rate of over 50% is satisfactory for data analysis and reporting, a response rate of 60% is good and a response rate of 70% or more is excellent. The excellent response rates achieved in the study were as a result of the persistent follow-ups on the participants by the researcher.

As outlined above, the findings relating to the questionnaire-based survey of registry officers are presented first.

5.2 Results of the questionnaire survey of registry officers

Eighty-six registry officers in the six targeted municipalities completed the questionnaire. The demographic profile of the respondents is provided below.

5.2.1 Demographic profile of registry officers

In order to understand the nature of the respondents, Section A of the questionnaire elicited their demographic profiles. The characteristics determined were:

- Gender
- Age
- Current job title
- Number of years in the current position.

The findings regarding each characteristic are presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Demographic data

Demographic data	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	59	68.6%
Female	27	31.4%
Age		
26-30 Years	20	23.3%
31-35 Years	23	26.7%
36-40 Years	21	24.4%
41 Years and above	22	25.6%
Current job title		
Admin Officer	24	27.9%
Senior Registry Clerk	20	23.3%
Registry Clerk	41	47.7%
Record Officer	1	1.2%
Number of years in the current position		
1-3 years	12	14%

4-6 years	45	52.3%
7-9 years	4	4.7%
10-12 years	22	25.6%
12 years and above	3	3.5%

It was important to know the gender of the respondents to allow the researcher to establish which gender is more involved in records management practices in municipalities. The majority of respondents, 59 (68.6%) were male and 27 (31.4%) were female. It is thus evident that there are more males than females working in the registry offices of the six municipalities comprising the study. Respondents were asked to specify their age group. It is evident that no age group dominated. However, the age group with the highest number of respondents was 31-35 years with 23 (26.7%); while the age group with the lowest number of respondents was 26-30 years with 20 (23.3%).

Respondents were also asked to specify their current job title. The results reveal that the majority of respondents, 61 (71%) were either registry clerks or senior registry clerks. This was followed by 24 (27.9%) respondents whose job title was administration officer. One (1.2%) of the respondents was a record officer. The researcher solicited information on the number of years of working experience the respondents had in their current position. A small majority of respondents, 45 (52.3%) have been in their position for 4-6 years while 22 (25.6%) indicated that they had 10-12 years of working experience. Those with the least amount of experience (1-3 years) numbered 12 (14%). Overall, the findings revealed that most people working in registry offices in municipalities do not have many years of working experience. The educational levels of the registry officers will be presented later when reporting on their qualifications. The next section of the questionnaire focused on obtaining the information needed to answer the research questions posed. As noted above, the questions themselves serve as headings.

5.2.2 What are the current records management practices in the selected municipalities of the Limpopo Province?

The first research question sought to establish the records management practices in the selected municipalities in Limpopo Province. As discussed in Chapter two, the study was underpinned by the Records Life Cycle and the Records Continuum Models. The results are presented under the following categories:

- a) Records management policy
- b) Record creation
- c) Filing of records
- d) Storage facilities and maintenance
- e) Appraisal and disposal
- f) Electronic records.

5.2.2.1 Records management policy

The importance of a records management policy in records management cannot be overstated. The policy provides a framework for the application of an organisation's records management programme and ensures that complete and exact records of the activities are created, captured and maintained. A written records management policy is important because it guides registry officers in managing records and setting standards that must be achieved. Various questions were asked relating to a records management policy and the findings relating to each are presented. Registry officers were first asked if their municipalities have a written records management policy.

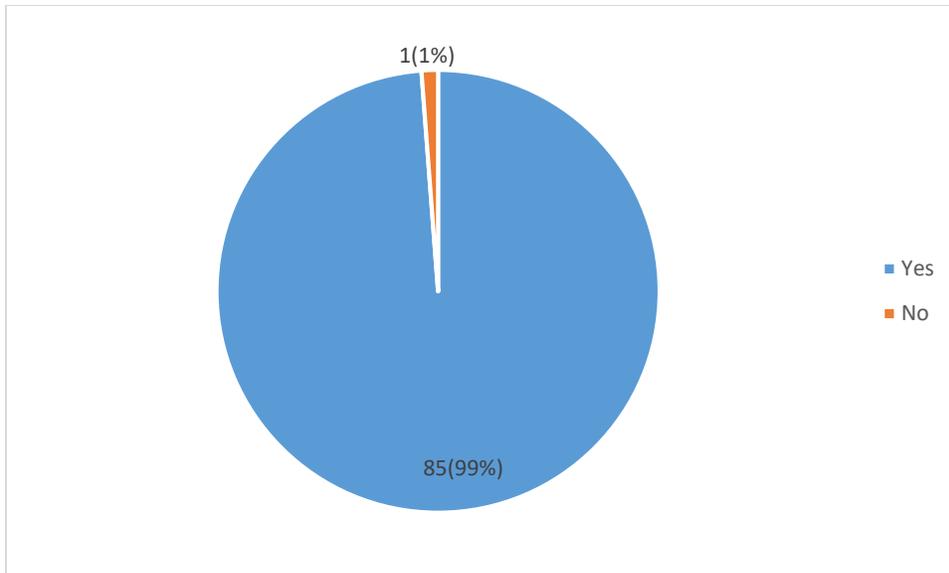


Figure 5.1: Records management policy n=86

An overwhelming majority, 85 (99%) of the respondents reported that they have a written records management policy. Surprisingly, there was one (1%) respondent who replied in the negative. The aim and purpose of the records management policy is to ensure that municipalities adhere to the legislative provisions of the National Archives Act and policy manuals, guidelines, circulars and directives. Records management policy also requires municipalities to manage their records in a well-structured record keeping system, and adopt and implement the necessary policies and procedures to ensure that the record-keeping and records management practices of the municipalities comply with the objectives and requirements of the National Archives Act. As Ngoepe (2016) would attest, records management policy and procedures, are developed but not implemented in most governmental bodies. Needless to say, developing records management policies and not implementing them is as good as not having them.

5.2.2.1.1 Awareness of the records management policy

It is of no use having a written records management policy if employees are not aware of the policy. The respondents were asked to indicate if all the employees in their municipality were aware of the policy. The findings are presented in Figure 5.2.

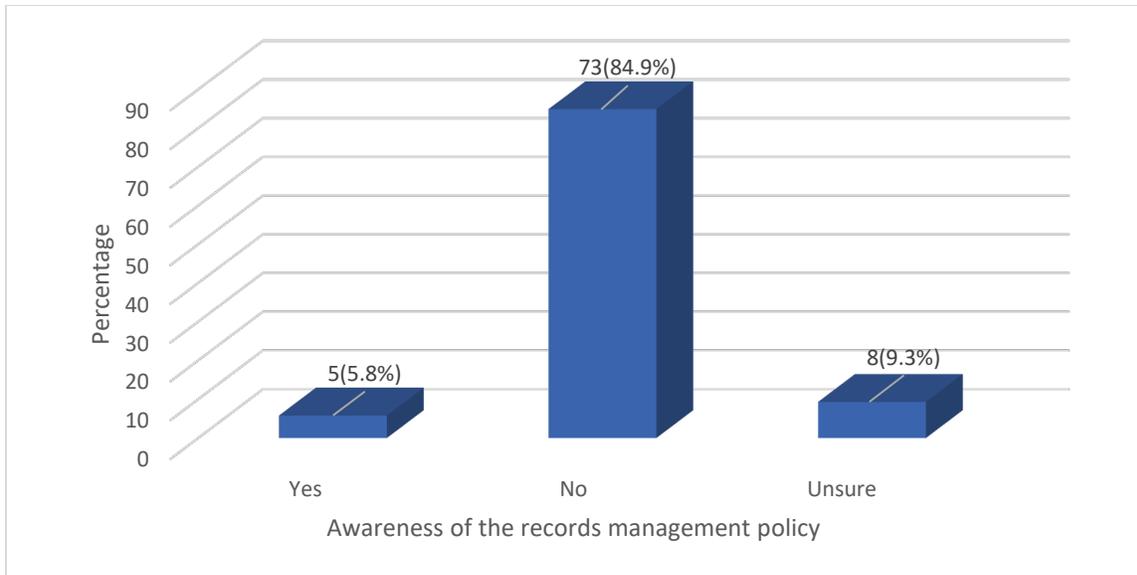


Figure 5.2: Awareness of records management policy n=86

The results show that 73 (84.9%) of the respondents reported that not all the employees in their municipalities were aware of the records management policy. Only five (5.8%) reported that all employees were aware of the policy and eight (9.3%) said they were unsure whether all employees in their municipalities were aware of the policy.

5.2.2.1.2 Regular review of the records management policy

Any written records management policy that is not reviewed on a regular basis will not promote good records management practices. The registry officers were asked if the records management policy is reviewed regularly. Figure 5.7 presents the findings.

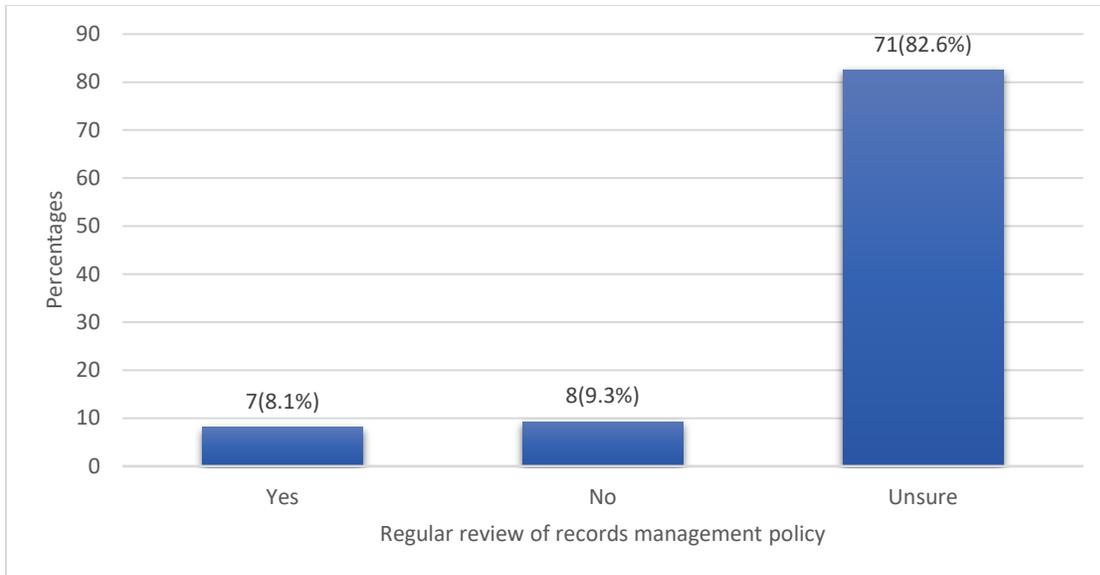


Figure 5.3: Regular review of records management policy n=86

What emerged strongly from the responses is that a large majority of respondents, 71 (82.6%) were unsure whether their records management policy was regularly reviewed or not. Only seven (8.1%) of the respondents indicated that their policy was reviewed regularly.

5.2.2.1.4 Managing records according to the records management policy

The study sought to establish if the registry officers managed records according to the policy and the responses are presented in Figure 5.4.

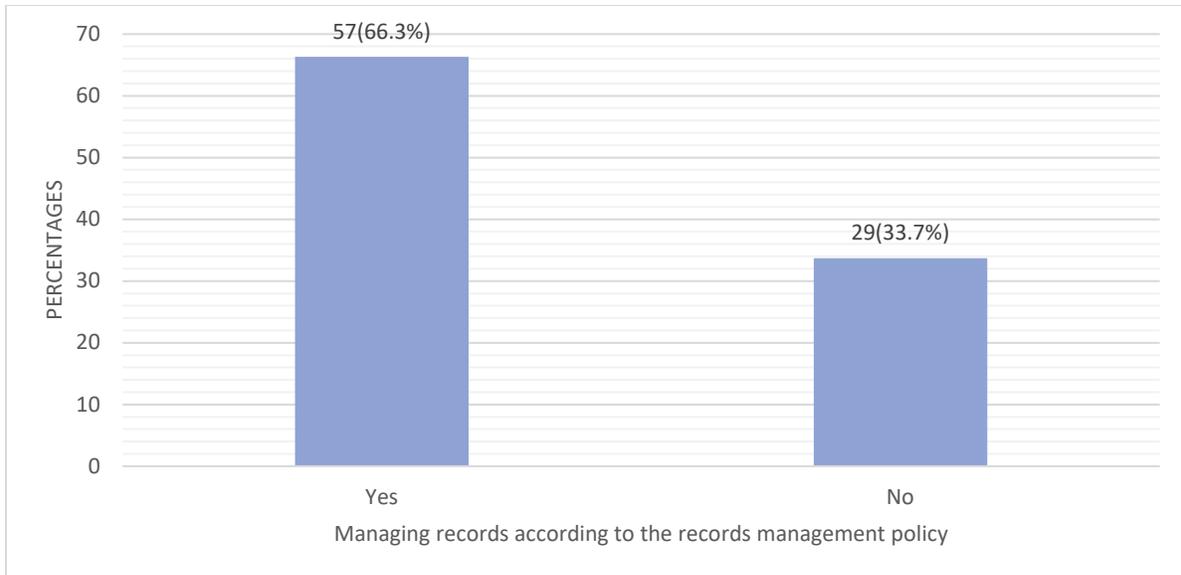


Figure 5.4: Managing records according to the records management policy n=86

The results reveal that 57 (66.3%) respondents do manage records according to the records management policy, but 29 (33.7%) do not manage records in accordance with the policy.

5.2.2.2 Records creation

Records management is the process of ensuring the proper creation, maintenance, use and disposal of records. The importance of records creation in records management practices cannot be underestimated. All created records should be allocated reference numbers in accordance with the file plan. Findings relating to various aspects of records creation are provided below.

5.2.2.2.1 Types of records created

According to the NARSSA (2004), records creation is one of the key phases in the records life-cycle. To understand the types of records created in municipalities, the respondents were asked about the main types created. The results are presented in Figure 5.5.

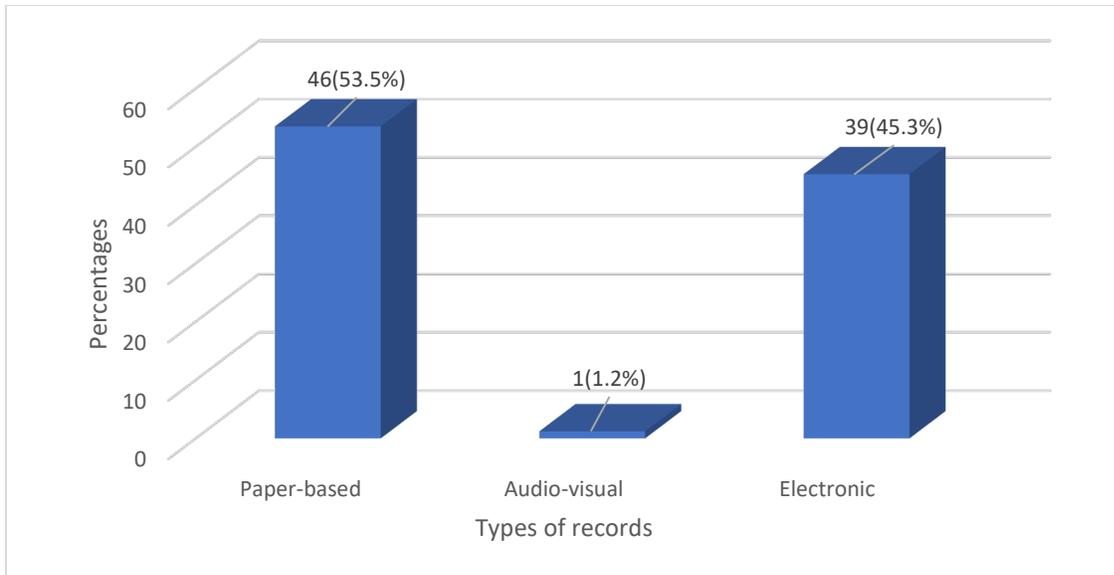


Figure 5.5: Types of records created n=86

A small majority of respondents, 46 (53.5 %) reported that the main type of record created in their municipality was paper-based while 39 (45.3 %) of the respondents mentioned electronic records as the main type created.

5.2.2.2.2 Where records are kept after creation

To establish the current records management practices in municipalities, it was crucial to determine where records are kept after creation. Records storage plays a significant role in ensuring that records are easily retrieved and accessed when required. The respondents were asked to specify where the records were kept after they had been created. The responses to the question are summarised in Figure 5.6 below.

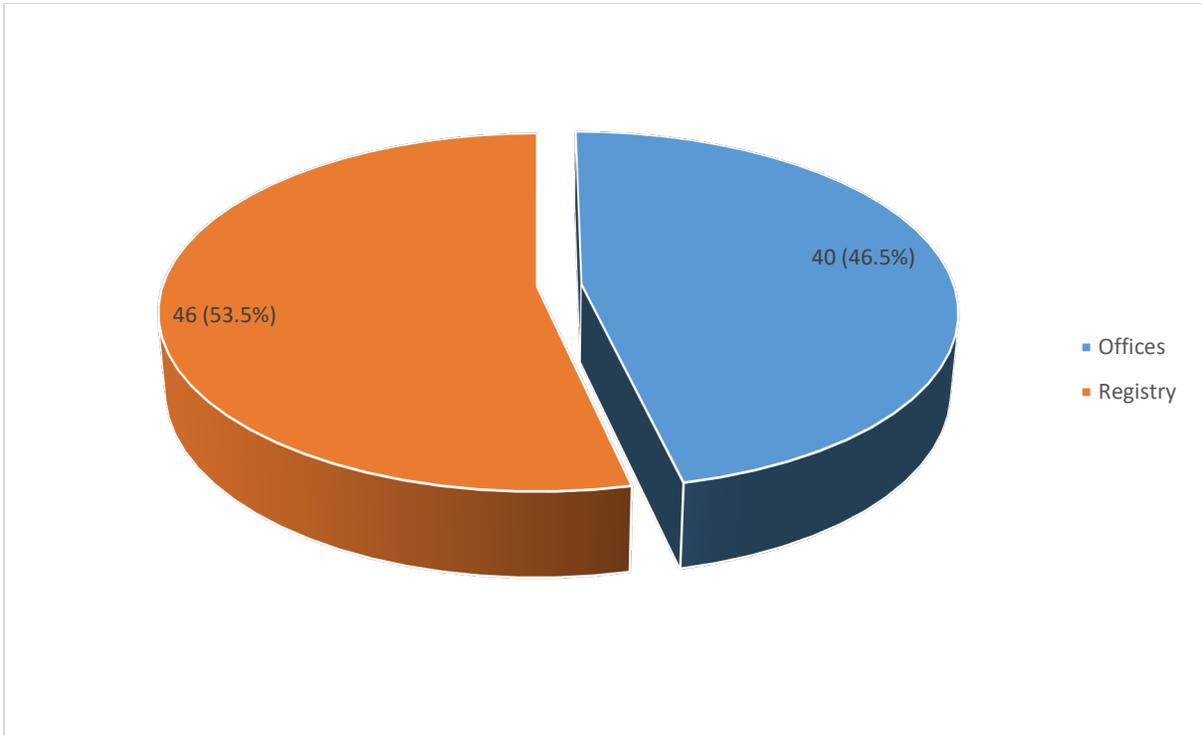


Figure 5.6: Records storage n=86

The responses presented in Figure 5.6 reveal that 46 (53.5%) respondents indicated that they keep their records in the registry while 40 (46.5%) indicated that records are kept in employees' offices.

5.2.2.2.3 Records creation training

Respondents were requested to specify if they were given training in records creation. The findings are presented in Figure 5.7.

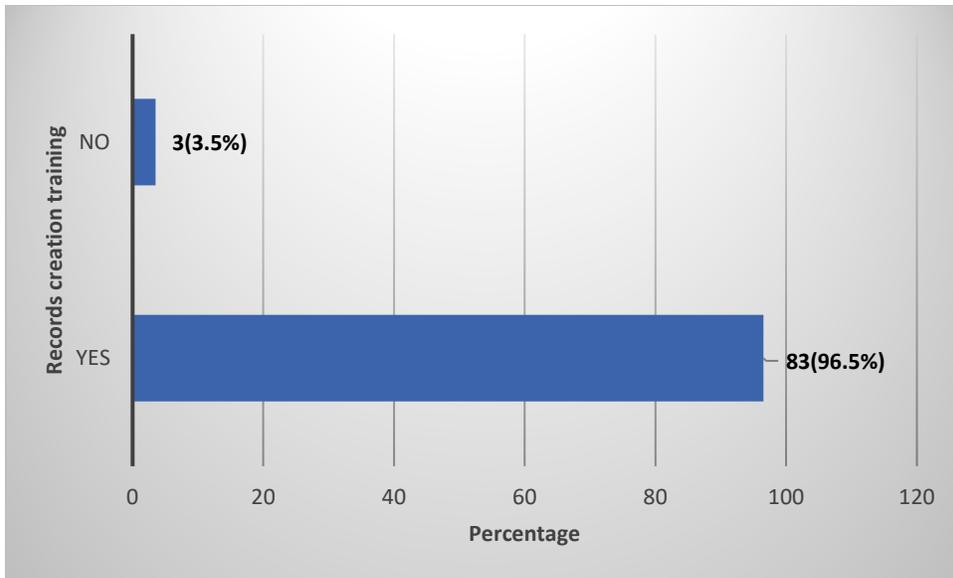


Figure 5.7: *Records creation training* n=86

As seen in Figure 5.7, the vast majority of respondents 83 (96.5%) indicated that they received training in records creation.

5.2.2.2.4 Methods used to provide training

The study sought to establish the methods used to train registry officers in records creation. The findings are presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: *Methods used to provide training* n=86

Methods used to provide training	Frequency	Percent
Orientation and induction process	44	51.2
Advertisements on internal media	1	1.2
Policy manuals	1	1.2
Awareness campaigns	40	46.5
Total	86	100.1*

* The total percentage does not add up to 100% because percentages have been rounded off to one decimal place.

The results reveal that just over half of the respondents, 44 (51.2%) received their records creation training during the orientation and induction process. Just under half 40 (46.5%) received training through awareness campaigns. Policy manuals, despite their importance, were not a factor in the provision of training and were mentioned by one (1.2%) respondent only.

5.2.2.3 Filing of records

Filing of records, when done correctly, ensures accurate and prompt retrieval of records when required. Records must be filed as soon as possible after receipt or creation. A sound records management practice ensures that records are correctly filed and stored. Every new record should be registered and maintained in a filing system with a reference number.

5.2.2.3.1 Records filing system

Registry officers were asked to indicate how records are filed in their municipality. Their responses are presented in Figure 5.8.

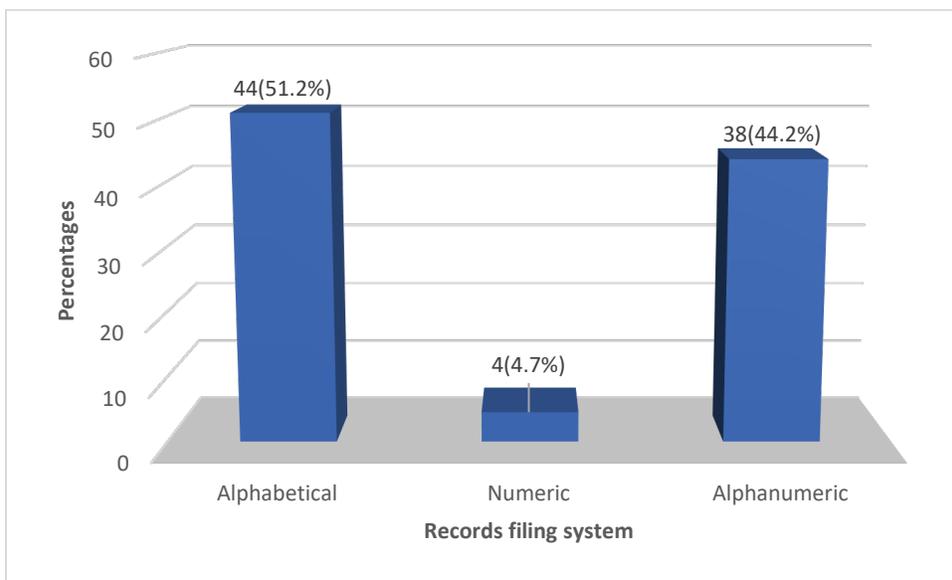


Figure 5.8: Records filing system n=86

The two most used filing systems were alphabetical and alphanumeric mentioned by 44 (51.2%) and 38 (44.2%) respondents respectively.

5.2.2.3.2 Frequency of filing of records

Records in storage areas must be filed frequently to avoid the accumulation of records in offices that could make it difficult to retrieve the files. To shed some light on the frequency of filing of records, respondents were asked to state how often they file the office records. The results are presented in Figure 5.9.

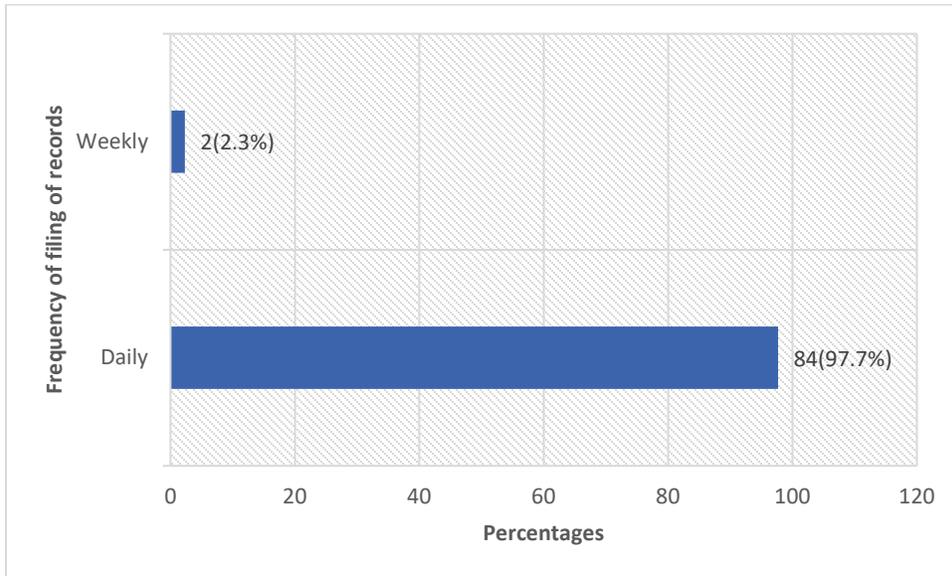


Figure 5.9: Frequency of filing of records n=86

The results reveal that the vast majority, 84 (97.7%) of respondents filed records on a daily as opposed to a weekly basis.

5.2.2.4 Storage facilities and maintenance

It is important that active municipal records are stored in the most economical manner possible, secured and available when needed. Furthermore, inactive records must be stored in the best possible conditions.

5.2.2.4.1 Storing of records

Given the importance of ensuring the safety of municipal records, they must be kept in appropriate storage. Records need to be “reachable” and protected against damage. The respondents were asked whether their municipal records were stored in filing cabinets, shelves, boxes or carousels. The results are presented in Figure 5.10.

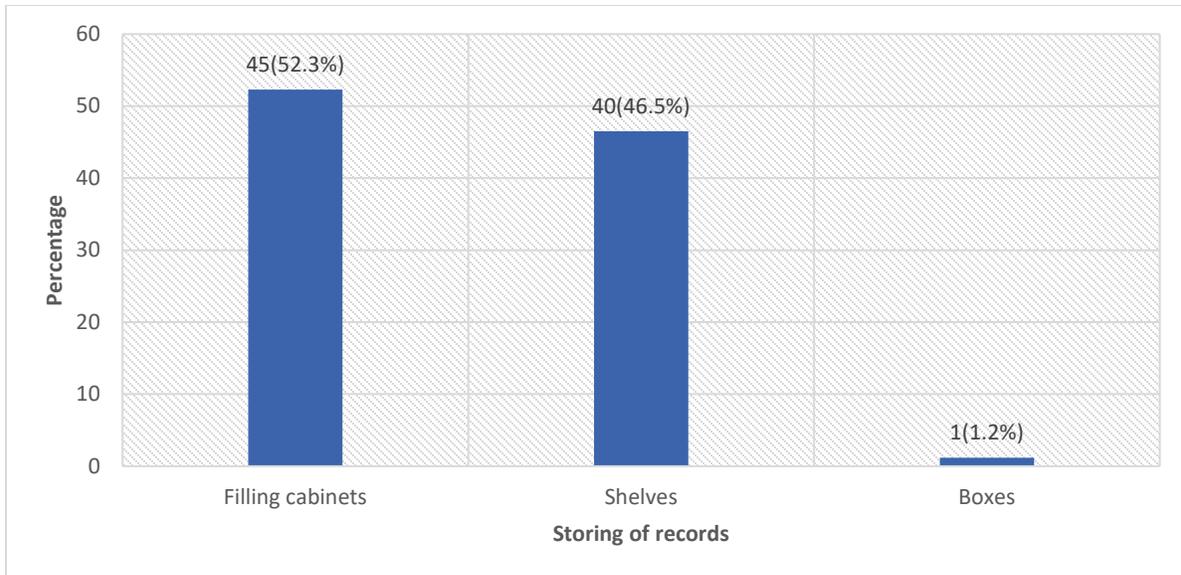


Figure 5.10: Storing of records n=86

As can be seen, filing cabinets are the most used for the storage of records with 45 (52.3%) respondents indicating this. Shelves were the next most used storage mechanism mentioned by 40 (46.5%) respondents. Boxes were little used.

5.2.2.4.2 Access to the storage area

All records need some level of security to make sure they are safe. The researcher wanted to find out which staff have permission to access the records storage areas. The results are presented in Figure 5.11.

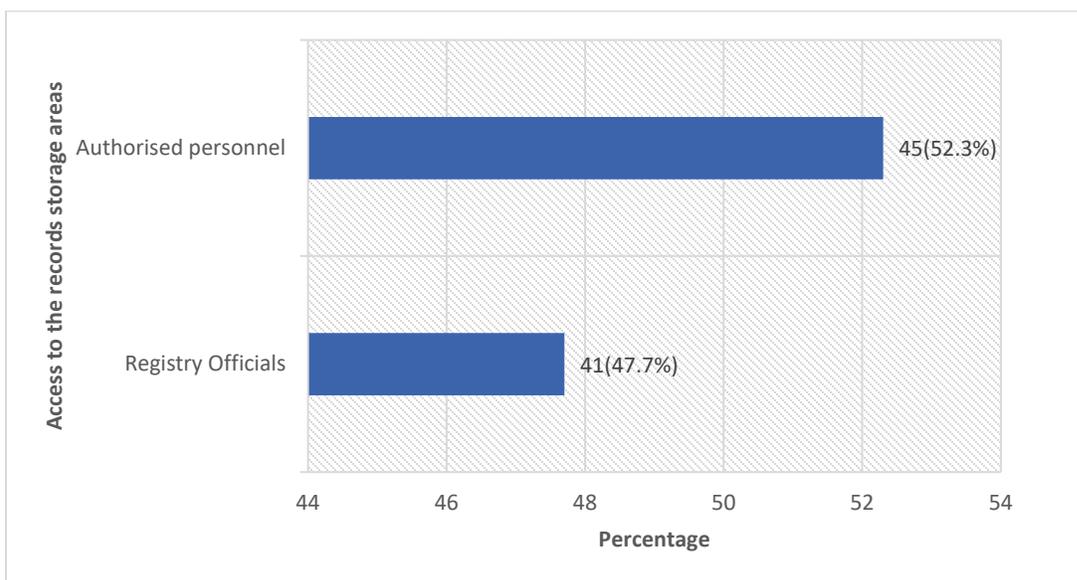


Figure 5.11: Access to the records storage areas

The results show that of the 86 respondents, 45 (52.3%) indicated that in their municipalities authorised personnel have access to the records storage area, while 41 (47.7%) respondents indicated that it is registry officials only who have such access.

5.2.2.4.3 Control of access to the records storage area.

Access is an important part of all records management practices. Access to storage areas should be monitored to ensure that only authorised staff have access. The respondents were asked how access to records storage areas is controlled and Figure 5.12 reflects the findings.

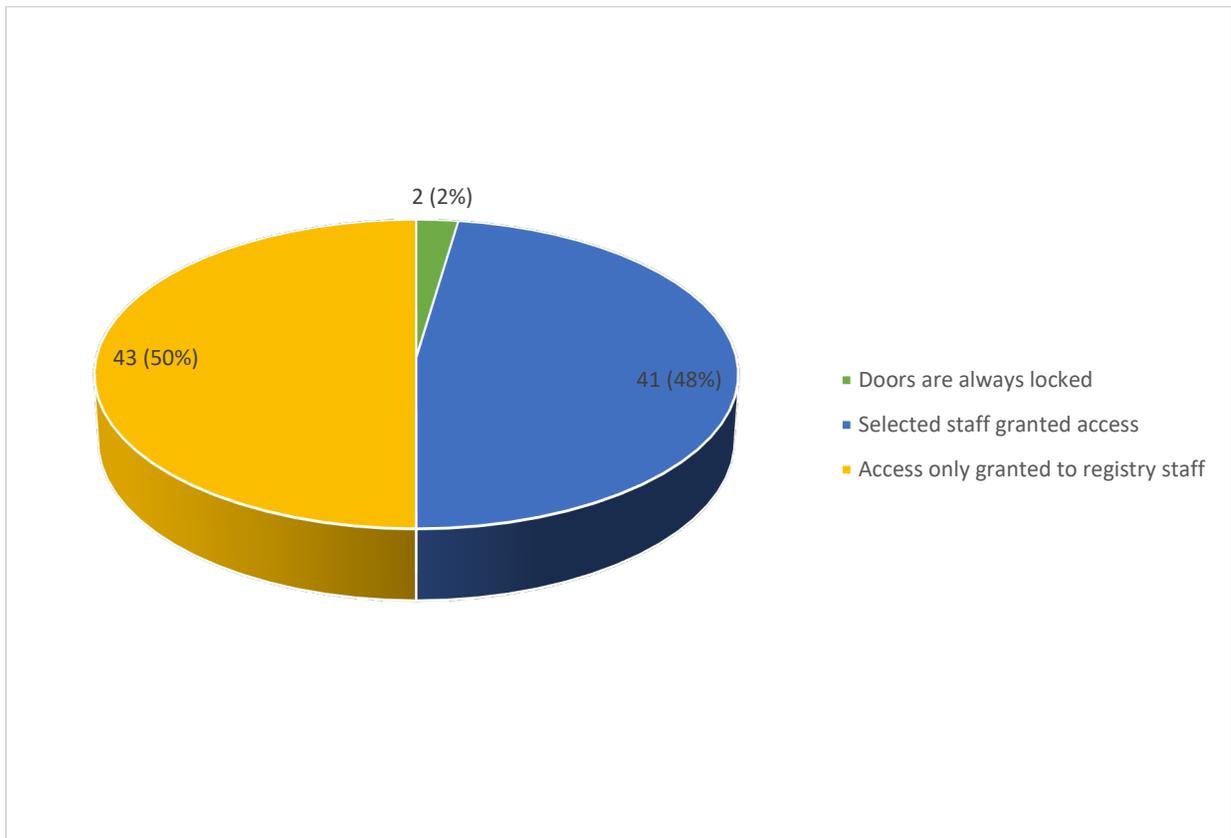


Figure 5.12: Control of the access to records storage areas n=86

As shown in Figure 5.12 above, exactly half the respondents, 43 (50%) indicated that they control access to the records storage area by ensuring that access is granted

to registry staff only. Just under half, 41 (48%) indicated that only selected staff are granted access. The remaining two (2%) respondents used locked doors to control access.

5.2.2.4.4 Methods used to request files

Respondents were asked to mention the methods used by municipal employees to request files from the registry offices. The results are presented in Figure 5.13.

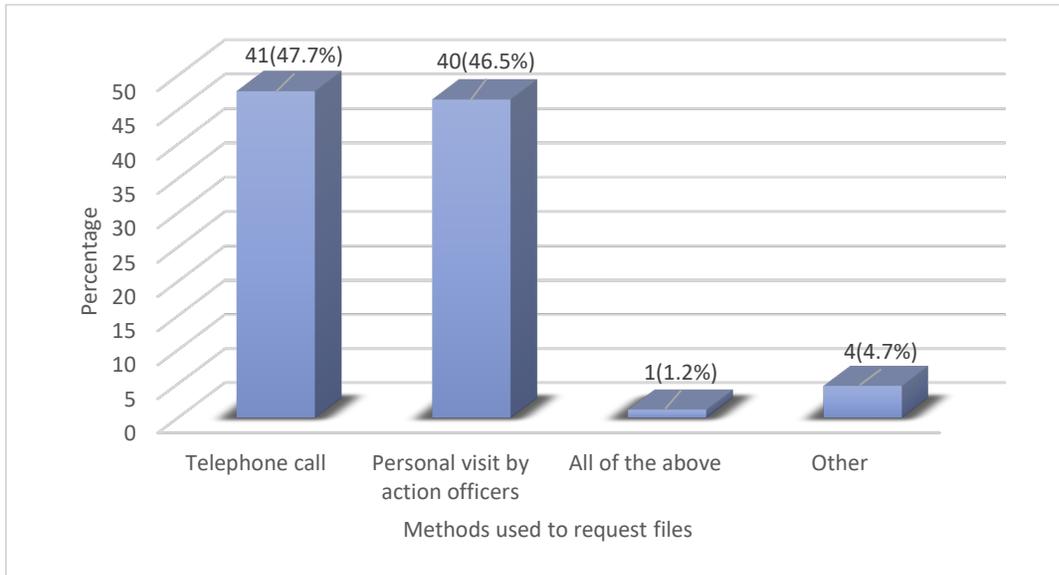


Figure 5.13: Methods used to request files n=86

Telephone calls to request records and personal visits by municipal officials were the most used methods indicated by 41 (47.7%) and 40 (46.5%) respondents respectively. The “Other” category consisted of using e-mails and sending the secretary to request records.

5.2.2.4.5 Availability of records when required

It is important for registry officers to ensure that records are made available at all times when required. Registry officers were thus asked if records were readily available when required. The results are summarised in Figure 5.14.

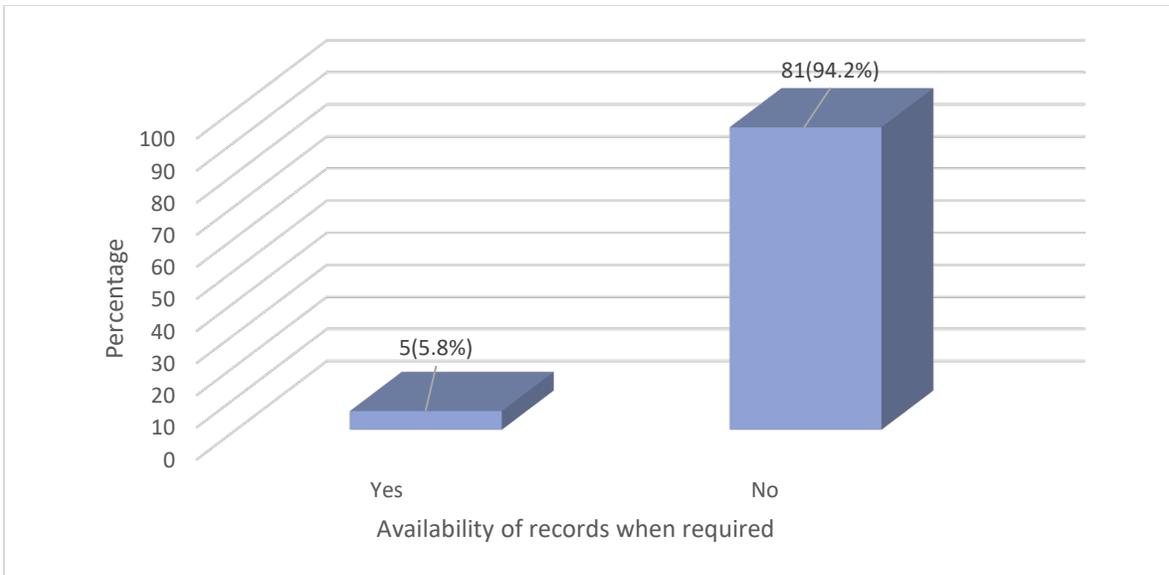


Figure 5.14: Availability of records when required n=86

Interestingly, a significant majority of 81 (94.2%) respondents indicated that records were not readily available when required. Only five (5.8%) respondents said that records were readily available.

5.2.2.4.6 Method used to distribute records

The method used to distribute records is a prerequisite for effective management of records, and therefore should be treated as a priority. The respondents were asked to indicate what method was used to distribute records to users and the results are presented in Figure 5.15.

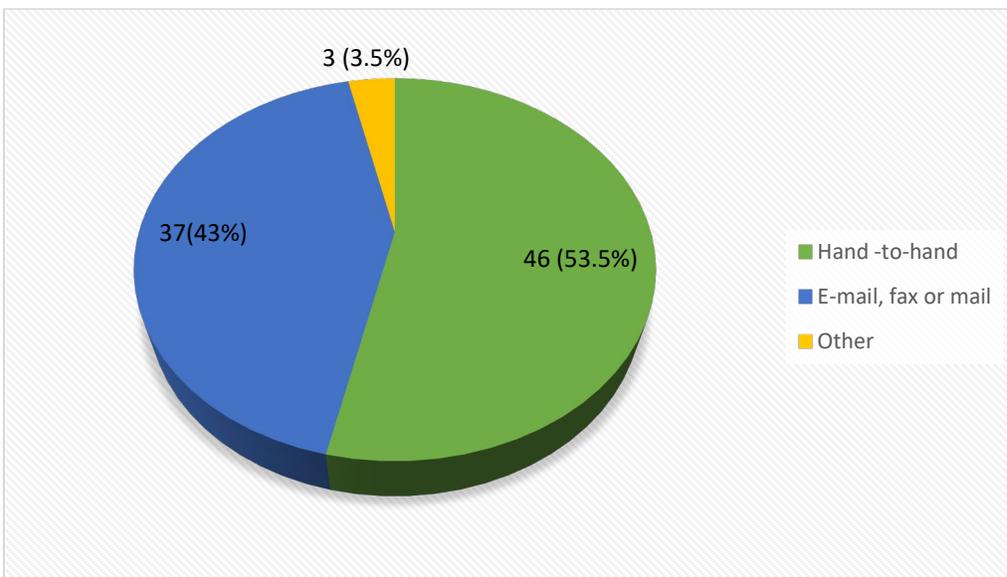


Figure 5.15: Method used to distribute records

Forty-six (53.5%) respondents reported hand-to-hand as the method used to deliver or distribute records while 37(43%) respondents used e-mail, fax or mail as distribution methods. Other methods used were messengers and colleagues mentioned by three (3.5%) respondents.

5.2.2.4.7 Experience missing records

Without a thorough records management strategy, municipalities will experience missing records. Poor records management practices also lead to the problem of missing records. Respondents were asked whether they experienced missing records. The results are presented in Figure 5.16.

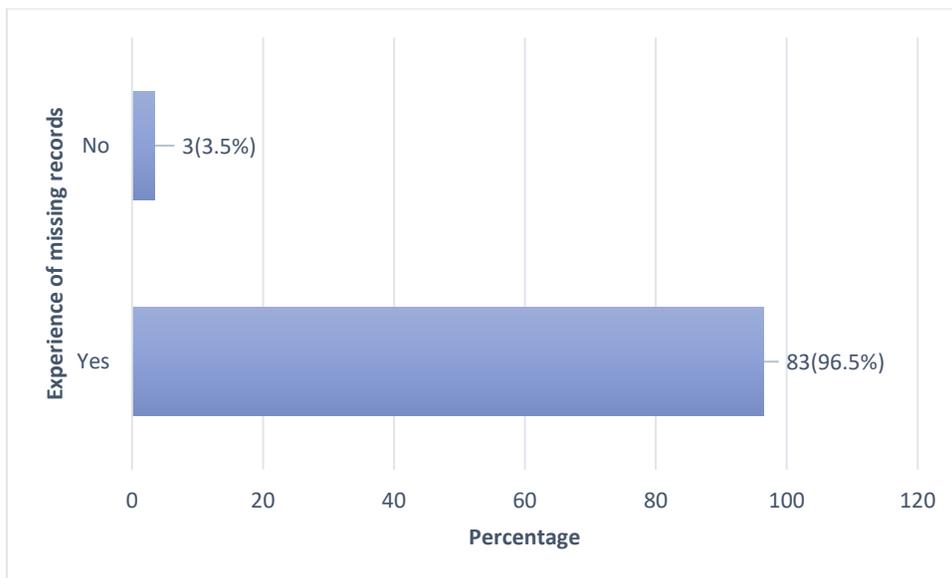


Figure 5.16: Experience of missing records n=86

It is evident that missing records is a significant problem in municipalities given that the vast majority 83 (96.5%) of respondents stated that they experience such a problem.

5.2.2.4.8 Reasons for the problem of missing records.

Respondents were then asked to indicate what they attributed the problem of missing records to. The results are presented in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Reasons for the problem of missing records

Reasons for missing records	Frequency	Percent
Shortage of staff	43	50
Poor records management practices	34	39.5
Inaccurate filing	6	7
Lack of storage space	2	2.3
Lack of training	1	1.2
Total	86	100

Half of the respondents, 43 (50%) attributed missing records to staff shortages in the municipalities. The next most-mentioned reason was poor records management practices pointed to by 34 (39.5%) respondents. Inaccurate filing was not seen as a significant reason, mentioned by only six (7%) respondents.

5.2.2.4.9 Artificial climate control equipment installed in records storage areas

According to Magee (2014), one of the more important, yet easily-overlooked, aspects of a long-term records storage area is environmental controls. Climate levels in registry offices are normally controlled using artificial climate control equipment. Respondents were asked if they have artificial climate control equipment installed in the storage areas. All 86 (100%) of the respondents answered in the affirmative.

5.2.2.4.10 Equipment used to control temperature and relative humidity

The respondents were then requested to indicate the equipment used to control temperature and relative humidity. The results are presented in Figure 5.17.

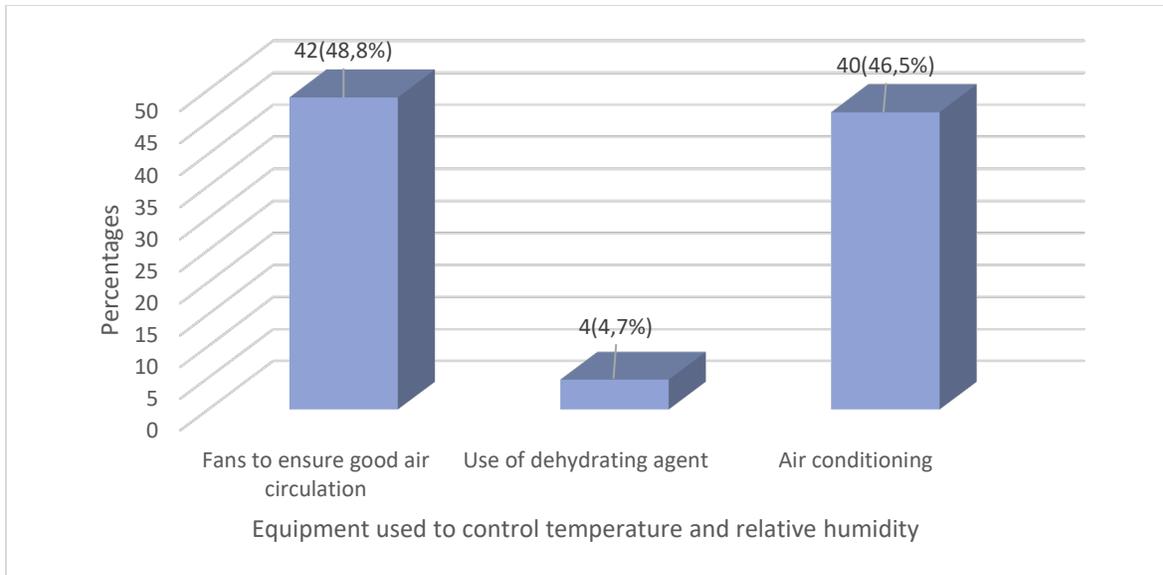


Figure 5.17: Equipment used to control temperature and relative humidity n=86

Fans to ensure good air circulation and air conditioning were the two most used equipment for controlling temperature and relative humidity in the records storage areas mentioned by 42 (48.8%) and 40 (46.5%) respondents respectively. The four (4.7%) remaining respondents made use of a dehydrating agent.

5.2.2.4.11 Fire detection and suppression system

The very nature of a records storage unit makes a fire detection and suppression system an essential requirement for an organisation. The researcher sought to establish if respondents had such a system in place. Figure 5.18 presents the findings.

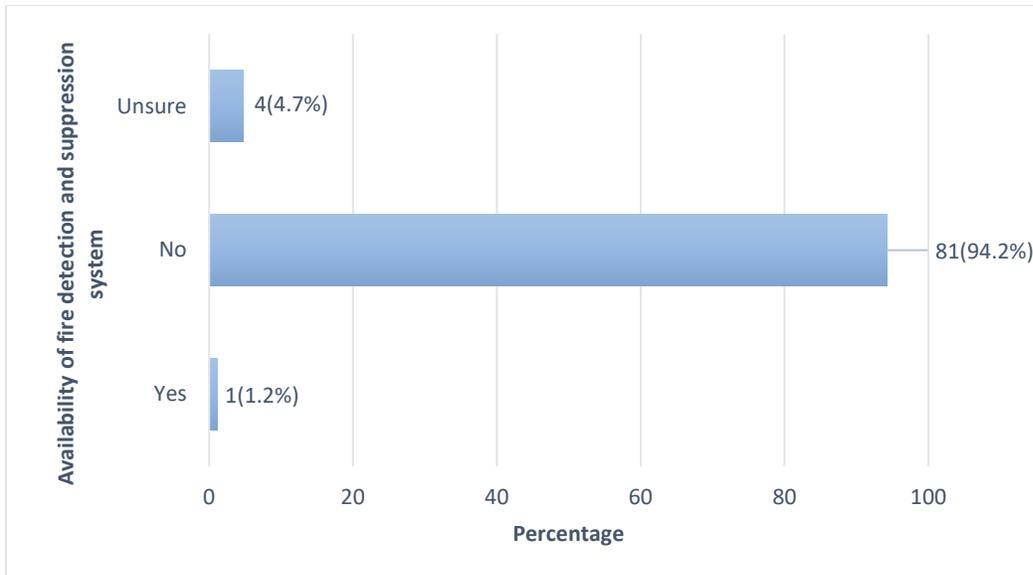


Figure 5.18: Availability of fire detection and suppression system n=86

The vast majority of respondents 81 (94.2%) did not have a fire detection and suppression system. Surprisingly, four (4.7%) stated that they were not sure whether their records storage area had such a system or not.

5.2.2.4.12 Availability of a disaster management plan

The protection and preservation of records are always at the risk of a disaster. All municipalities should have a disaster management plan as without such a plan they stand to lose all their records and institutional memory should a disaster occur. Having a disaster management plan is thus important for good records management practices. Respondents were asked whether such a plan was in place and the results to the question are presented in Figure 5.19.

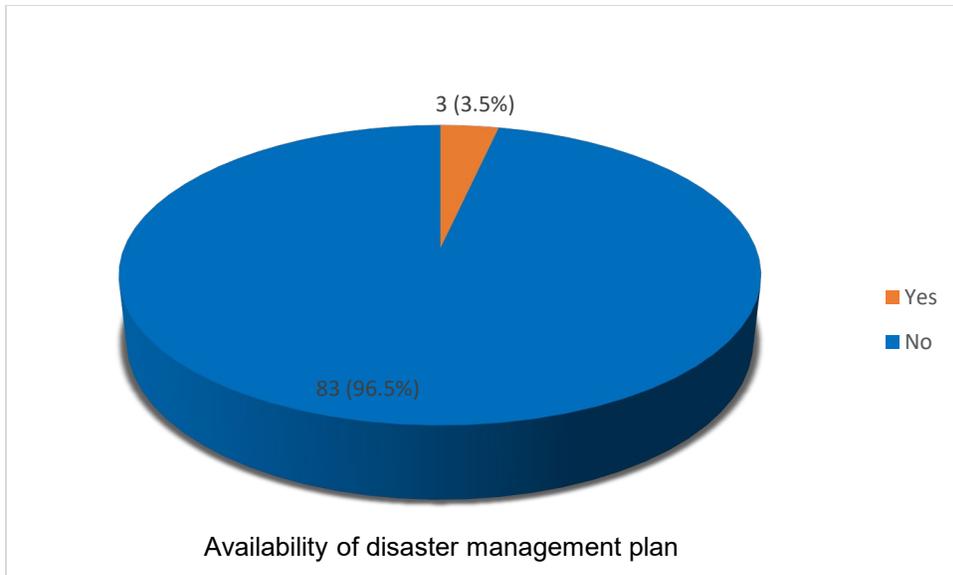


Figure 5.19: Availability of disaster management plan n=86

As evident from the above figure, the vast majority of respondents 83, (96.5%) stated that there was no disaster management plan in place.

5.2.2.4.13 Pest infestations in the record storage area

The safeguarding of records during their active and inactive stages ensures that records can be accessed when needed. Pests such as insects and rodents hunt for food and shelter in records storage areas and this can have a destructive effect on the records. The researcher asked respondents if they had ever experienced pest infestations. The results are presented in Figure 5.20.

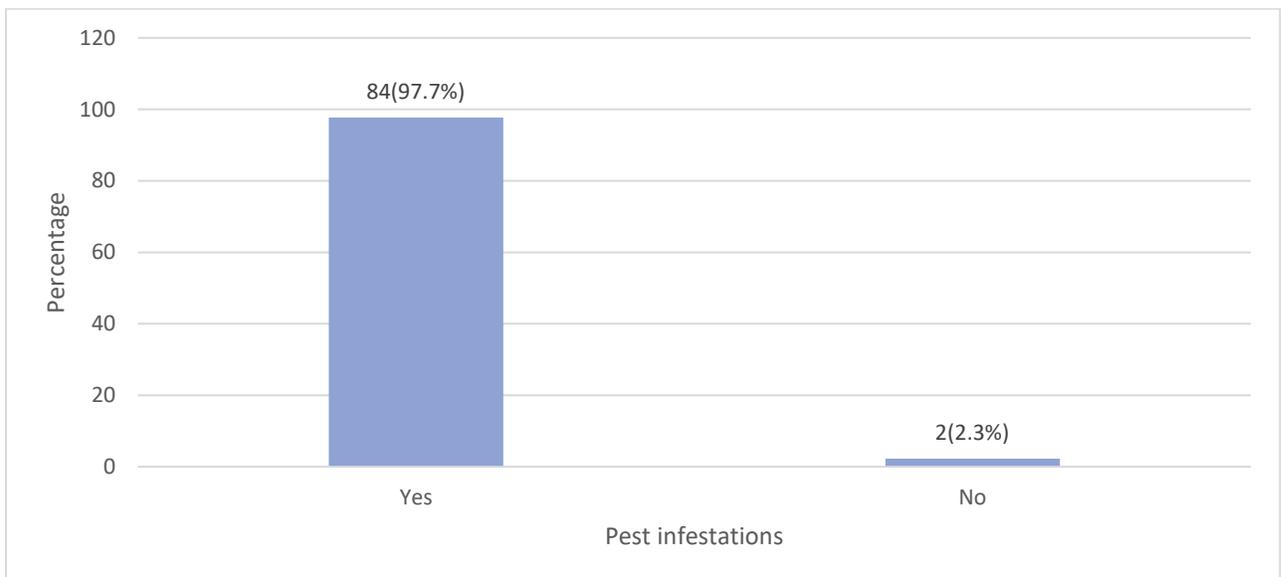


Figure 5.20: Pest infestations experienced in the record storage area

As can be seen, the vast majority of respondents 84 (97.6%) indicated that they had experienced pest infestations in the record storage area.

5.2.2.4.14 Pests that were found in the record storage area

Those respondents who stated “yes”, to question on experiencing pest infestations were provided with a list of pests and asked to indicate which type they had encountered in the record storage area. The results are presented in Figure 5.21.

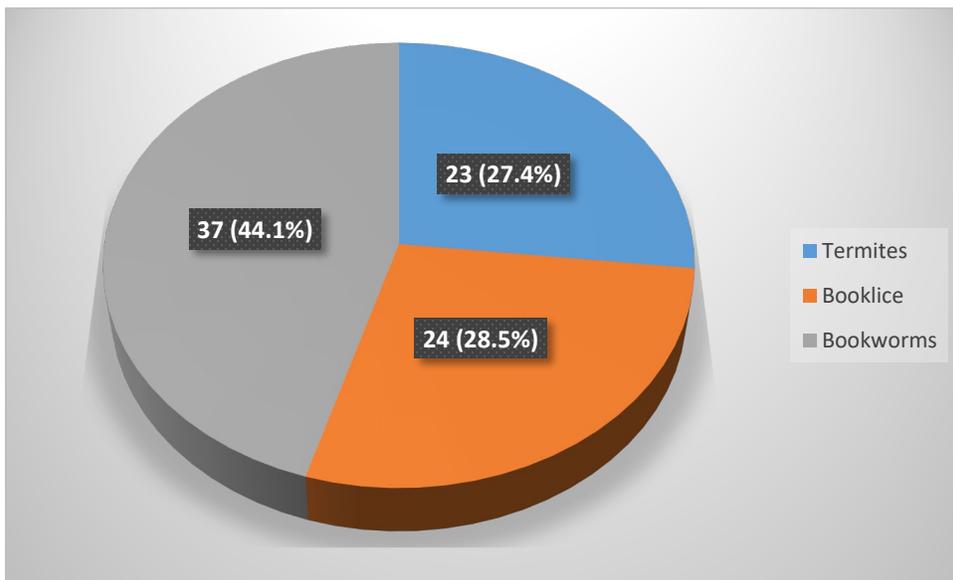


Figure 5.21: Pests that were found in record storage area n=84

The pest most encountered by respondents was bookworms, mentioned by 37 (44.1%) respondents. The two other pests encountered were booklice – 24 (28.5%) respondents and termites – 23 (27.4%) respondents.

5.2.2.4.15 Control of pest infestations in the record storage area

A variety of pests' attack records in the storage area and these may do significant damage to the records. Respondents were requested to show how they control pest infestations in the record storage area. The results are presented in Figure 5.22.

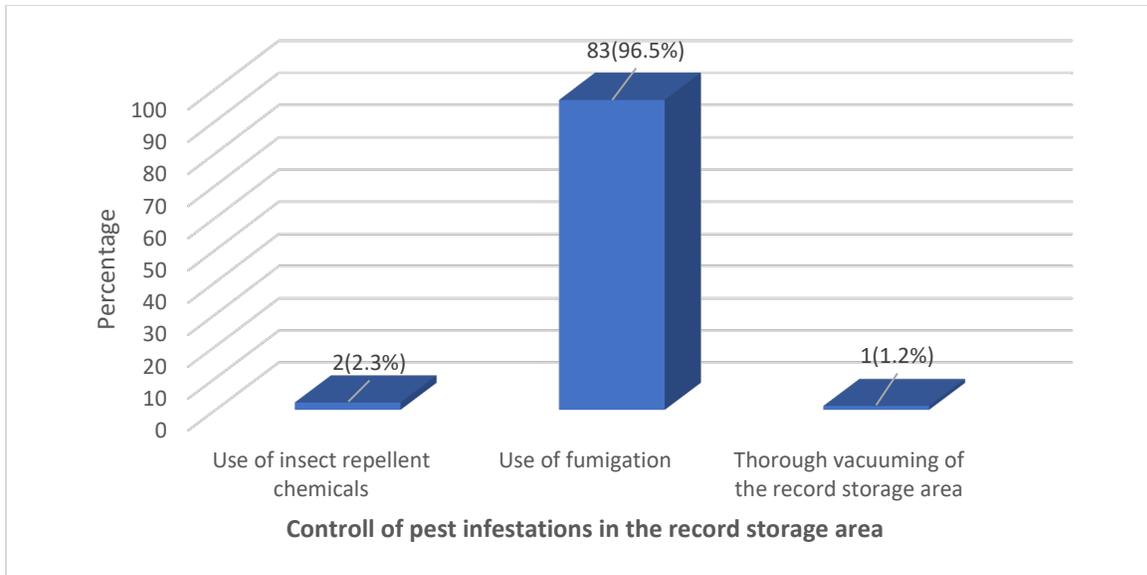


Figure 5.22: Control of pest infestations in the record storage area n=86

The results show that the vast majority 83 (96.5%) of the respondents used fumigation to control pest infestations. The only other control measure indicated as used by more than one respondent was insect repellent chemicals used by two (2.3%) respondents.

5.2.2.5 Disposal of records

The process of disposing a record should be carried out according to a records disposal policy (or programme). Understanding the importance of an effective disposal programme is a vital element in ensuring that records are effectively managed. In order to determine the appropriate disposition actions, records need to be appraised. Various questions regarding the disposal of records were asked of respondents the first four of which concerned a disposal policy or programme.

5.2.2.5.1 Records disposal policy

As noted above and in line with the importance of having a records disposal policy (or programme) respondents were asked four questions which required either a Yes or No response. The results of the questions are summarised in Figure 5.23 below.

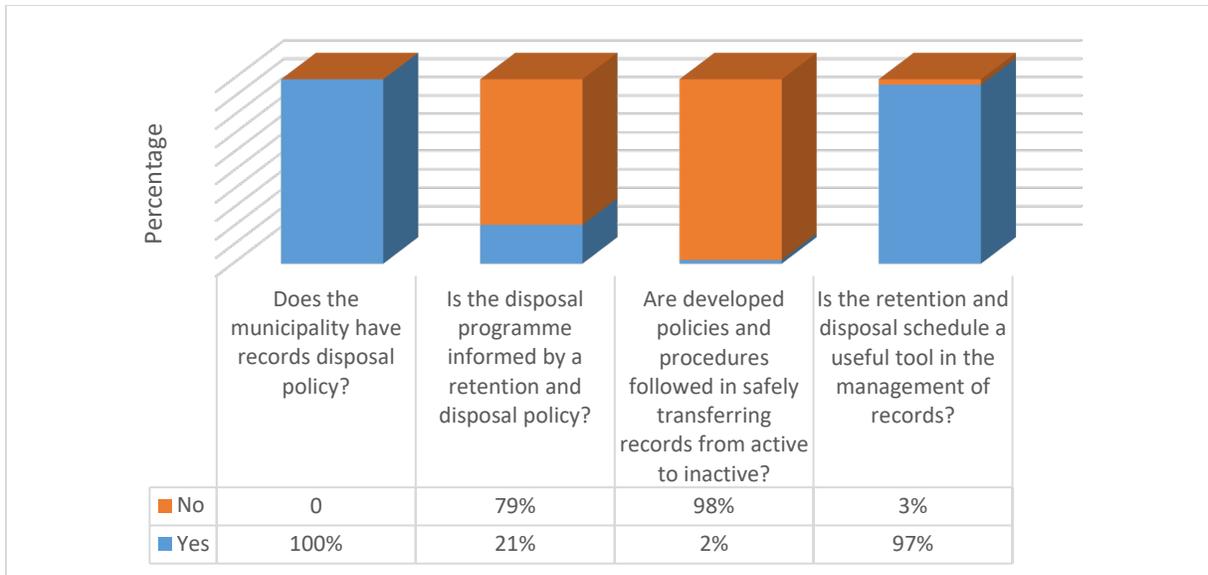


Figure 5.23: Records disposal policy n=86

The results presented in Figure 5.23 above show that all 86 (100%) respondents indicated that their municipality has a records disposal policy that guides them on which records to dispose of. When respondents were asked to indicate if their records disposal programme was informed by a retention and disposal policy, the majority 68 (79%) revealed that their disposal programme was not informed by a retention and disposal policy. A third question determined if developed policies and procedures were followed in safely transferring records from active to inactive. Surprisingly, a very large number of respondents, 84 (98%), indicated that they do not follow developed policies and procedures when transferring records from active to inactive. However, when respondents were asked in the final question whether the retention and disposal schedule was a useful tool in the management of records, 83 (96.5%) reported that it was. It does appear that the registry officers may have had a problem with the terminology used in these questions. This could be due to the lack of formal qualifications in records management.

5.2.2.5.2 Guide in determining which records to destroy

The registry officers were asked what guides them in determining which records to destroy. The results from the 86 respondents are presented in Figure 5.24.

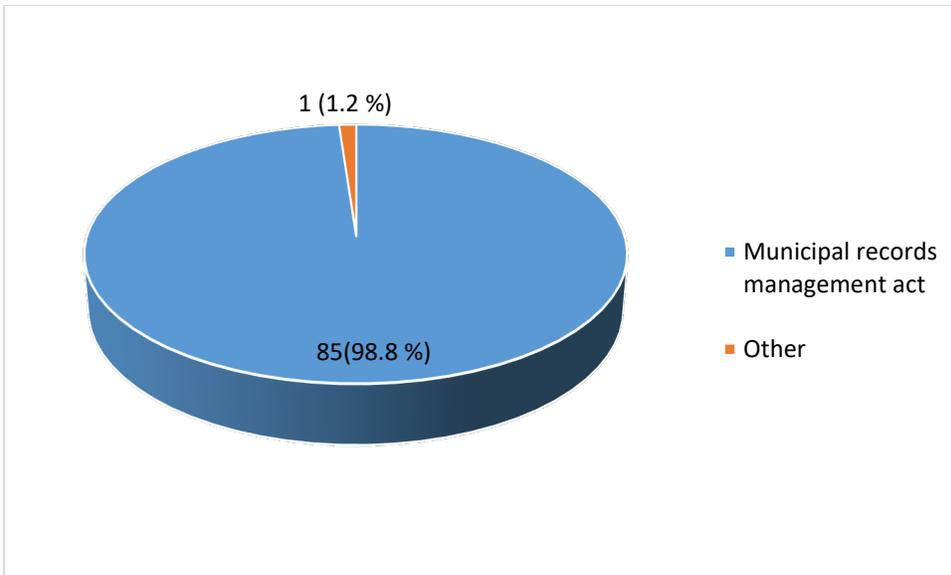


Figure 5.24: Guide in determining which records to destroy n=86

All but one (1.2%) of the respondents, 85 (98.8%), responded that they relied on their municipal records management act as a guide in determining which records to destroy.

5.2.2.5.3 Authorisation for the destruction of inactive records

Respondents were asked who gives authorisation for the destruction of inactive records. Figure 5.25 below presents the results.

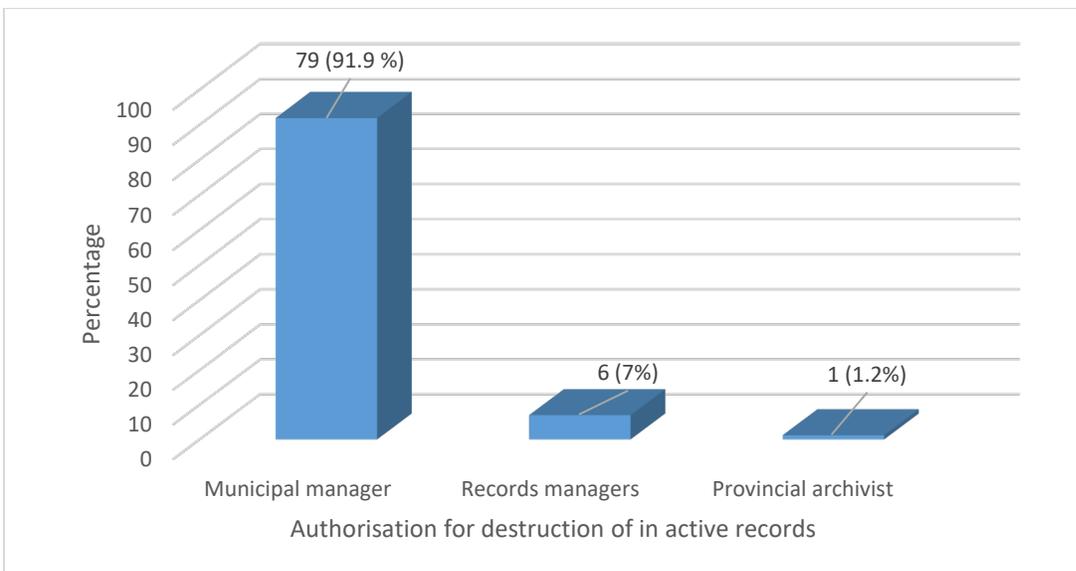


Figure 5.25: Authorisation for the destruction of inactive records

The results reveal that 79 (91.9%) of the respondents relied on the municipal manager to give the authorisation to destroy inactive records. This was followed, by some distance, by six (7%) respondents who relied on their records managers for such authorisation.

5.2.2.5.4 Where records with permanent retention value kept

A question was asked to establish where municipalities keep the records that have permanent retention value. The results are presented in Figure 5.26.

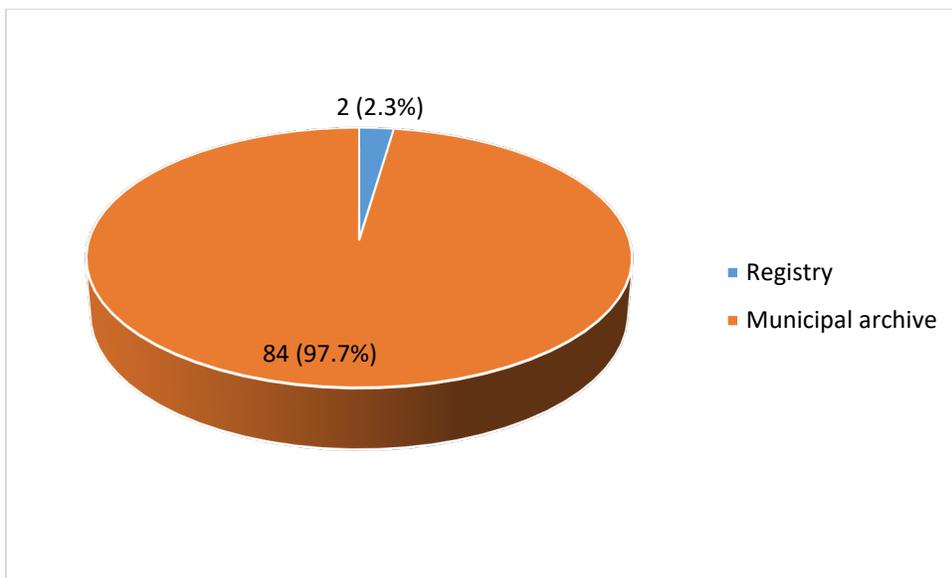


Figure 5.26: Where records with permanent retention value kept n=86

The vast majority of respondents, 84 (97.7%) revealed that records with permanent retention value were kept in the municipal archive.

5.2.2.6 Electronic records

The introduction of computers into society has led to swift and vibrant changes in the way municipalities manage records. Just as with paper records, electronic records should be arranged systematically and logically so that they can easily be found and used.

5.2.2.6.1 Types of electronic records created

An electronic record is one created, produced, communicated, received, or stored by electronic means. As with print records, electronic records are also subject to a records management strategy. To ascertain the kinds of electronic records created in municipalities, respondents were given a list of the various types and asked which were applicable. The results are presented in Table 5.4.

Table 5:4: Types of electronic records created n=86

Types of electronic records	Percentage	
	Yes	No
Municipal Accounts	95.3	4.7
Invoices	41.9	58.1
Emails	2.3	97.7
Memorandum	96.5	3.5
Press statements	0	100
Policy documents	4.6	95.3
Municipal officials' speeches	99	1
All of the above	0	100
Other	1	99

*The respondents were allowed multiple responses.

The results show that municipalities create various types of electronic records. Those mentioned the most were municipal speeches indicated by 85 (99%) respondents, municipal accounts by 82 (95.3%) respondents and memoranda by 83 (96.5%) respondents. Less mentioned were invoices indicated by 36 (41.9%) respondents, policy documents by four (4.7%) respondents and, surprisingly, emails indicated by only two (2.3%) respondents.

5.2.2.6.2 Format of electronic records created

The researcher sought to establish the format in which electronic records were created. The responses of the respondents are presented in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5 Format of electronic records created n=86

Format	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Microsoft word	66	76.7	20	23
PDF	66	76.7	20	23
Database format	0	0	86	100
Spreadsheet format	0	0	86	100
Audio-visual	0	0	86	100
Audio	0	0	86	100
All of the above	0	0	86	100
Other	0	0	86	100

The majority of respondents, that is 66 (76.7%), were created in Microsoft Word. The same number of respondents indicated that records were created in PDF. In fact, and as can be seen, these were the only two formats in which records were created.

5.2.2.6.3 Storage of electronic records

The researcher solicited information on where the electronic records were stored. As with paper-based records, in order to ensure that electronic records continue to be available when needed, it is necessary to store them in a safe and dependable medium. The responses are presented in Figure 5.27.

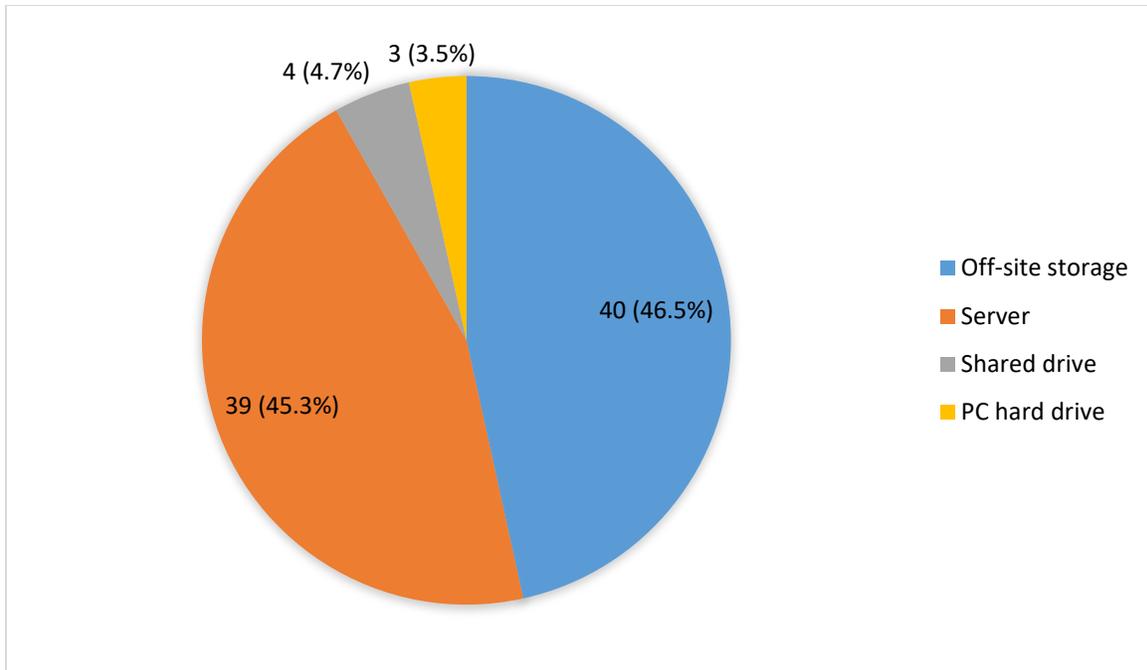


Figure 5.27: Storage of electronic records n=86

Forty (46.5%) respondents stored their electronic records off-site, while 39 (45.3%) stored their electronic records on a server. Less used for storage was a shared drive indicated by four (4.7%) respondents and a PC hard drive indicated by three (3.5%) respondents.

5.2.2.6.4 Electronic records management

The respondents were asked three questions concerning the management of electronic records. The first concerned policy, the second disposal and the third challenges. Findings to the three questions are summarised in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6: Electronic records management n=86

Electronic records management	Yes		No		Unsure	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Does the municipality have a policy on managing electronic records?	86	100%	0	0%	0	0%

Do you have guidelines on the disposal of electronic records?	13	15%	66	77%	7	8%
Do you face challenges in managing electronic records?	83	97%	3	3%	0	0%

All (100%) respondents revealed that their municipalities have a policy on managing electronic records. However, the results also reveal that only 13 (15%) of the respondents indicated that they have guidelines on the disposal of electronic records. What is of great concern was that 83 (97%) of the respondents reported that they faced challenges in managing electronic records.

5.2.3 How knowledgeable are staff in municipalities about records management practices?

The second research question determined the level of skills in, and knowledge about records management among staff in the municipalities. Knowledge and skills play a crucial part in records management practices as they affect how records are created, used and disposed of. To begin with, respondents were questioned about their formal education.

5.2.3.1 Highest level of education

Education and training play an important role in ensuring that staff are able to comprehend and apply policies and efficiently apply good records management practices. Respondents' were requested to specify their highest level of education completed. Their responses are presented in Figure 5.28.

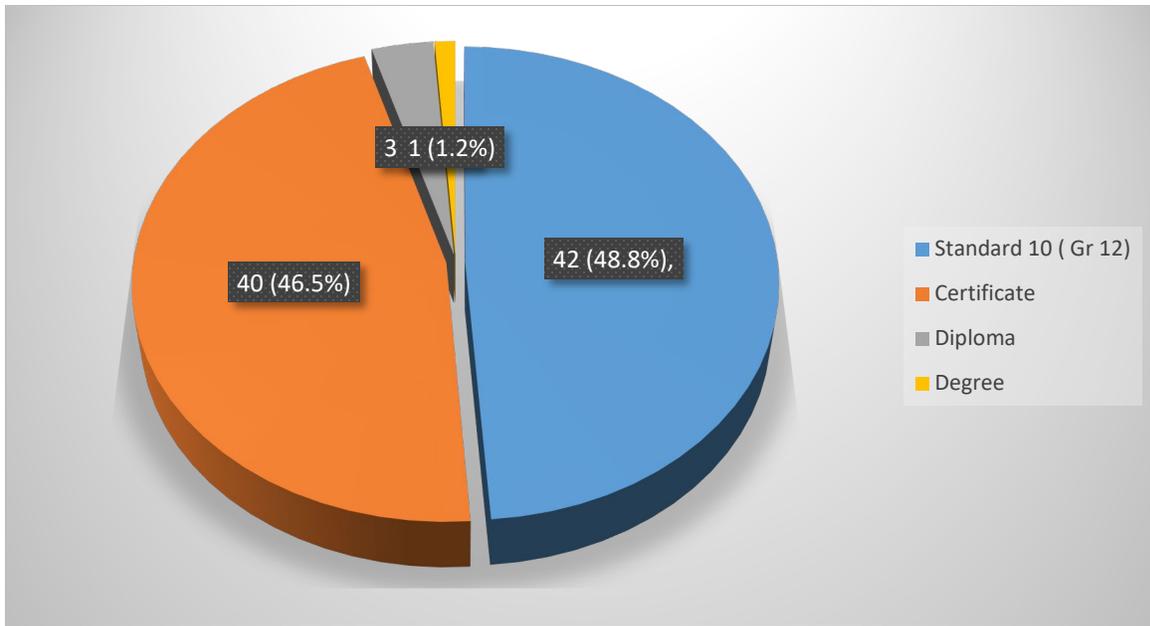


Figure 5.28: Highest level of education n=86

The results reveal that the highest number of respondents, 42 (48.8%) had Standard 10 (Gr 12) and this was followed by 40 (46.5%) respondents having certificates. Three (3.4%) respondents held a diploma qualification and only one (1.2%) had a degree.

5.2.3.2 Formal qualifications in records management

Respondents were asked if they had a formal qualification in records management. Their responses are presented in Figure 5.29 below.

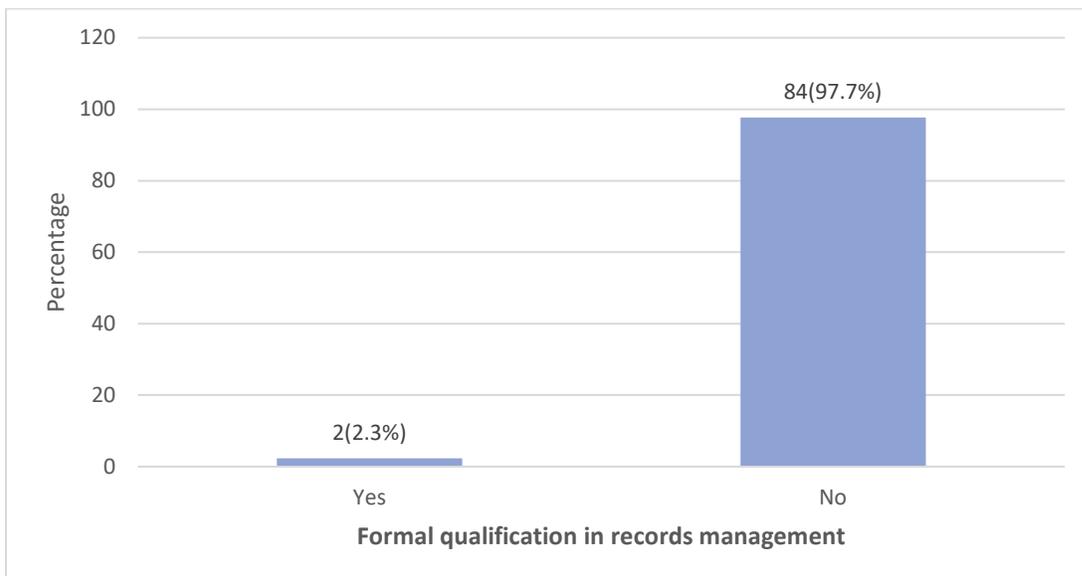


Figure 5.29: Formal qualification in records management

Despite all the respondents working in registry offices, only two (2.3%) indicated that they had a formal qualification in records management.

5.2.3.3 In-house training in records management

In order to improve records management practices in municipalities, the registry officers need to be provided with in-house training on records management. The researcher wanted to establish if the respondents had received such training. The results are presented in Figure 5.30.

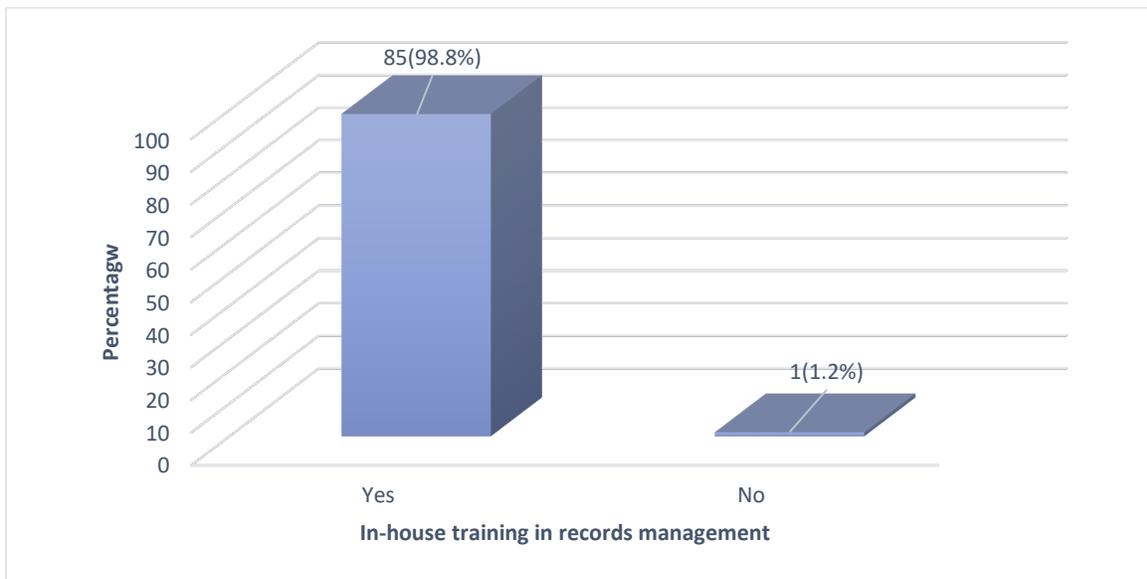


Figure 5.30: In-house training in records management n=86

The results reveal that with the exception of one respondent, all the respondents, 85 (98.9%) indicated that they had received in-house training in records management.

5.2.3.4 Frequency of training in records management

The respondents were further asked to indicate how often they attend such training. The results are presented in Figure 5.31.

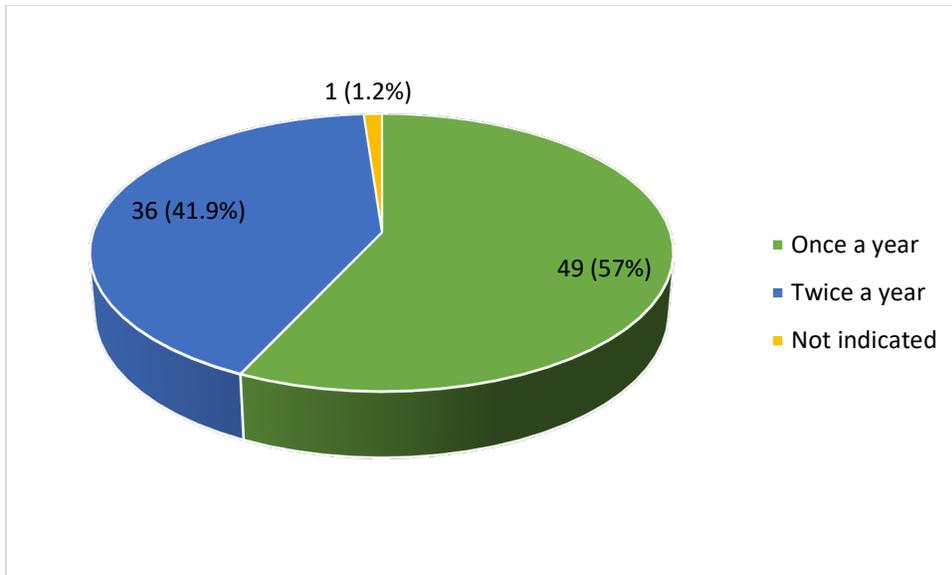


Figure 5.31: Frequency of training in records management n=86

Respondents indicated that they attend records management training either once or twice a year. The majority of respondents, 49 (57%) attend once a year while 36 (41.9%) did so twice a year. It is evident that training was not offered by municipalities more than twice a year.

5.2.4 What are the activities and strategies that are used to support records management practices?

It is necessary that all staff in the municipalities acknowledge the need for responsibility and accountability in the creation, usage, maintenance, storage, and disposal of records. However, these can only be achieved if the municipality puts in place clear strategies and activities that support records management practices. The third research question sought to establish the activities and strategies put in place by municipalities to support records management practices.

5.2.4.1 Sound records management strategy

A sound records management strategy not only helps protect records management practices but also enhances an organisation's operational efficiency. The researcher sought to establish if respondents were aware of the importance of a sound records management strategy in the municipalities. The respondents were asked if they thought a sound records management strategy was required in the municipality.

Perhaps understandably, all 86 (100%) respondents were of the opinion that such a strategy was required in the municipality.

5.2.4.2 Rating of records management practices in the municipality

Sound records management practices are essential “resources” in an organisation. In order to establish the current state of records management practices in the municipalities, the respondents were asked to rate the practices in their municipality on a scale of Very good to Poor. The responses are presented in Figure 5.32.



Figure 5.32: Rating of records management practices in the municipality n=86

As can be seen an equal number of respondents, 41(47.7%), rated their municipality’s records management practices as either Good or Fair. The two extreme ratings, namely; Very good and Poor were each checked by two (2.3%) respondents.

5.2.5 What are the factors that affect the current records management practices in municipalities in Limpopo Province?

While the purpose of the study was to establish the records management practices in the selected municipalities, it was necessary to also understand the factors that

affected these practices. It was with these factors that the fourth research question was concerned.

5.2.5.1 Factors that contributed to the current records management practices

The first question attempted to determine the factors that contributed to the current state of records management practices in the municipalities. Respondents were provided with a list of six factors (including an Other category) and asked to indicate which they considered was the main contributing one. Their responses are presented in Figure 5.33.

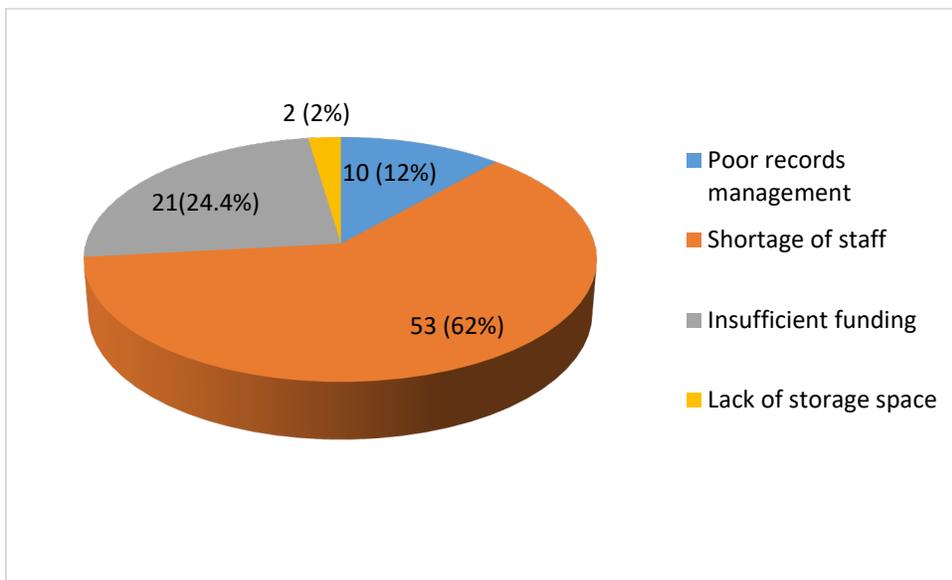


Figure 5.33: Factors contributing to the current records management practices n=86

The majority 53 (61.6%) of the respondents indicated that the shortage of staff was the main contributing factor to the current records management practices in the municipalities. This was followed by 21 (24.4%) respondents who indicated insufficient funding as the contributing factor. Poor records management was mentioned as the factor by 10 (11.6%) respondents.

5.2.5.2 Appreciation of the role of records

Respondents were asked if they believed that staff in their municipality appreciated the role of records in their area of operations. The responses are presented in Figure 5.34 below.

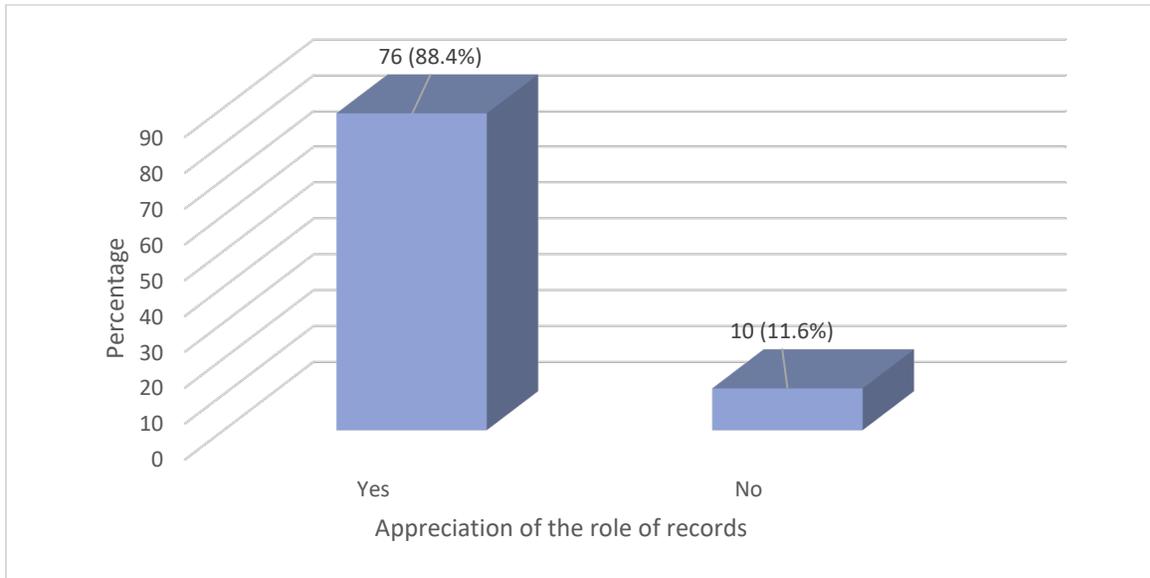


Figure 5.34: Appreciation of the role of records n=86

The results were reasonably emphatic in that a majority of respondents, 76 (88.4%), believed that staff in their municipality appreciate the role of records in their areas of operations.

5.2.5.3 Relationship between records management and clean audit outcome

To further to determine respondents' understanding of the importance of records management in the municipality, they were requested to indicate if there was a relationship between records management and a clean audit outcome. The results are presented in Figure 5.35.

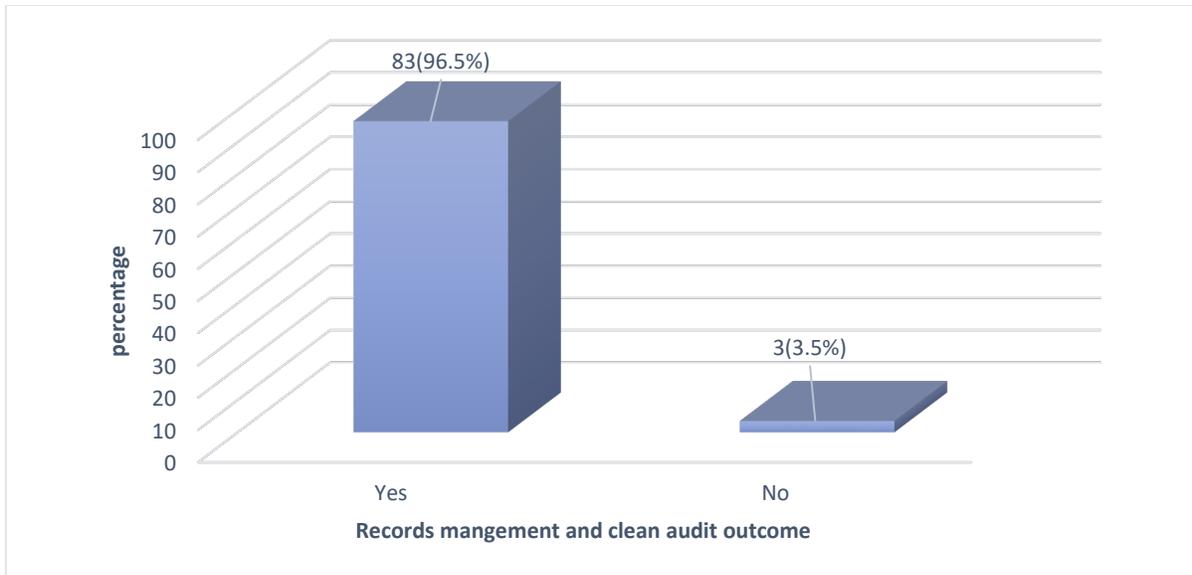


Figure 5.35: Relationship between records management and clean audit outcome
n=86

It is clearly evident that respondents were aware of the relationship between records management and clean audit outcomes with 83 (96.5%) respondents indicating that there was such a relationship.

5.2.5.4 Value placed on sound records management as key to a clean audit outcome

In a second question relating to clean audit outcomes, respondents were asked what value they would place on sound records management as a key factor in a clean audit outcome. Respondents were to choose from a five-point scale ranging from Essential to Not important. Figure 5.36 presents the findings.

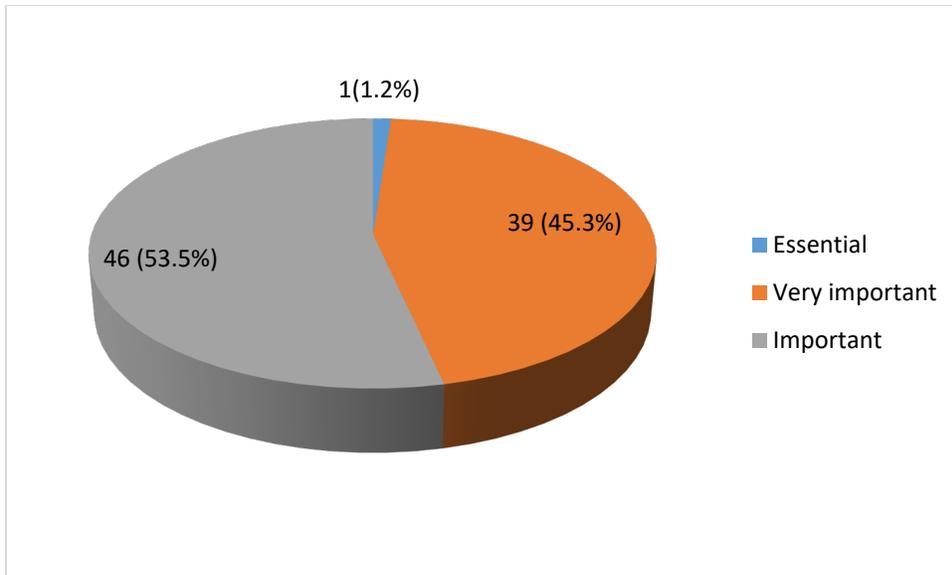


Figure 5.36: Value of sound records management as key to a clean audit outcome n=86

The findings revealed all the respondents positively rated the value of sound records management in clean audit outcomes. More specifically, 46 (53.5%) respondents rated records management as a key to clean audit outcomes as Important, 39 (45.3%) valued it as Very important and the remaining one respondent (1.2%) valued it as Essential.

5.2.5.5 Support from top management

The final question relating to factors affecting records management practices in municipalities concerned support from top management for good records management practices. Respondents were asked whether they believed that such support was forthcoming. Findings reveal that a significant majority of respondents, 73 (84.9%) believed that top management does not support good records management practices in their municipalities.

5.2.6 What are the challenges faced by municipal officials with respect to the management of records in municipalities in Limpopo Province?

Given that the focus of the study was on the records management practices in selected municipalities in Limpopo Province, it was considered necessary to

establish the challenges faced by the registry officials in managing records. This was the fifth research question.

5.2.6.1 Challenges faced in managing records

At the close of the questionnaire, respondents were requested, in an open question, to identify the main challenges they encountered in managing records in the municipality. This question was asked against the backdrop that records management practices can only be improved if one knows what the challenges registry officials face are.

Twenty-one respondents (24.4%) indicated the challenge of staff shortages in their municipalities while another 20 respondents (23.3%) indicated that the challenge they faced was a lack of training in records management. In this regard, one of the registry officers had this to say:

We were never trained in records management but are expected to perform our duties to our level abilities while they know very well that there are no qualifications in records management in South Africa except for those with junior degrees that can study post graduate diplomas.

Twenty (23.3%) respondents reported the lack of storage facilities in their municipalities as a challenge. In the words of one respondent:

We struggling to deal with the large number of records received because there are no storage facilities and some of the records are even stored in boxes.

Less mentioned challenges were as follows:

Eleven (12.8%) respondents referred to the struggle of managing records due to a lack of support from the senior manager. In a similar vein, 10 (11.6%) respondents said that their managers do not take records management as a priority. One registry officer stated:

Records management is not seen as a priority by managers, as they dump people not needed in other departments in registry offices.

Surprisingly, one (1.2%) respondent raised the issue of political interference while another one (1.2%) said that there was a lack of political support pointing out that:

Politicians have a tendency of requesting records and do not return [them] but when auditors come we are expected to retrieve those records.

One (1.2%) respondent referred to the issue of unqualified staff as a challenge. The same respondent continued to report that most people working in registry offices had been transferred from other important departments like finance and accounts to the registry offices after they had been accused of corruption. They arrived without any skills in records management.

5.3 Results of interviews with records managers

Qualitative data was collected in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the context of records management practices in municipalities in the Limpopo Province. This section presents the qualitative results from the interviews with records managers. It was considered necessary to interview records managers as they are responsible for the operation of records management programmes in their respective municipalities and possess in-depth knowledge about records management practices. Thematic content analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data gathered through the interviews. As with the presentation of the quantitative findings above, the research questions underpinning the study provide the basis for the presentation of the qualitative findings. The records managers were assigned the labels RM1 to RM6 to ensure confidentiality. This section begins with the demographic profile of the records managers.

5.3.1 Demographic profile of the records managers

In order to understand the general nature of records managers, their demographic profiles were sought. This information was necessary to determine what factors may influence the respondents' answers in terms of their understanding of records management practices. Table 5.7 provides the demographic profile of the six records managers interviewed.

Table 5.7: Demographic profile of the records managers n=6

Records Manager (RM)	Gender	Age	Number of years in the position	Highest qualification	Field of study
RM1	Male	36	4	Degree	Public Administration
RM2	Male	54	8	Diploma	Local Government
RM3	Female	52	12	Degree	Public Administration
RM4	Female	49	13	Degree	Teaching
RM5	Male	56	19	Degree	Human Resource Management
RM6	Male	51	8	Diploma	Records Management and Archival Studies

Firstly, respondents were requested to specify their gender. The responses given show that the majority (4) of the records managers in the selected municipalities were male, while two were female. In terms of age, four of the six were over the age of 50. The number of years the records managers had worked in their positions ranged from four to 19 years with an average of just on 11 years. The final two demographic questions concerned qualifications. Three respondents had a degree and three had a diploma. To determine whether the respondents had formal qualifications in records management and archival studies a question was asked

about the field of study of the qualification. Surprisingly, only one respondent had a qualification in records management and archival studies, while of the other five respondents, two had a qualification in public administration, one in local government, one in human resources management and one in teaching. It is thus clear that the majority of records managers in the selected municipalities do not have a formal qualification in records management. It is also evident that one does not need a formal qualification in records management to be appointed as a records manager.

5.3.2 Records management practices

The first research question was to establish the current records management practices in the selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province. As with the findings relating to the registry officers above, this section presents the findings of the interviews with the records managers on the various elements that affect records management practices. The elements included factors related to records creation, storage, use and maintenance, records appraisal and disposal, and records management policy.

5.3.2.1 Records creation

Records management is about the management of records from creation to disposal or archiving. The records managers were asked how records are created. The responses are summarised below:

- RM1: *We received files from different departments from the municipalities and then record the file in the registry book. From there we open Z20 file and put the records in the file. The file is then classified and labelled.*
- RM2: *Upon receiving of a record, we register the record in the registry book and label, index and put the records in a file.*
- RM3: *We first open a file, and classify the records according to the file plan. Once the file is open, we record the file in the schedule.*
- RM4: *All records are first recorded in the records schedule, stamped and then allocate the reference number based on the file plan.*
- RM5: *Open a file using Z20, and record the file in the central registry schedule.*

- RM6: *Once the record has been received, we create a file and list the record on the register of files opened. Then we allocate the reference number guided by the file plan.*

The respondents were further asked to state the type of records created. Their responses are summarised in the words of two respondents. The first (RM2) stated that:

The types of records that are mainly received are meter readings for billing, memos from senior managers, approved house plans, municipal accounts, invoices and policy documents.

The second respondent (RM6), in a similar vein, said:

The types of records we're creating differ, but the most popular records we have received are tender documents, applications for employments, meter readings and memorandum from senior managers.

The records managers were also asked to indicate in what formats records are created. In response, they were unanimous that records received and created in municipalities were mainly in print format. In this regard a respondent (RM6) commented:

We are a rural municipality and even if we want to introduce electronic billings, our communities would not be able to access those records. It is for that reason why most of the records created are in printed formats.

In terms of where records are kept after creation, the findings from the interviews revealed that most records were kept in the registry once created. One respondent (RM6) reported that while they want all records created to be kept in the registry, most managers in the municipality continued to keep records in their offices and, despite this, still came to the registry to request records that were never submitted to the registry in the first place.

5.3.2.2 Records maintenance and use

The effectiveness of the records management system depends on how records are stored, maintained and used. Records managers were asked to state how the records are filed. The responses of four respondents (RM1, RM2, RM3, and RM6) revealed that records were filed alphabetically, while two (RM4 and RM5) indicated that they file their records alphanumerically.

On being asked to state if there was sufficient storage space for records in the registry offices, all the respondents were in agreement that the space available was not sufficient. They were, however, quick to point out that there were plans to increase the space allocated for records storage. The researcher sought to establish whether the filing system used made it easy to retrieve a record. All the records managers were in agreement that the filing system used made it easy to retrieve records. However, it was clear from the responses that while it was easy to retrieve records, junior staff members experienced some difficulties in retrieving records. One of the respondents (RM6) reported that:

We have created a records filing system that is easy to use and retrieve records. However, there is always difficult for our registry clerks to retrieve records as they are not yet familiar with our system.

The records managers were also asked to state if records were readily available when required. The responses revealed that records were readily available when required. However, one respondent (RM1) reported that there was a problem as records were not always retrieved when required:

There have been many cases where we couldn't trace or retrieve records. In many cases it was records that were misfiled, never returned after use or records that were never received in registry offices.

Records managers were asked to indicate if they sometimes experienced missing records. All six respondents indicated that they do experience problems with missing records.

A follow-up question was asked to establish why records went missing. Five of the six respondents pointed to staff shortages as the reason for missing records. The sixth respondent attributed missing records to poor records management practices and inaccurate filing. All records require some level of security to ensure their safety, authenticity and integrity. The researcher sought to establish how each municipality ensures the safety and security of their records. The respondents reported that records were kept safe by controlling access to registry offices and only authorised personnel were allowed in the offices.

One records manager (RM4) commented that,

The only people that have access to registry offices are people working in the section and the supporting sections, like Information Technology and officials from the municipal manager's offices.

A disaster management plan yields many benefits for records management and is also important for good records management practices. The researcher sought to establish if the municipalities have a disaster management programme in place. All respondents indicated that their municipalities did have such a programme in place. Four of the respondents (RM1, RM4, RM5 and RM6) further stated that they were ready for any disaster. The next question solicited information on whether records would be safeguarded in the event of a fire, flood or other natural disasters. The responses are summarised below.

RM1: *Our records are kept in a strong room that is fireproof and waterproof.*

RM2: *Our registry offices have a strong room; no fire can get there. In the event of a flood, the boxes used are also waterproof.*

RM3: *All our records have been scanned and duplicated electronically. We keep the records on the offsite storage.*

RM4: *Boxes used to store records are waterproof and fireproof.*

RM5: *No plans in case of natural disaster, however, fire can only be prevented by the strong room used and with water it will be a complete disaster.*

RM6: *We don't have any means of protecting our records against disaster.*

Questions 14 and 15 determined whether the registry offices monitored temperature and relative humidity and controlled pest infestations in the record storage area. The records managers revealed that their registry offices do monitor and control the temperature in the records storage area. This could be due to most of the registry offices mentioned being located in a strong room with no windows for ventilation. As a result, people cannot work there unless there is some monitoring and controlling of the temperature.

The results also revealed that there was pest infestation control in the records storage area. Five of the six records managers interviewed revealed that fumigation is used to control pest infestation. One respondent (RM6) reported that once a quarter, the registry section is closed for the whole day in order to fumigate the records storage area.

5.3.2.3 Records appraisal and disposal

Records must be controlled by an appraisal and disposal policy demonstrating the groups of documents to be disposed of or kept permanently in archives after the retention period has expired. Question 16 asked the respondents if their municipalities have a records disposal procedure manual. All six respondents affirmed that their municipalities have such a manual. The next question asked the respondents if they have a records appraisal policy in their municipalities. While the majority (RM2, RM3, RM4, RM6) of the respondents said they did have a records appraisal policy in their municipalities, there were two respondents (RM1 and RM5) who indicated that they did not know about a records appraisal policy. A follow-up question was asked on how the municipality disposes or destroys its records. All the respondents reported that their records were disposed of by shredding. In the words of one respondent (RM6):

We make sure all our disposed records are shredded, as some of the records contain very confidential information.

The records managers were asked who gave permission for the disposal of inactive records. Two of the respondents (RM5 and RM6) reported that they gave permission for the disposal of records, while the other four (RM1, RM2, RM3 and RM4) reported that the municipal managers, as the accounting officers, authorise any destruction of records. Surprisingly, the provincial archivist did not feature in this regard. The respondents were also asked where they kept records which have a permanent retention value. The responses confirmed the results of the questionnaire, where it was indicated that records are kept in the registry offices and municipal archives. None of the respondents reported that they send the records to the provincial archives.

5.3.2.4 Records management policy

This section gathered information which addressed issues pertaining to the records management policy. A records management policy is the foundation of effective management of records in an organisation. The records managers were asked if their municipality had a written records management policy. All six respondents replied in the affirmative. One of the respondents (RM6) said the following:

It is impossible to manage records without the written records management policy accompanied by an approved file plan.

The records managers were asked if all the employees in the municipality were aware of the records management policy. Once again, all the respondents replied in the affirmative. One respondent (RM2) added that during the preparation for the audit period, municipal officials are made aware of the records management policy. The respondent continued to say that most of the employees have records management as one of the key performance areas in their job description. This is a clear indication that municipal employees are made aware of the records management policy. However, to be aware of the records management policy is not enough, as awareness does not mean that records management is actually being done in accordance with the records management policy.

The records managers were also asked if employees manage records in accordance with the records management policy. Two respondents (RM2 and RM4) stated that while municipal officials are aware of the records management policy, they do not follow the policy. One respondent (RM3) reported that some employees decided to just ignore the records management policy for their own benefit. A fourth respondent (RM6) stated that most of the municipal employees are cadre deployments and therefore are loyal to those who deploy them. If any records are needed for audit purposes and they fear that the records may implicate them, the records disappear. The respondent (RM6) had this to say:

The records management policy is there to guide everyone on how to deal with records management, however, people decide to disregard the policy and manage records without following policy. The municipality has so many policies that are followed like procurement policy, HR policy, IT policy, etc. But records management policy is not adhered to.

The remaining two respondents (RM1 and RM5) mentioned that they were working on ensuring that all official municipal records were managed according to the records management policy as they were currently following the policy.

Question 24 sought to establish if the records management policy had guidelines on the kind of records to be kept. Five of the six respondents agreed that their policies did not have guidelines on which records to keep. The sixth respondent (RM1) argued that while the guidelines are there on which records to keep, they are not clear and sometimes even confusing to ordinary municipal officials. When asked if their records management policy complied with the government legislation and regulations regarding records management, all the respondents stated that their policies did comply.

5.3.3 Knowledge of staff about records management practices

The second research question sought to establish the level of skills and knowledge about records management among staff in the municipalities. Qualified staff, with relevant skills and knowledge, are key to the successful implementation of good records management practices. To begin with, the records managers were asked if

they had sufficient registry officers to deal with records. All respondents were in agreement that they did not have sufficient staff. They added that the records management sections had the lowest priority in their municipalities as they did not provide service delivery. When vacancies become available, the municipality prioritises the sections that deal with service delivery.

The records managers were asked if the registry office staff have sufficient training in records management. Surprisingly, all six respondents stated that the staff in the registry offices do not have the necessary training in records management. Staff training is considered very important in improving records management practices and the records managers were asked if their staff undergo regular training in records management. Again, surprisingly, all six respondents stated that staff in the registry offices do not receive training in records management. One respondent (RM6) stated that there was no records management training in the Limpopo Province and those course that was available outside the province were, in many cases, expensive and unaffordable. A second respondent (RM5) added that when in-house training is organised, the registry officers do not take the training seriously as no certificate is awarded. In a follow-up question, the records managers were asked whether they believed regular training for staff was necessary to realise the full potential of the management of records. All six respondents reported that it was necessary for all the staff in the registry offices to undergo regular training in records management to improve the current records management practices.

5.3.4 Factors that affect the current records management practices in municipalities in the Limpopo Province

The fourth research question sought to establish the factors that contributed to the current records management practices in the municipalities. The records managers were asked to indicate some of the factors that contribute to the current records management practices in their municipalities. Several factors were identified by respondents, namely, unqualified staff in the section, shortage of staff in registry offices, insufficient funding for employing more staff and the need to improve the storage facilities. However, it was the lack of support from senior management and politicians that was identified as the factor that contributed the most to the current

inadequate records management practices. One respondent (RM6) stated the following:

I think we have a problem in the municipality where comrades are deployed even if they don't have the relevant qualifications. It is even worse in registry section where anyone who is found to be corrupt or incompetent in other sections are seconded to registry section even if there is no experience or qualification in records management. It is clear that management and political leaders do not take records management as a priority. This has created a serious problem where at some stage you have new people that know nothing about records management and you have to train those people. As a records manager, you now leave your responsibility and become a trainer.

The researcher asked the respondents to indicate if there was a service-level agreement between line managers and the records management section in terms of the roles and responsibilities regarding the management of records. All respondents replied that there was no such agreement. They further mentioned that while line managers create records, they are not obliged to forward the records to the registry offices for filing. The records created are kept in the offices of the line managers.

Even the best records management practices need to be audited and re-evaluated from time to time as audits ensure that the practices are still effective. The records managers were asked if there was anyone conducting audits to evaluate records management practices against accepted standards. All respondents agreed that no records audits were being conducted in their municipalities. Such records audits are the responsibility of the provincial archivist and the SALGA, yet it appears that these are not been done. When the records managers were asked to indicate if they received support from top management, all respondents revealed that they do receive such support. While this finding contradicts the findings in Section 5.3.4, it seems to suggest that while there is top management support, it is not adequate to promote records management. This is confirmed by one respondent (RM6) who said:

We do get full support from top management, however, if there is no financial commitment, the support can never be enough. There is also a problem of political

interference where in case we have vacancies, comrades are deployed to our section. Our top management will not have anything to say.

5.3.5 Activities and strategies used to support records management practices

The third research question sought to establish the activities and strategies that have been put in place to support records management in municipalities. The study sought to establish from the records managers what resources were required to manage records effectively. The responses underscored the importance of both financial and human resources for the effective implementation of good records management practices. As noted by one respondent (RM5):

We need financial resources to improve our records management programmes, but furthermore, we also need human resources too.

When the records managers were asked about the facilities required to manage records effectively, various answers were given. All six respondents agreed that they needed secure storage of records and enough space for storage. One respondent (RM2) further reported that they also needed shelves on which to put the records as well as boxes. The respondents were asked to state some of the activities that were needed to support records management in the municipalities. The records managers stated that they need buy-in from management to support records management programmes and also political will from politicians. When respondents were asked to state some of the strategies used to support records management in the municipalities, they gave varying responses. One respondent (RM2) stated that there was an awareness about the importance of records management in the municipalities. Three respondents (RM1, RM3 and RM5) indicated that their municipalities have introduced a records management day where everyone is made aware of the importance of records management. The remaining two respondents (RM4 and RM6) talked about the programme put in place by SALGA and the AG to improve records management practices in their municipalities as a means of ensuring that municipalities receive clean audits.

5.3.6 Records management challenges

The last section in the interview schedule consisted of three questions determining the challenges faced in ensuring effective records management (the fifth research question), the steps being taken to address the challenges and suggestions for the improvement of records management practices in the municipalities. In terms of the challenges, the following concerns were communicated by the records managers:

- *RM1: Unqualified personnel in the registry offices make it difficult to manage records.*
- *RM2: Political interference and nepotism in the appointment of personnel in the registry offices.*
- *RM3: Poor storage facilities with no budget for improvement.*
- *RM4: Lack of formal qualification in records management in South Africa.*
- *RM5: Records management not seen as a priority by managers and politicians.*
- *RM6: Records management does not form part of the strategic plan of the municipalities.*

It is clear that the lack of qualifications in records management is a serious challenge in South Africa.

The second question asked whether the municipalities were taking any steps towards addressing the challenges. Five respondents (RM1, RM2, RM4, RM5 and RM6) reported that currently, no effort had been made to deal with the challenges that they face. However, one respondent (RM3) stated that they have reported the challenges to the municipal managers and that they were being attended to.

The final question asked the records managers what they could recommend to help improve records management practices in the municipality. The following comments were made:

- *RM1: Politicians must stop interfering in the appointment of registry officers and only qualified personnel must be appointed to work with records.*
- *RM2: More financial resources must be made available to improve storage facilities.*

- *RM3: South Africa universities and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) must introduce records management training.*
- *RM4: Provincial Archives must assist with training of registry officers in the Province*
- *RM5: Records management must be seen as a priority and form part of the strategic plan of the municipalities and integrated into the Integrated Development Plan (IDP).*

As can be seen, the suggestions made were largely addressing the challenges mentioned.

5.4 Results of the interviews with municipal managers

This section presents data collected through semi-structured interviews with municipal managers in the selected municipalities of the Limpopo Province. While the municipal managers do not directly work with records, they are the accounting officers of municipalities in charge of human resources, finances, policy and other administrative issues and, as such, the researcher was of the opinion that they hold valuable information regarding records management practices in their municipalities. As in the questionnaire provided to the registry officers and the interview with the records managers, the questions in the interview schedule used with the municipal managers revolved around the research questions on which this study was based. It was anticipated that the interviews with the municipal managers would shed some light on what the contributing factors to the current records management practices in the selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province could be. It is the research questions which again provide the structure for the presentation of the results relating to the municipal managers. The municipal managers were assigned the labels MM1 to MM5 to ensure confidentiality. To begin with, the demographic profile of the municipal managers is presented.

5.4.1 Demographic profile of the municipal managers

Table 5.8 below provides a summary of the municipal managers' demographic characteristics. As outlined earlier, five of the six municipal managers participated in the study.

Table 5.8: Demographic profile of the municipal managers n=5

Municipal manager (MM)	Gender
MM1	Male
MM2	Male
MM3	Male
MM4	Female
MM5	Male

Four of the five municipal managers were male. Generally, most of the respondents were over the age of 50, while one (20%) was 48 years old. None of the municipal managers had been in their current position for more than three years and two (40%) were in an acting capacity. The lack of experience in terms of years in their current positions could be attributed to municipal managers being political appointments and aligned with the municipal elections that were held in 2016. In terms of qualifications the two (40%) acting municipal managers had a master's degree, one (20%) had an honours degree, one (20%) a degree, and the fifth one (20%) indicated that he had completed an executive management programme.

5.4.2 Records management practices

This section presents the findings of the study on the various elements that affect records management practices from the perspectives of the municipal managers. The respondents were asked to indicate if they create records that need filing in their section. All five respondents acknowledged that they do create records that need filing. A follow-up question was asked whether the respondents receive records that need filing. All five respondents confirmed that they do receive records that need filing. Respondents were asked to indicate where they file their records. MM2 and MM4 reported that they kept their records in their offices, while one respondent

(MM3) stated that their records are kept in the secretary's office. However, the remaining two respondents, MM1 and MM5, reported that all records received or created by their offices were sent to the registry for filing. In order to establish if the records system used was effective, the respondents were asked to state if they experienced problems in retrieving records which they wanted to use in their daily work routines. The answer from all five respondents was that they do not experience problems when retrieving records.

In terms of the storage and security of records, all five municipal managers agreed that records were securely stored thus avoiding them being stolen, damaged or altered. When asked whether their municipality has a records management disaster management plan in place, MM1, MM2, MM4 and MM5 replied in the negative. The fifth respondent (MM4) had no understanding of a records management disaster plan and could not provide an answer. Information with regards to the person with the overall responsibility for the management of records in the municipality was sought. Two (40%) of the respondents indicated that the overall responsibility lay with the office of the records manager, while three (60%) stated that records management was the municipal manager's responsibility. For further insight into the records management practices, the respondents were asked to rate the current records management practices in the municipality. The five-point rating scale used ranged from Very good to Very poor. Three (60%) of the respondents rated the current records management practices in their municipalities as Very good, while the other two (40%) gave the practices a Good rating.

5.4.3 Knowledge of staff about records management practices

The second research question intended to establish the level of skills in, and knowledge of, records management among staff in the municipalities. On the question of attending records management training, all five municipal managers indicated that they had never attended any training in records management. The respondents added that records management was not one of their key performance areas hence there was no need to attend such training. However, when respondents were asked to indicate if they provided advice to the registry officers relating to records management, four (MM1, MM2, MM4 and MM5) stated that they did. The

fifth (MM3) respondent reported that he/she provides advice to the records managers only and not to the registry officers. This raises the question of how do municipal managers provide advice (and presumably leadership) to registry staff when they themselves have never attended training in records management? To shed light on the level of skills of registry officers, the municipal managers were then asked to rate the level of skills of the registry officers in their municipality. Two (MM1 and MM3) respondents “regretfully” noted that the skills of their registry officers were “Fair”. A further two (MM2 and MM4) rated the registry officers’ skills “Very good” and the fifth (MM5) respondent rated the skills of their officer as “Good”.

5.4.4 Factors that affect the current records management practices in municipalities in the Limpopo Province

One of the research questions was to identify the factors that affect the current records management practices in the municipalities in the Limpopo Province. The first question in this section asked the municipal managers to show where the registry section falls in the organogram structure of the municipality. Four (80%) respondents stated that the registry section falls under Corporate Services, while one (20%) said that it falls under Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The municipal managers were then asked if they thought the adoption of a records management system was important for the municipality. All the respondents affirmed that it was very important for their municipality to adopt a records management system. In a related question, the researcher sought to ascertain if the respondents considered records management as being essential in the attainment of the municipality’s mission, vision and core value. All respondents said that they had to consider records management as a priority in this regard. The researcher also sought to establish the municipal managers’ perspectives of the most serious administrative problems for records management in their municipalities. The most-mentioned problems were the lack of staff awareness of the importance of records and an insufficient budget as confirmed by four (80%) of the municipal managers. Also highlighted by three (60%) of the municipal managers were the problems of incompetent/unskilled staff, damaged records, and misfiled and missing records.

The municipal managers were then asked to identify factors that contribute to the current records management practices in their municipalities. Inadequate funding and the lack of staff in the registry were identified as the main contributing factors to the current state of records management. A further factor identified was the lack of secured storage for records. One municipal manager (MM2) was of the view that officials take records management policies lightly and, by so doing, disregard the implementation of these policies and fail to ensure that staff are aware of such policies. Another respondent (MM3) reported that there were no disciplinary procedures for those found disregarding record management policies.

5.4.5 Activities and strategies used to support records management practices

In order to ensure effective management of records, municipalities must put activities and strategies in place to support records management. Research question three of the study sought to identify strategies and activities that were used to support records management practices. When the municipal managers were asked if their municipality had a sufficient budget for records management functions and activities, their responses were no different from those of the records managers. All five respondents agreed that the budget allocated to records management functions in their municipalities was insufficient. One (MM2) respondent added that there had been budget cuts in all the sections of the municipality and the registry section had not been exempted in this regard.

For more insight into the allocation of human resources in the registry offices, municipal managers were asked to state if the registry section was allocated sufficient human resources to deal with records management. All the respondents indicated that the registry section, like any other section in the municipality, do not have enough staff. One respondent (MM2) stated that there were many vacancies in the municipalities that could not be filled because of a lack of financial resources. The registries were thus not unique in terms of staff shortages. The respondents were asked to indicate whether their senior managers in the municipality, supported good records management practices. All five municipal managers answered in the affirmative. Although municipal managers asserted that senior management fully supported records management practices, it was the view of both records managers

and registry officers that they do not get enough support from top management. The contradiction may be the result of the fact that municipal managers, being part of senior management, believe that they are providing all the necessary support. When asked to state if records management was in line with the municipal strategic plan, four respondents (MM1, MM2, MM3 and MM5) reported that their strategic plans included records management while the fifth respondent (MM4), being fairly new to the position, had not yet perused the municipality's strategic plan. The municipal managers were also asked if their municipality put any value on good records management as a means of promoting accountability and transparency. All five respondents agreed that their municipality did indeed do so.

5.4.6 Challenges faced with the management of records

The final questions concerned the records management challenges that municipalities faced. Three (60%) respondents viewed a lack of finance as the main challenge faced by their municipalities in managing records. One respondent (MM2) pointed to the difficulty in getting qualified registry officers within the community and made the following comment:

Records management is not a priority on the list of things that our people need. Our people need water, electricity, sanitation, roads and jobs. We are a rural municipality with no income whatsoever. The only money available is used for services delivery and we cannot afford to use the money meant for service delivery to buy storage facilities for records.

A follow-up question was asked on what could be done to deal with the challenges faced to ensure effective records management. Four of the municipal managers responded and their responses are summarised below:

- *Treasury must increase budget allocation to municipalities.*
- *Improved revenue collection for rural municipalities.*
- *SALGA to assist with records management as they do with knowledge management and financial management in municipalities.*
- *Introduction of records management course in TVET colleges and universities.*

5.5 Summary

The data collected using questionnaires, interviews and semi-structured interviews were analysed and presented in this chapter thereby ensuring the study's research questions were answered. SPSS was used to generate and present statistics from the quantitative data while data from the interviews were thematically analysed and presented in a narrative form. Findings revealed that most registry officers in municipalities had no formal qualifications in records management and many only received in-house training on records management. Clearly, the lack of formal qualifications in records management in South Africa is a serious challenge. Further challenges faced by municipalities in managing records is a shortage of staff and an insufficient budget for records management training. The researcher discusses and interprets the study's findings in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

6.0 Introduction

The previous chapter presented analysed data from the sampled population. The current chapter discusses and interprets the findings of the study and integrates the findings with the results of other research in the field. The discussion and

interpretation of the findings presented in this chapter are supported (or contradicted) with evidence found in the existing literature thereby giving meaning to the data generated from the study. The literature review components of the study are linked with the results of the study and this is guided by the research questions (see below) and the theoretical framework of the study, namely, the Records Life Cycle and the Records Continuum models. The purpose of the study was to establish the current records management practices in selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province. The population of the study consisted of registry officers, records managers and municipal managers in the selected municipalities. While the findings obtained from both the qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were analysed and presented separately in the previous chapter, they are integrated into this, the discussion chapter.

The discussion of the findings is done in relation to the research questions underpinning the study, namely:

- a) What are the current records management practices in selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province?
- b) How knowledgeable are staff in the municipalities about records management practices?
- c) What are the factors that affect the current records management practices in municipalities in the Limpopo Province?
- d) What activities and strategies are used to support records management practices?
- e) What challenges are municipal officials facing in the management of records in the municipalities?

Before discussing the findings on each of the research questions the demographic profiles of the respondents are discussed below.

6.1 Demographic profiles

Although the demographic profiles of the research participants did not form part of the research questions, Section A of the questionnaire and interview schedules

ascertained the respondents' demographic characteristics including gender, age, position and education. Mensah and Adjei (2015) note that "demographic variables such as age, gender, the highest level of education and number of years in the position have positive relationships with a commitment to work. Therefore, respondents' demographic profiles were considered important when establishing the current records management practices in municipalities. The education and qualifications of the respondents are not discussed here; this is done later, at an appropriate point, in the discussion.

Findings revealed that of the 86 registry officers the majority, 59 (68.6%) were male while 27 (31.4%) were female. Thus, the number of males working in the registry offices of the selected municipalities were more than double that of females. Age is an important factor in records management practices because working in registry offices involves carrying of boxes and retrieving of records, which older people may not cope with. The results revealed that no age group dominated and the highest number, 23 (26.7%), of the participants were within the age group of 31-35 years. This number was closely followed by 22 (25.6%) who were 41 years and above. Twenty (23.3%) of the respondents were within the age group of 26-30 years and 21 (24.4%) were in the age group of 36-40 years. The respondents were thus, in the main, relatively young and thus able to cope with the physical demands of the job of registry and records management.

When participants were asked to specify their current position, it was found that 61 (71%) occupied the position of either registry or senior registry clerks. Twenty-three (27.8%) occupied the position of administrative officer. It is thus evident that the job title of registry clerk is preferred to other job titles. Some municipalities refer to the people employed in municipalities in registry offices as administrative officers, hence they do not consider qualifications in records management while other municipalities refer to the staff in registry offices as registry clerks or officers. It is for these reasons that only one (1.2%) of the respondents was called a records officer. Findings on the number of years working experience in their current positions revealed that a small majority, that is 45 (52.3%) participants, have been in their position for four to six years while 22 (25.6%) have been in their current position for 10 to 12 years.

Furthermore, 12 (14%) participants have been working for one to three years, four (4.7%) for 7 to 9 years, while only three (3.5%) have been working in their current position for 12 or more years. Marutha's (2016) study had similar findings. The study found the highest percentage (46.1%) of medical records management staff in the healthcare institutions of Limpopo had three to five years of experience.

As noted above, a small majority (52.3%) of the municipal employees working in the registry offices have been in their current positions for between four to six years and very few of them, three (3.5%), have been working for 12 years and more. Thus, overall, the findings revealed that the majority of people working in registry offices in municipalities do not have many years of work experience and to what extent this would impact on their records management practices is not known. However, the results from the interviews with records managers showed a different picture. Of the six records managers interviewed, three had been working in the same position for more than 12 years, two were in the same position for eight years and one had four years' experience in the position. In a study by Makhura (2005), it was found that the highest percentage of participants (38.4%) working with records in Polokwane Municipality had four to ten years work experience while only 9.7% had been working for the municipality for one to two years.

From the above description, it can be concluded that the demographic data collected from the participants provided a picture of more males than females in the population sample of registry officers, records managers and municipal managers. The vast majority, if not all, the participants in the study arguably possessed knowledge on, and had adequate exposure to, records management practices in their municipalities. They were thus able to provide, in the main, valid and reliable responses to the questions posed.

6.2 What are the current records management practices in municipalities in the Limpopo Province?

Research question one sought to establish the current records management practices in the selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province. As in the

presentation of the findings in the previous chapter, the discussion will centre on various themes which comprise records management, namely, records management policy, record creation, records filing, storage facilities and maintenance, records appraisal and disposal, electronic records, and knowledge of staff about records management. The proper management of records involves the records life-cycle from creation until disposition or preservation as well as the three phases, that is, active, semi-active and inactive phases. According to the NARSSA (2007), if institutional bodies do not control records through the earlier stages of their life-cycle, records that have low administrative value are kept too long and those of archival value cannot be identified and safeguarded. In tandem with the provision of the Records Life Cycle and the Records Continuum models, records must be properly managed from the time of creation to disposal.

6.2.1 Records management policy

The importance of a records management policy in records management cannot be overstated. The Limpopo Province Archives Act 5 of 2001 requires the municipalities to manage its records in a well- structured record keeping system, and to put the necessary policies and procedures in place to ensure that its record keeping and records management practices comply with the requirements of the Act. Despite this, however, Chachage and Ngulube (2006) observed that it is likely for organisations in Sub-Saharan Africa to function without records management policies. According to Phiri (2016):

The records management policy establishes a framework for the implementation of an organisation's records management programme and ensures that full and accurate records of the activities are created, captured, maintained, made accessible, stored and legally disposed of in accordance with legislative requirements.

Furthermore, the author pointed out that organisations cannot guard their records without records management policies (Phiri, 2016).

A written records management policy serves as a guidance tool for registry officials – it ensures sound records management and creates a standard to achieve. A

records management policy is key to ensuring adequate and functional records management tools and processes in any institution. This resonates well with the claim by Ngoepe (2012:166) that “by not implementing records management policies and carrying out disposal authorities, governmental bodies would be vulnerable to not being able to meet legislative or other obligations required of them”. As governmental bodies, municipalities which do not have or do not implement a records management policy are thus vulnerable to not meeting their obligations. This also conforms to the creation stage of the Records Life Cycle Model that places a high value on the importance of a records management policy in managing records.

Eighty-five (99%) of the 86 registry officers participating in the study stated that their municipalities have a records management policy. This was confirmed by both the records managers and municipal managers. One of the records managers went so far as to say that:

It is impossible to manage records without the written records management policy accompanied by an approved file plan.

In a study by Garaba (2010), it was stated that the records management policy should facilitate access to recorded information. Garaba (2010) found that most of the former struggle movements in Eastern and Southern Africa did not have records management policies. A study by Phiri (2016) also found that some Malawian universities were functioning without records management policies, unlike universities in South Africa which have such policies in place.

The Limpopo Provincial Government passed the Limpopo Province Archives Act (No. 5 of 2001) to “regulate records management functions in the province which is consistent and concomitant with the NARSSA. Moreover, all public records in the province should be managed in terms of the broad policy guidelines contained in both the NARSSA and the Limpopo Province Archives Act”. Therefore, it was important that the researcher evaluated whether the municipalities’ records management policies complied with government legislation and regulations. Findings revealed that all the records managers interviewed indicated that their records management policy does comply with government legislation and

regulations. However, one does need to keep in mind Katuu's (2016) finding that there is "substantial legislative and regulatory dissonance" in the management of records in South Africa. This dissonance was reflected to some extent within the municipalities. Twenty-nine (33.7%) of the registry officers indicated that they do not manage records according to the records management policy as required by legislation. This could have negative implications for records management practices as records have to be managed in accordance with the records management policy. The results of the interviews with records managers also revealed that municipal employees do not always manage records in accordance with policy and that some employees ignore the records management policy for their own benefit.

It is of no use having a written records management policy if employees are not aware of the policy. Ngoepe and van Der Walt (2009) observed that records management policies and legislation were seldom clearly communicated and as a result, some legislation and policies were not successfully implemented. Nengomasha (2009) opined that records management policies should be approved and widely publicised to create awareness about their availability. Similarly, Keakopa (2013) argued that:

Raising awareness of the importance of records as a strategic resource in the organisation was an important step as all staff had to buy-in to the project and understand their responsibilities during the different phases of implementation.

The registry officers were also asked whether all staff in the municipality knew about the records management policy. Seventy-three (84.9%) registry officers reported that not all the employees in their municipalities were aware of the records management policy and it could be argued that, as a result, they could not implement the policy. This sentiment is shared by Ngoepe (2012:191) who, in his study, concluded that "while many governmental bodies have developed records management policies, the actual implementation appears to be the issue as they are not aware of the records management policy". In contrast, Marutha (2016) revealed that the reason why records management policies were not implemented in the health sector was

not because of a lack of awareness of the policies, but rather because of a lack of other resources, including funds, to implement the policies.

The interviews with records managers and municipal managers also revealed that not all municipal officials were aware of the records management policy. However, the records managers did report that they were alerting people to the records management policy. According to the NARSSA (2007), full staff knowledge and awareness of the vitality of records management policies are important. Ensuring that staff are aware of the importance of records management policies is crucial to the success of sound and adequate records management practices. According to Maseh and Mutula (2016), records management policies are critical when it comes to enhancing how records are managed; therefore, it is imperative that records management policies are not only made available to employees but are also understood.

Any written records management policy that is not reviewed regularly will not be useful in promoting good records management practices. It is important for the policy to be reviewed regularly as legislation and organisations change. "A records management policy should be reviewed and, if necessary, amended, so that it is kept up to date and continues to meet the organisation's needs" (National Archives of England, 2017). A study by Banda (2014) concluded that adherence to a records management policy must be continuously monitored and be reviewed on an annual basis. The current study found that most registry officers 71 (82.6%) were unsure if their records management policy was reviewed at regular intervals. One could argue that if the policy was renewed at regular intervals the officers would be aware of this and one could assume that the records management policies were not reviewed at regular intervals (if they were reviewed at all). In addition, Unegbu and Adenike (2013) stated that staff need to be trained when implementing records management policies as this will ensure policies are adhered to. Marutha (2016) revealed that staff in healthcare institutions in the Limpopo Province did not fulfil what was necessitated by the guidelines as they had not been properly trained in records management.

6.2.2 Records creation

The literature reviewed alluded to the fact that records creation is one of the key phases in the records life-cycle (NARA, 2004). The literature further stated that if records are to meet the requirements for accountability and transparency, they must be properly managed from creation to disposition (Wamukoya, 2000). This is in line with the provisions of the Records Continuum Model which state that records must be properly managed from creation to disposition to ensure their continuous availability. In terms of creation, just over half 46 (53.5%) of the registry officials stated that the records created by municipalities were mainly paper-based. This contention was supported by both the records managers and municipal managers. Given that Limpopo Province is a rural province, with less technology, poor telecommunication infrastructure and a high level of illiteracy, it is not surprising that paper-based records are the main types of records created in the municipalities.

These findings are corroborated by Ndenje-Sichalwe (2010), who found that “most of the records in the government ministries in Tanzania were created and maintained in paper format”. Furthermore, the IRMT (2011) found that “most government departments still depend on paper-based records to support most of their daily tasks”. Similarly, a study by Bakare and Issa (2016) on the “assessment of records management practices in selected local government Councils in Ogun State, Nigeria”, also established that there is a prevalence of paper as the medium for recording and conveying information in selected local government councils. While municipalities are still largely paper-based, a study by Phiri (2016) revealed that electronic records were becoming the predominant format in South African universities. Universities are moving into electronic records and advancing technologically as the majority of university employees are computer literate, while municipalities are still paper-based and have limited technology with high levels of computer illiteracy.

Storing records is important because safety is ensured and one can easily retrieve and access information when required. It was revealed by 46 (53.5%) registry officers that records were kept in the registry after creation – this was a common practice

and was confirmed by most of the records managers. However, the fact that many of the registry officers, 40 (46.5%) stated that records, after creation, were kept in offices, could be understood to mean that there are a substantial number of records in the selected municipalities that are not kept in a safe and secure environment (such as the registry) as emphasised in the Records Life Cycle and the Records Continuum models. This is further reinforced by the municipal managers revealing that records were stored in their offices or their secretary's office. This can be seen as "risky" as not only are these records stored outside of the registry more vulnerable but when municipal managers leave their jobs at the municipality, they can take valuable records with them. This could be one of the reasons why municipalities have experienced missing records as confirmed by 83 (96.5%) of the registry officers who indicated that they experience the challenge of missing records.

6.2.3 Records filing

Proper filing of records ensures easy access and retrieval of records. Registry officers were asked to indicate how records are filed. The findings revealed that a small majority of registry officers 44 (51.2 %) file their records alphabetically, 38 (44.2%) indicated that they file their records alphanumerically and four (4.7%) stated that their records are filed numerically. This was verified by the records managers who indicated that records in certain municipalities are filed alphabetically. Records in records storage areas must be filed according to the file plan and disposal schedule and display the correct reference numbers visibly and identifiably. Interestingly (given the low number of respondents who were under the impression that their municipality files records numerically), Mathebani-Bokwe (2015) observed that records in the Victoria Public Hospital in the Eastern Cape Province are filed numerically.

Records are continuously created and received in any organisation and therefore filing is a continuous activity as well. To shed some light on the frequency of filing of records, the registry officers were requested to state how often they do so. On a positive note, the vast majority of the officers, 84 (97.7%) reported that they file their records on a daily basis. This resonates well with the claim by Wakumoya (2009) that a lack of consistency in records filing can result in a backlog of records and

congestion in the registry offices. Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that when records are filed immediately the possibility of missing records is minimised. The researcher then sought to establish whether the filing system used made it easy to retrieve a record. According to the records managers the filing systems used in their respective municipalities did indeed make it easy to retrieve a record. However, it was clear from the responses that while it was easy to retrieve records, some difficulties were experienced by junior staff members in retrieving records. This is perhaps not surprising as findings indicated that 45 (52.3%) of the registry officers have been in their position for only 4-6 years. One of the records managers stated that:

We have created a records filing system that is easy to use and retrieve records. However, there are always difficulties for our junior registry clerks to retrieve records as they are not yet familiar with our system.

However, the results from the questionnaire survey of registry officers revealed that a substantial majority, 94.2% (81) of the respondents did have problems with retrieving records and they were not readily available when required for decision-making. These findings are similar to those of a study by Mohammed, Tetteh and Ahmed Azumah (2018) in which it was observed that retrieving records at the Sunyani Technical University was a challenge due to improper records management.

According to Keakopa (2013), the importance of storing and preserving records is to make the records easily accessible and readily available for decision-making. The records managers were also asked if records were readily available when required. Their response was that records were readily available when required thus contradicting the findings relating to the registry officers. The records managers do have more experience than the registry officers and this could account for them not having problems with access and availability of records. Furthermore, many of the records managers have bachelor degrees and some a postgraduate degree.

The researcher was also interested in establishing if the municipalities experienced missing records. All six records managers indicated that they do experience problems with missing records. It must be noted that saying the registry officers do

experience missing records is not saying that when records are needed, the registry officers are unable to access and retrieve them. However, a missing record is, in effect, a lost record and this implies that records are not being properly managed in the selected municipalities. According to Marutha and Ngoepe (2017), “records that are managed properly can easily be retrieved and this minimises missing records. Missing records can have serious repercussions for the municipalities and municipal officials in service delivery. As Luthuli and Kalusopa (2017) argue, “poor records management which results in missing records could undermine service delivery and therefore transparency and accountability”.

In a follow-up question, the records managers were asked to indicate the cause of the problem of missing records. The majority of records managers revealed that the reasons for missing records were a shortage of staff, poor records management practices, and inaccurate filing. Katuu and Ngoepe (2015:192) pointed out that an education and training programme is key to addressing records management deficits, including the problem of missing records. According to Maseh (2015), manual filing systems were found to be the contributing factor to missing records in the Kenyan judiciary. To what extent the filing systems used in the municipalities play a role in missing records was not investigated but inaccurate filing and poor records management practices, as mentioned by the records managers above, are a cause for concern.

6.2.4 Records storage facilities

The safety of municipal records is of the utmost importance for any records manager and to ensure this, records must be kept so that they are both accessible and protected against damage. Unegbu and Adenike (2013) observed that for the security and durability of records, they should be kept in such a way that they are available and protected against unauthorised access and damage.

6.2.4.1 Storage facilities

Records should be stored in such a way so as to enable user access and ensure that they are protected from unauthorised access, use, disclosure, removal,

deterioration, loss or destruction. Record storage facilities are a vital component of good records management practices. Marutha and Ngulube (2012) stated that in order to make sure records are quickly retrieved when requested, proper records management practices must be implemented and this includes having proper records storage facilities. The NARSSA clearly stipulates that the records office is the official location where information resources are kept. Nevertheless, this study established that the storage facilities of records in the selected municipalities are poor and insufficient as reported by the majority of the records managers. On a positive note, records managers did mention that there were plans to increase the space allocated for records storage. The findings are similar to those of a study by Tsabedze (2011) on records management in the government of Swaziland which revealed that records storage was poor. A study by Maseh (2016) also revealed that in a majority of the courts in Kenya, there were no designated areas for the storage of records. A study by Bakare, Abioye and Issa (2016), revealed that storage facilities for record-keeping in the selected Local Government Councils in Ogun State, Nigeria were insufficient.

6.2.4.2 Security of records

Records managers and personnel must take reasonable steps to protect the personal and confidential information they hold from misuse and loss as well as from unauthorised access and modification or disclosure. According to Alegbeleye and Chilaka (2019), the lack of security controls in organisations exposes the organisation to lose private and confidential records of individuals and the organisation as a whole. All records need to be secured at all times to ensure authenticity and reliability. If records are not properly secured, they may be tampered with thereby losing their originality or they may be stolen. The researcher sought to establish how the municipalities ensured the safety and security of their records in the registry offices as stipulated in the Records Life Cycle Model. The finding from the questionnaire survey revealed that 45 (52.3%) of the registry officers indicated that only authorised personnel have access to the records storage area. Authorised personnel could be the registry officers, messengers or any other persons that have been given permission to enter the records storage area. Similarly, the records

managers stated that records were kept safe by controlling access to registry offices in that only authorised personnel were allowed such access. When asked the same question, all five municipal managers agreed that the records were kept in a secured place at all times ensuring that they could not be stolen or damaged. This is in line with standards set in the storage and maintenance stage of the Records Life Cycle Model that access to records storage areas must be controlled.

The “right to use” is a vital component of any records management practice. Access to storage rooms needs to be organised in order to prevent unauthorised admittance that can result in the modification, obliteration, loss or theft of records. Only authorised people should be given authority to access records storage areas. The researcher also wanted to find out how access to records storage areas was controlled. Responses echoed those given concerning security of records in the paragraph above. Half all the registry officers 43 (50%) indicated that access to records was controlled by restricting access to registry staff only while another 41 (48%) indicated that only selected staff are granted access as there is an access control door. Thus, only registry officers and authorised people like messengers were given access to the records storage areas. This finding was corroborated by the municipal managers who also confirmed that records were kept safe by controlling access to registry offices and only authorised personnel were allowed in the registry offices. A study by Ngidi (2015) on the medical records management practices at Princess Marina Hospital in Botswana revealed that there were restrictions with regard to who could and could not access records and measures were put in place to ensure this. Similarly, a study by Bakare, Abioye and Issa (2016) also found that security measures had been put in place to guard against unauthorised access to records in the Local Government Councils in Ogun State, Nigeria. Users of the records were subject to managerial authorisations and clearances.

6.2.4.3 Methods used to request records

In terms of how municipal employees request records from the registry offices, findings revealed that almost an equal number of registry officers were of the view that employees either used a telephone call (41 or 47.7% respondents) or personally visited the registry offices (40 or 46.5% respondents) to request records. The fact

that municipal officials still use the telephone to request records could be considered risky as there is no trace of who requested the records. Nevertheless, when records are delivered, messengers make sure that staff receiving the records sign for them. It is important that when records are requested, the person requesting the records signs a form to this effect thus ensuring that a log of who has the records is kept. To avert access to records by unauthorised people, requesters should be asked to complete the request form for every item required. Movement of records from one service point to another within the municipalities must be observed and monitored to shield records against damage, loss and theft.

6.2.4.4 Method of delivery and distribution of records

The method of delivery and distribution of records is a prerequisite for the effective management of records and therefore should be treated as a priority. The questionnaire survey participants were asked to indicate the method of delivery used to distribute records. Forty-six (53.5%) of the registry officers stated that they used hand-to-hand delivery for the distribution of records while 37 (43%) reported that they use email, fax and mail. A study conducted by Mafu (2014) on the management of court records in the Magistrate's Court in the Eastern Cape revealed that messengers were used to deliver records. The use of hand-to-hand as one of the means of delivery implies that the selected municipalities under study are conscious of the safety and security of records during their delivery and distribution. Essentially, records are kept safe even when in transit. A study by Moatshe (2016) in Botswana revealed that there are no records tracking systems at the Supreme Furniture.

6.2.4.5 Overall responsibility for records management

Even though records management is a collective responsibility for every employee in the organisation, the records manager and his (or her) team must take overall responsibility and accountability for every record that is created in the organisation (Marutha, 2016). The majority of the records managers in the study stated that the overall responsibility for the management of records in their municipalities lay with the office of the municipal manager. In contrast, Mathebani-Bokwe (2015) revealed

that in the Victoria Public Hospital in the Eastern Cape records managers were responsible for the hospital's records management programme. Marutha (2016), however, revealed that accountability for medical records management in a health institution was also assigned to the chief executive officer as the overall head of the hospital.

6.2.5 Records maintenance and use

According to the NARSSA (2004:44), records maintenance and use means that the organisation maintains the records by ensuring that every user, whether inside or outside the organisation, has access to, and can use, the records under the control and care of the records management division. This study sought to ascertain how records are maintained and used in the selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province.

6.2.5.1 File plans

Ngoepe (2009) argued that structures used to organise or classify government records play a vital role in a government institution's capability to conduct and manage its records over time. File plans are a valuable and necessary tool in the management of records as a strategic business resource. In order to manage all records in conformity with requirements and to set standards, municipalities should develop a file plan which is revised on a regular basis. The study sought to establish if the selected municipalities have a file plan and all the registry officers surveyed indicated that they did. This was confirmed in the interviews held with the records managers. However, despite the findings revealing that municipalities have file plans, the findings further revealed that they were not used. The fact that the file plans were not used should be a "wake-up call" to municipalities since it can lead to disastrous situations in the future. On the contrary, a study by Kalusopa (2011) revealed that the trade unions in Botswana did not have file plans to begin with and that created serious challenges in records management.

6.2.5.2 Artificial climatic control equipment in the records storage areas

It is extremely important to maintain a constant temperature in the records storage area. Climate levels in registry offices are normally controlled using artificial climate control equipment. Participants were asked to state if they had such equipment

installed in the storage areas. The findings revealed that all (100%) the registry officers agreed that their registry offices have artificial climate control equipment in the records storage areas. While no follow-up question on the purpose of the artificial climate control was asked, it can be assumed that cooling is needed for the safety of records as Limpopo Province is very hot during summer with temperatures reaching above 45°C in some parts of the province. The registry officers were asked to indicate the type of equipment used in controlling the temperature. The use of fans and air conditioners as a means to control the temperature in record storage areas was mentioned by 42 (48.8%) and 40 (46.5%) officers respectively. On the contrary, the finding of a study by Nsibirwa (2012) on the preservation of legal deposit materials in South Africa revealed that some of the depositories did not have climate control systems as staff had to open windows to achieve ventilation.

It is extremely important to monitor temperature in the records storage area. The researcher also solicited information on whether the registry officers monitor temperature and relative humidity in the record storage areas. The findings from the interviews with records managers revealed that registry officers do monitor and control the temperature in the records storage areas. This could be because most of the registry officers mentioned that the records storage areas are located in a strong room with no windows for ventilation. As a result, people cannot work there unless there is some monitoring and controlling of the temperature. While it was not asked if the purpose of the temperature control was for records or for people, it can be assumed that it was not only for the safety of the records (as indicated above) but also for the safety and comfort of the people working there.

6.2.5.3 Fire detection and suppression system

Records are always potentially at risk and their loss in a disaster can be crippling for the municipalities. Therefore, effort should be made to prevent any loss of records due to disasters. The very nature of records storage presents a unique challenge for fire detection and fire system safety. It is an essential requirement for every organisation to have a fire detection and suppression system in the records storage areas. As far as the selected municipalities are concerned, 81 (94.2%) registry

officers indicated that they do not have a fire detection and suppression system in the records storage areas. The lack of such systems was confirmed in the interviews with the records managers. This is of concern given that a fire detection and suppression system would help to quickly detect and suppress fires (with the help of staff trained in emergency recovery procedures, as most smoke detection systems discharge water) (Nsibirwa, 2012). With no systems in place, municipalities are at risk of losing their valuable records should a fire occur.

6.2.5.4 Availability of a disaster management plan

One of the potential threats to the protection and preservation of records is the hazard of natural disasters. Having a disaster management plan shows the level of preparedness by organisations in terms of disaster management. The availability of a disaster management plan also yields many benefits for records management and is also important for good records management practices. Without disaster management plans, municipalities stand to lose all their records and institutional memory. According to the IRMT (2000), records must be protected against disasters and disaster management strategies need to be established to minimise hazards and ensure that salvage strategies are undertaken immediately. In short, a disaster management plan will guarantee the right actions are engaged in should an emergency or disaster occur. Ngoepe (2016) argued that a disaster management plan is important to ensure unceasing business processes in case of a disaster such as a flood or fire which could lead to the loss of records.

In terms of the current study the vast majority of registry officers, 83 (96.5%), indicated that their municipalities do not have disaster management plans. Not having such a plan in place puts the records in the registry at risk particularly given that the Limpopo Province is prone to natural disasters such as flooding, fire, strong winds, hail and thunderstorms. The records managers confirmed that there were no disaster management plans in place. However, when municipal managers were asked to indicate if their municipality had a records management disaster management plan in place, a majority of them said that they did. One municipal manager did not understand the disaster plan in relation to records management and could not provide an answer. The findings regarding disaster management plans are

in agreement with Marutha (2011) who, in his study on the records management practices in hospitals, found that the Limpopo Department of Health did not have disaster management plans in place. Similarly, Maseh (2015) established that the Kenyan judiciary did not have a disaster management plan. On the contrary, Marutha (2016) later found that hospitals in the Limpopo Province do have disaster management plans. Ngoepe (2016) observed that while government bodies developed disaster management plans, they were not applied in many government departments and that drafting of policies but not applying them was as good as not having them. Given the findings above, it would seem that the municipalities were not ready to deal with any disasters that should arise with regards to their records.

6.2.5.5 Pest infestations in the record storage area

The Records Life Cycle Model suggests how records can be managed and stored through all the stages comprising their life cycle and that this can prevent the deterioration of records should the records be moved to the archives phase. The safeguarding of records during their active and inactive life will promote access to records, for as long as they are needed. Pests such as insects and rodents can be attracted to records storage areas looking for food and shelter and can have an undesirable impact on records management practices. When the registry officers were asked if they had experienced pest infestations, their responses revealed that municipalities have indeed experienced infestations in the record storage areas. There was no follow-up question regarding the monitoring of pests and this was an oversight on the part of the researcher. In support of the finding, a study by Nsibirwa (2012), on the preservation of, and access to, legal deposit materials in South Africa found that 63.6% of the participants had experienced pest infestations in the depositories.

6.2.5.6 Control of pest infestations

Apart from protecting records against natural disasters, records need to be protected against pest infestation. Pests are responsible for substantial damage to records, and records can be susceptible to a variety of pests. According to Segaletsho (2015), deterioration of collections due to pests is one of the major barriers to information accessibility in most libraries and archives. The techniques used to control pests

must not be harmful to collections and staff, and must entail precautionary procedures and systematic monitoring. Registry officers were asked to indicate how they control pest infestations in the records storage area. The vast majority of the participants, 83 (96.5%), indicated that fumigation was used to control pest infestation. Five of the six records managers interviewed also indicated that fumigation was used to deal with pest infestation. Katekwe and Mutsagondo (2018) noted in their study on “challenges and prospects of records maintenance in public departments in Zimbabwe, that fumigation is carried out once per quarter. According to the Limpopo Province Archives Act (No. 5 of 2001), municipalities must manage the implementation of pest control. One such control is fumigation. It is important for municipalities to have an effective pest control management programme in place; however, if a problem occurs, fumigation may be necessary to eradicate the problem.

Fumigation is an important control measure in the records and archives industry for the control of pest infestations. However, fumigation is not known to be safe for records. It is, therefore, necessary for municipalities to opt for safer methods of controlling pest infestations in records storage areas. One such method is known as Integrated Pest Management (IPM). IPM combines the least toxic approaches to pest control by integrating a variety of mechanical, cultural, biological and, as a last resort, chemical control of pests in a records storage area. It seeks to use natural means to control pests, combined with chemical pesticides for backup only when pests are unable to be controlled by natural means. IPM is a process that can be used to solve pest problems while minimising risks to records, people and the environment. Nsibirwa (2012) opines that fumigation is toxic and affects the materials as a residue remains on the materials which may cause chemical instability and does not prevent the biological agents from returning.

6.2.6 Appraisal and disposal

According to Basil (2005), records appraisal and disposal are fundamental to effective and efficient records management since they assist the organisation to regulate the advance of records, determine compliance to disposal law and decrease financial losses from missing records.

6.2.6.1 Appraisal

When asked whether their municipality has a records appraisal policy, four of the six records managers replied in the affirmative and the remaining two did not know. They were then asked to indicate where the records with permanent retention value were stored. It was found that the records are kept in the registry offices and municipal archives. It was disappointing to note that none of the participants reported that they send the records to the provincial archives. The province has recently opened a new archive building that is currently not in use. The Records Continuum Model puts more emphasis on the continuing value placed on the records and as a continuous conveyor belt that transcends time. The Records Continuum Model advocates for collaboration in the work of archivists and records managers where the preservation of records is concerned.

In terms of Schedule 5 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, “archives other than national archives are a functional area of exclusive provincial competence positioned in the provincial departments”. This provision made it possible for each province to promulgate their own act on archives and records services. “That led to the promulgation of the Limpopo Province Archives Act (No. 5 of 2001) to regulate records management functions in the Limpopo Province. The provincial archives legislation is, however, consistent with the national archival legislation. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa divides the responsibility for the management of records of public bodies between the national and the provincial archives services, where archives other than national archives are designated as functional areas of exclusive provincial competence.

6.2.6.2 Disposal

The act of disposing of records must be carried out according to the records disposal policy. In order to determine the appropriate disposition actions, records need to be appraised. Various questions regarding the disposal of records were asked and participants were asked to respond “Yes” or “No” to the questions. On the question of whether registry offices have a records disposal policy and guidelines, all the officers agreed that they have records disposal policies or guidelines. However, when the registry officers were asked to state if the policies and procedures are

followed in transferring records safely from the active to the inactive phase, almost all the respondents, 85 (98.8%), indicated that they do not follow the records disposal policies and procedures. This is understandable given that the majority of municipalities do not follow records disposal policy.

In terms of disposing or destroying their records, all the records managers reported that the disposed of records are shredded. When asked who gives permission for the disposal of inactive records, four of the records managers pointed to the municipal managers as the accounting officers of municipalities who authorise the destruction of records. Surprisingly, the provincial archivist did not feature in this regard. In terms of Section 13(2) of the National Archives and Records Services of South Africa Act (1996), no public records under control of a governmental body may be disposed of if no written disposal authority is supplied by the national archivist or the provincial archivist. The Act thus makes it clear that no municipal records should be disposed of without the permission of the provincial archivist.

The Limpopo Province Archives Act (No. 5 of 2001) stipulates that “municipal records with archival value should be transferred to the provincial archives 20 years after creation with the approval of the municipal manager and after prior arrangements have been made with the provincial archivist”. The provincial archivist is responsible for conducting all inspections in all municipalities. However, it would seem that the provincial archivist has not been able to perform his or her duties regarding the inspection of municipal registry offices in the Limpopo Province. It is worthwhile to note that according to Section 13(2) c of the National Archives and Records Services of South Africa Act, municipalities must provide access for the authorised provincial archivist or the NARSSA officials to conduct inspections. Therefore, if the provincial archivist and the NARSSA do not inspect municipalities’ records management programmes, we will continue to see poor records management practices in municipalities. This is corroborated in a study by Ngoepe (2012:187), which revealed that “very few governmental bodies in South Africa have transferred records of enduring value into archives due to a lack of storage space in archives repositories”. In this regard, as Mojapelo (2017) would attest, the NARSSA has a regulatory role

in records management in the public sector, but the sector is characterised by poor records management practices.

6.2.7 Electronic records as guided by the Records Continuum Model

According to the IRMT (2009:11), “the introduction of information technologies has affected the way government preserves and makes available records in their custody”. As a result, sound records management should be applied to both print records and electronic records. Use of electronic means to conduct business and deliver basic services has become increasingly commonplace in municipalities. Therefore, electronic records, just like print records, need to be managed. Nevertheless, McLeod, Hare and Johare (2004) emphasised that the nature of these records adds an extra level of complexity to the activity of record-keeping, ensuring that appropriate, authentic and reliable records are created and captured whilst their integrity is maintained.

6.2.7.1 Types of electronic records created

Based on the Records Continuum Model, archivists and records managers need to be involved together with information systems developers in the creation of record-keeping systems. An electronic record is a record produced, made, conducted, communicated, received, or stored by electronic means. Just like paper records, electronic records are also subjected to a records management strategy. In this section, the researcher solicited data about the type of electronic records created in municipalities. Electronic records created and mentioned by over 90% of the respondents were municipal speeches, 85 (99%), municipal accounts, 82 (95.3%) and memoranda, 83 (96.5%). Surprisingly, emails were mentioned by only two (2.3%) of the respondents. This is an indication that municipalities do not consider e-mail communications as important like other types of records. Asogwa (2012) observed that many Africa countries are jumping into the information technology bandwagon without adequately incorporating good records keeping strategies to include e-mails as official records.

According to the Records Continuum Model, electronic records need to be created, captured, organised and pluralised electronically. On a positive note, in line with the model, selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province acknowledged the electronic

records during creation and capture. However, as highlighted by Millar (2004), the preservation of electronic records is at great risk if standards for their creation, management and preservation are not available in the organisation. Asogwa (2012) reported that in most African countries records managers and archivists lack the fundamental skills and competencies that would enable them to handle records in an electronic environment.

6.2.7.2 Formats of electronic records created

According to the IRMT (2009), computers have led to prompt and vibrant fluctuations in the way administrations and businesses function and the format in which records are created. As McKemmish (2005) observed, the Records Continuum Model approach to recordkeeping illuminates the weaving of the patterns of recordkeeping from initial stages to ensure that electronic records are created through processes that ensure accessibility. In terms of the format in which the records are created, findings revealed that 66 (76.7%) of the registry officers indicated Microsoft Word format and the same number indicated PDF. Surprisingly, no mention was made of records created in spreadsheet, audio, and audio-visual formats. Thus, most records created were documents that were either in Microsoft Word format or PDF. As municipalities create and use records in different electronic format, they must plan for the management of those records.

Kalusopa (2011), with regard to the formats of electronic records, found that e-mails 29 (21%), the MS package (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) 28 (20%) and databases 14 (10%) were the dominating electronic formats of records in most labour organisations in Botswana. Municipalities are required to give electronic records the same care that they provide to print records and management of both types must be closely integrated and co-ordinated. According to Millar (2010), just like print records, electronic records should, in spite of technological changes, remain accessible and usable over time. It is clear from the findings of the study that the selected municipalities are giving the electronic records the same care that they give to print records as stipulated in the Records Continuum Model.

6.2.7.3 Storage of electronic records

The Records Continuum Model reminds records managers and archivists that records need to be stored in secure and accessible storage facilities. According to Wamukoya and Mutula (2005), poor storage facilities have been identified as major factors contributing to the failure to capture and preserve electronic records in eastern and southern African institutions of education. Information on where the electronic records were stored was solicited by the researcher. Findings indicate that almost half of the registry officers 40 (46.5%) mentioned offsite storage, while another 39 (45.3%) stored the electronic records on the server. It was encouraging to note that very few respondents indicated that they were storing their electronic records on their personal computers which are not considered safe. It should be noted that for electronic records to be adequately managed, there should be secured storage facilities. Creating electronic records without proper storage facilities leaves the electronic records in a shambles. Therefore, the storage of electronic records becomes very important for the success of electronic records management. The study conducted by Marutha and Ngulube (2012) concluded that electronic records management appears to be a serious challenge in the public health sector of Limpopo Province impacting on the quality of health care. This is not in line with the assertion by Irons (2006) that electronic records should be preserved in such a way that their form, retrieval, reliability and authenticity, as evidence of a particular activity, are not subject to change, bearing in mind the safety of the records.

6.2.7.4 Electronic records management policy

An assessment by Wamukoya and Mutula (2005) affirmed that the failure to capture and preserve electronic records in eastern and southern African institutions of higher education has been attributed to, among other factors, the lack of policies and procedures. On a positive note, all (100%) of the registry officers confirmed that they have a policy on managing electronic records which is in line with the Records Continuum Model. However, when asked if they have guidelines on the disposal of electronic records, a majority, 66 (77%) of the records officers said that they do not. This is a major concern as the disposal of electronic records were not guided in any way. The final question on electronic records management solicited information on

whether registry officers experience any challenges in managing electronic records. In response, the vast majority of the respondents, 83 (97%) said that they do. According to Asogwa (2012), electronic records management is new to most records officers in sub-Saharan Africa and poses many challenges.

The increasing shift from print records to electronic records has caused many organisations to depend on technology. If municipalities want to remain relevant in the current society that increasingly depends on information technology, they will have to adapt to, and embrace, electronic records. However, since the Limpopo Province is a rural province with high rates of unemployment, lack of smartphones and laptops, digital illiteracy, and poor network and electricity connections, it will be difficult for municipalities to migrate to electronic records. Nevertheless, a study by Magee (2014) asserted that despite the widespread daily use of computers by almost every municipal employee in the city of Bellingham (in the USA), the eventual "paperless office" that was predicted was not happening anytime soon as the majority of participants interviewed mentioned that they still create and use paper records. This, of course, was the case in a developed country and it is not surprising that a developing country like South Africa (and Limpopo Province in particular) is lagging behind in electronic records and their management. As noted by Wamukoya and Mutula (2005), the management of electronic records is acknowledged by both governments and records management professionals as a global problem. It is, therefore, not surprising that municipalities in the Limpopo Province are struggling with the management of such records.

6.3 How knowledgeable are staff in municipalities about records management practices?

The second research question sought to establish the level of knowledge of records management among staff in the municipalities. Qualified staff with relevant skills and knowledge are the key to the successful implementation of good records management practices. Knowledge and skills play a crucial part in records management practices as they affect how records are created, used and disposed of. According to Popoola (2009), "the success of any organization's records management practices depends on the skills, capability and level of commitment of

the records personnel, who are indispensable to the system and an important force in the development of the organisation”.

6.3.1 Level of education

Chinyemba and Ngulube (2005) argued that the records management programme in an organisation warrants that records management activities must be effective and efficient. Education and training allow employees to comprehend and apply policies, and simplify the efficient application of good record management practices. Education and training also play an important role as they affect how staff create, maintain, use and dispose of records, thus ensuring good records management practices. Registry officers were asked to indicate their highest level of educational qualification. The highest number of respondents 42 (48.8%) had Standard 10 (Grade 12) as their highest qualification while 40 (46.5%) indicated that they had a certificate. This indicates that the registry officers in the selected municipalities in Limpopo Province do not have formal qualifications in records management. This could have negative implications for the records management practices in municipalities. The findings from the interviews with records managers revealed that the majority of them have degrees, while a few have diplomas. These findings are consistent with those of Phiri (2016) who found that the level of knowledge in records management in the universities in Malawi was very low and required pressing consideration. The findings of the study by Marutha (2016) also revealed that the highest qualification achieved by most of the participants working in records management in the health institutions in the province was a certificate. Isa (2004) rightfully concludes that the quality of records management professionals in the future will be mainly dependant on the role of higher learning institutions and professional bodies in providing relevant education and training.

The interviews with records managers also revealed that staff in the registry offices in the municipalities do not have the necessary training in records management. The municipal managers were also asked to indicate the level of skills of the registry officers in their municipalities. They considered that the level of skills of the registry officers to be “Fair”. This brings up the issue of unqualified staff appointed in registry

offices in municipalities which may have damaging consequences on records management practices in those municipalities. The findings of this study, when looked at from the perspectives of related studies, especially in Africa, show that a majority of the organisations in the public sector are struggling with staff who have no qualifications in records management.

6.3.2 Formal qualification in records management

Records management is a field that needs to be run by experienced professionals with a formal qualification in records management and who know what has to be done. Managing records is a difficult and challenging task for municipalities. Phiri (2016) noted that it is important for records management staff to undertake training programmes to continue to be relevant in the dynamic world and more so in this era where electronic records are gradually becoming the principal medium for information. According to Mcleod, Hare and Johare (2004), an important aspect in meeting both the challenges and addressing the strategic management of records is the provision of education and training for employees working with records. This means that registry officers must be provided with formal qualifications in records management. However, this was not the case in the Limpopo municipalities because only two (2.3%) of the registry officers had a formal qualification in records management. Thus, the vast majority were not formally qualified. This may be due to the fact that records management is probably not seen as a priority in the selected municipalities. To make matters worse, the majority of records managers were also found to have no formal qualification in records management. The lack of qualified staff created a problem for the records managers as they revealed in the interviews that they spend most of their time training registry officers instead of managing records. This could have a negative impact on the management of records in the selected municipalities.

Marutha and Ngoepe (2017) opined that employees with no training in records management end up being demoralised and unresponsive on the job and just do it because of the salary. This may have been the case in the selected municipalities given that, as mentioned above, the vast majority of registry officers had no formal qualification in records management. Keakopa (2013) argued that records

management is labour intensive and not just enough staff are needed but staff who are highly trained as well. Thus, even if the municipalities had an adequate number of staff in the registry offices, if the staff are not well-trained there will still be a problem. There is a danger with this practice of not having formally qualified staff as records management will always be seen as a “low-class” profession. This could be one of the reasons why registry officers were not following the records management policies when managing records.

As noted above, the lack of formal qualifications in records management was also evident with the records managers – while all had specialist qualifications, only one had a qualification in records management and archival studies. This situation is evident in other contexts as well. According to Ngulube (2000), “records management activities in the public sector in Zimbabwe are carried out by registry staff, which comprises of registry clerks, classifiers and supervisors with no qualifications in records management”. From the findings of the study by Marutha and Ngoepe (2017), it was revealed “that only a few officials working in records management in the public hospitals had completed a qualification in records management. The problem of unqualified staff in records management was also prevalent in Phiri’s (2016) study in South African universities and more staff members were required to go for formal training in records management. The study by Marutha and Ngoepe (2017) referred to above pointed out that the majority of people working in the public health services had public administration qualifications and observed that this could be the reason why records are poorly managed in public hospitals. The same could be said of records management practices in the selected municipalities in this study. In contrast, a study by Msibi (2015) on the preservation of public records and archives in Swaziland Government ministries, revealed that most of the staff working in the ministries had formal training in records and archives management, which included a preservation component.

6.3.3 In-house training in records management

One of the key elements in every definition of a professional is the need for continuous training to develop and improve knowledge and skills. Marutha (2016:

251) emphasised that it is usually due to incapable and incompetent records management officials that most of the record-keeping systems collapse or become dysfunctional and complicated. While most of the registry officers did not have a formal qualification in records management, the findings did show that all but one (98.8%) of the registry officers had received in-house training in records management to improve their skills. In contrast, Marutha (2016) revealed that in the Limpopo healthcare institutions, in-house records management training and workshops were received by only 56.7% of respondents. However, the in-house training in records management offered to the registry officers in the current study was on an irregular basis. This suggests that the training of employees in records management was not a priority for the municipalities. This irregular training might suggest one probable reason for the current state of records management practices in municipalities. A similar conclusion was reached by Marutha and Ngoepe (2017) when they revealed that the in-house training in records management in the Limpopo Department of Health was also done irregularly.

In the interviews with records managers, it was revealed that staff in the registry offices undergo regular informal training in records management to improve the current records management practices. However, the finding further revealed that when in-house training sessions are organised, the registry officers do not take the training seriously as no certificates are awarded. The findings from the interviews with municipal managers indicated that none of the municipal managers had ever attended any training in records management. They pointed out that records management was not one of their key performance areas and thus they did not see the need to attend records management training. However, municipal managers as the accounting officers of the municipalities, are expected to advise and lead the records management services of their municipalities. The fact that the municipal managers had no training in records management implies that they should not be giving advice on records management. However, despite the lack of training a majority of the municipal managers did provide advice to registry staff. Giving credence to this, Seniwoliba, Mahama and Abilla (2017) asserted that records management is a field that needs to be run by experienced professionals who will

know what has to be done and it is, therefore, necessary to ensure that records management staff have a qualification in records management. The authors further emphasised that workshops and seminars should be organised to train staff on records management.

6.4 What activities and strategies are used to support records management practices?

It is vital that staff in the municipalities acknowledge the need for responsibility and accountability in the creation, usage, maintenance, storage and disposal of records. However, this can only be achieved if the municipality puts in place clear strategies and activities that support records management practices. The third research question sought to establish what activities and strategies were used by municipalities to support records management practices.

6.4.1 Budgeting and human resources

According to the NARSSA (2007), municipalities should ensure that the budget for the records management programmes and that the necessary financial, human and technological resources are allocated to support the records management programmes. When the municipal managers were asked to indicate if their municipality had allocated a sufficient budget for records management functions and activities, their responses were no different from that of the records managers. The findings from both groups of managers revealed that the budgets allocated for records management functions in all the municipalities were insufficient. This is in contravention of the NARSSA (2006) policy guidelines. The findings further revealed that budgets had in fact been cut in all sections of the municipalities and the registry section was no exception. For more insight into the allocation of human resources in the registry offices, participants were asked to state if the registry sections were allocated adequate human resources to deal with records management. It was found that in all the municipalities, the human resources allocated to the municipalities were not adequate to deal with the records management functions. One municipal manager stated that:

There are many vacancies in the municipalities and they cannot be filled because of lack of financial resources, it's not like the registry section is the only one section affected by lack of financial resources.

However, it does appear that the registries in the selected municipalities, unlike other departments, are not given the consideration they deserve. Similarly, Kanzi (2010) and Nevhutalu (2016), found that records management in the Amathole District Municipality (ADM) and the Vhembe District Municipality were not receiving the attention they deserve. This finding is similar to that of a study in the USA by Magee (2014) that revealed that the main limitation to properly implementing records management practices comes down to the root of most problems, namely, money.

6.4.2 Support from top management

According to Zwikael (2008), top management support is known to have a high impact on project accomplishment. The researcher was interested in establishing whether top managers in the selected municipalities were providing support for records management practices. According to the municipal managers interviewed, senior managers in the municipalities do support records management. However, both records managers and a majority of the registry officers (73 or 84.9%) were of the view that they do not get enough support from top management. The contradiction may be due to the municipal managers, being part of top management, believing that they are providing the necessary support. The views of the records managers and registry officers are corroborated in a study on records management in the Kenyan judiciary by Maseh (2015). The study found that top management in the Kenyan judiciary did not accord records management full support. Phiri (2016) noted that it is essential to make senior management aware that record-keeping is the life-blood of their organisation. Isa (2009) emphasised that the essence of records management relies heavily on the awareness among senior management of the benefit of practising good record-keeping.

The records managers were asked to indicate if there was a service-level agreement between line managers and the records management section in terms of the roles and responsibilities regarding the management of records. All the records managers indicated that there were no such agreements. They added that while line managers

create records, they are not obliged to forward the records to the registry offices for filing. The records created are kept in the offices of the line managers. This would suggest that only the line managers would have access to the records kept in their offices. Furthermore, line managers can destroy or hide evidence and encourage corruption as there will be no transparency. This is contrary to the Limpopo Province Archives Act (No.5 of 2001) that stipulates clearly that the registry office is the official location where records are kept. Kanzi (2010) asserts that the bulk of municipal employees file records in their offices despite them being aware that records should be filed in the registry offices.

6.4.3 Records audit

The records managers were asked if there was anyone conducting audits to evaluate record management practices against accepted standards in the municipalities. All respondents agreed that no records audits had been conducted in their municipalities. It is thus evident that records management practices in the selected municipalities are not audited for regulatory action and compliance. The only time when municipalities realise that their records management practices are not effective is during the financial audit by the AG. This situation exists despite the study by Ngoepe (2013) on the role of records management in the auditing process, revealing that records management plays an enabling role in the auditing process, as auditors rely on records to support their findings. Conducting a records audit is the responsibility of the NARSSA and the provincial archivist and it appears that both have failed in their regulatory role as far as the selected municipalities are concerned. According to Marutha (2016), the records audit enables the records management committee to discover important information relating to strategies concerning records management. Mojapelo (2017) observes that the supervisory role of records management in the public sector rests with the NARSSA. However, it has been shown on several occasions that the NARSSA was unable to cope with this regulatory role.

6.4.4 Strategies to support records management

Municipal managers were asked to indicate strategies that are used to support records management in the municipalities. Strategies put in place by municipalities to support and improve records management practices included:

- Records management awareness.
- A records management day to highlight the importance of records management.
- A programme put in place by the SALGA and the AG to improve records management practices in their municipalities.

As observed by Keakopa (2012:39), “most organisations in Botswana are beginning to recognise the need to develop and implement records management strategies and are putting up tenders for the development of such strategies”.

6.4.5 Sound records management strategies

Sound records management strategies are designed to ensure that records management programmes are aligned to overall corporate objectives, with clear achievable goals and priorities. Kanzi (2010) notes that a sound records management strategy is the foundation of managing records and the delivery of services to the public. Sound records management not only helps protect records practices but also enhances an organisation’s operational efficiency. The researcher sought to establish if the registry officers thought that a sound records management strategy was required in their municipalities. All the officers (100%) agreed that such a strategy was required. It emerged that both records managers and municipal managers while acknowledging the importance of sound records management practices in the selected municipalities, indicated that no strategies had been put in place to support these practices.

6.4.6 Municipal strategic plan

To ensure that records management is given the attention it is worthy of, it must be a strategic objective in the government department's strategic and business plans (NARSSA, 2007). The municipal managers were asked if records management was

aligned with the municipality's strategic plan. Three (60%) managers stated that the strategic plan of the municipality does include a records management programme. It is evident from this finding that municipalities in Limpopo Province have not given records management the attention it deserves as stipulated by the NARSSA.

The municipal managers were also asked to state if the municipality put any value on good records management as a means of promoting accountability and transparency. All five managers were of the view that their municipality does put a value on good records management as a means of promoting accountability and transparency. Undoubtedly, the study has demonstrated that while the municipal managers acknowledge that records management is an important tool to promote accountability and transparency, they failed to value records management as a means to do so. This implies that records management is in reality not seen as an important municipal programme since it does not always form part of the municipal strategic plan. A study by Marutha and Ngoepe (2017) noted that the reason for this is that records management is a new concept and, as a result, is not seen as an important division which leads to a minimal budget allocation.

6.5 What are the factors that affect the current records management practices in municipalities in the Limpopo Province?

It was necessary for the current study to understand what the factors affecting the current records management practices in the selected municipalities were. The fourth research question sought to identify these factors.

6.5.1 Rating of the current records management practices in the municipality

Records management practices have always been one of the fundamental assets of an organisation. Before establishing the factors affecting the current records management practices the study determined how the records management practices in the selected municipalities were rated. The majority of registry officers (82 or 95.3%) rated the practices in their municipality as either "Fair" or "Good". The two extreme ratings, namely "Very good" and "Poor" were mentioned by two (2.3%) respondents each. It is evident that the registry officers did not believe that the current records management practices in their municipalities were adequate and that there was room for improvement. The findings of this study are similar to those of a

study by Alegbeleye and Chilaka (2019). The authors found that records at the Ministry of Health in the Abia State of Nigeria were not managed in accordance with best records management practices.

Kanzi (2010), in his study of records management practices in the Amathole District Municipality, revealed that there was still room for upgrading the practices, as the findings presented more weaknesses in the records management system than strengths. Similarly, a study by Unegbu and Adenike (2013:7) observed that “records management practices in the Ministry of Information and Strategy in Lagos is something that needs more attention and should be treated as crucial in the development of the Lagos State information system at large”. The interview results also revealed that most of the municipal employees are “cadre deployed” and are devoted to the deployer. This means political agendas are pursued when the ruling party deploys its members in municipalities. Twala (2014) observed that “the cadre deployment policy has been implemented by the African National Congress and its alliance partners in pursuit of its avowed intention to have loyal party hands on all the levers of power in government, and this undermines accountability structures in the public sphere”. Generally speaking, it can be argued that in South Africa, municipalities are run and controlled by politicians.

6.5.2 Factors affecting the current records management practices

Where the registry section is placed in an organisation could have an impact on how records are managed and resources are allocated. The municipal managers were therefore asked to indicate where the registry section was placed in the organogram structure of their municipality. Four municipal managers reported that the registry section was under the Corporate Services Department, while the fifth manager said that it was placed under Information and Communication Technology. Keakopa (2013:39), amongst other researchers, has observed that “a records management function in any organisation should be placed strategically if records are to play a meaningful role in organisational strategic directions”. Marutha (2016) made the important point that in some cases, the records management function is misplaced or linked to the wrong directorate or division, for example, the finance, human resource or information communication technology divisions where it receives less

priority in terms of budget allocation and other resources. Unfortunately, no follow-up question regarding placement was asked and the advantages and disadvantages of four of the five registries being placed under the Corporate Services Department are thus not known.

The municipal managers were asked if they thought the adoption of a records management system was important to their municipality. Perhaps unsurprisingly, all the managers thought that it was. In a further question, the municipal managers were asked if they considered records management as being essential in the attainment of the municipality's mission, vision and core values. Again, all the managers answered in the affirmative, considering records management as a priority in this regard. More practically, the municipal managers were asked what they thought the most serious administrative problems relating to records management in their municipalities were. The most mentioned problems were the lack of staff awareness of the importance of records and an insufficient budget. Other problems identified were incompetent/unskilled staff, damaged records, missing records and the misfiling of records. Responses from the registry officers regarding administrative problems pointed to the shortage of staff, insufficient funding and the lack of storage space.

A further finding of the study and among the list of the factors contributing to the inadequate current records management practices, was the records managers' contention of the lack of support from senior management and politicians. It is worth noting that politicians do not work for the municipalities, but are elected to represent their local community in the running of municipalities and help monitor the performance of the municipalities. However, they seem to have contributed to the current records management practices in the municipalities by not supporting their sound practice. Other factors that affect the quality of the current records management practices identified by the records managers concerned, in the main, staff. Unqualified staff, shortages of staff and insufficient funding for the employment of more staff in the registry offices were pointed to. Also mentioned was the need to improve storage facilities. In a similar vein, the municipal managers pointed to inadequate financial resources, lack of staff in the registry offices and the lack of

secure storage for records. Also mentioned were municipal officials disregarding the records management policy, and that no measures were taken to ensure that those who disregard the records management policy were dealt with.

The most-mentioned problems were the lack of staff awareness of the importance of records and an insufficient budget. Undoubtedly, the lack of support from top management and politicians has also emerged as one of the main contributing factors to the inadequate current records management practices in the selected municipalities. Politicians change with every municipal election and this creates instability and a lack of continuity. The findings of this study are similar to those of the aforementioned study conducted by Magee (2014) in Bellingham City. Findings revealed that budget constraints existed across the board in the city, and limited financial resources led to limited facilities and resources. Magee's (2014) study also revealed that as staff are either let go or leave, their positions are not filled and their duties are absorbed by remaining staff which further limits the ability of these staff to keep up with current incoming records.

Kanzi (2010) identified the following factors as contributing to the unsatisfactory current records management practices in the Amothole District Municipality: not using a file plan, lack of training of both records office staff and users, unqualified and demoralised records officers and the lack of support from senior management. The findings of the study by Kanzi (2010) are similar to the findings of the current study. However, there was no indication that the records managers in the current study were demoralised or the registry officers uncooperative and demotivated as found by Kanzi (2010). From the above analysis, it can be deduced that there is a need for municipal and political office bearers to work together to support records management programmes.

6.5.3 Appreciation of the role of records

The findings of the study revealed that the majority of registry officers, 76 (88.4%), said that staff in their municipality appreciated the role of records in their areas of operation. Appreciation of the role of records is an important issue and the above

finding is a positive one with regards to records management practices in the municipalities in general. The findings of the study are similar to that of the finding of a study conducted by Keakopa (2013) in Botswana, that revealed that management and staff appreciated the importance of records and acknowledged that there was an urgent need to address staffing and storage requirements for the section which is responsible for all records management activities in the organisation.

6.5.4 Relationship between records management and clean audit outcomes

Previous studies have shown that there is a relationship between records management and a clean audit (Ngoepe, 2012). The researcher was interested in finding out if the registry officers were aware of this relationship. They were thus asked to state if there was a relationship between records management and a clean audit outcome. The vast majority of registry officers (83 or 96.5%) said that there was such a relationship. This corroborated an observation by Ngoepe and Ngulube (2014) who noted that there is a consensus among scholars that proper records management plays a significant role in the auditing process". It was also in agreement with David's (2017) assertion that "there is a strong correlation between records management and improved audit opinions.

The registry officers were also asked what value they would place on sound records management as a key factor in a clean audit outcome. Forty-six (53.5%) of the registry officers rated sound records management as "Important" and a further 39 (45.3%) rated it as "Very important". The final respondent actually rated it as "Essential". This is a clear indication that the registry officers understood that records management was a valuable tool with which to improve audit outcomes. This sentiment was also echoed by Ngoepe and Ngulube (2014) who pointed out that the main reason why government departments were given negative audit opinions was as a result of a lack of evidence in the form of financial records and a lack of knowledge on the part of the finance staff.

6.6 What challenges are municipal officials facing in the management of records in municipalities?

The final research question concerned the perspectives of the participants regarding the challenges faced in the management of records in their municipalities.

Challenges mentioned by more than 20 of the registry officers were: staff shortages, a lack of training in records management, and a lack of storage facilities. Less mentioned were a lack of support from the senior manager (11 respondents) and management not taking records management as a priority (10 respondents). The challenges cited by the records managers during the interviews were as follows:

- *Unqualified personnel in the registry offices make it difficult to manage records.*
- *Political interference and nepotism in the appointment of personnel in the registry offices.*
- *Poor storage facilities with no budget for improvement.*
- *Lack of formal qualifications in records management in South Africa.*
- *Records management not seen as a priority by managers and politicians.*
- *Records management does not form part of the strategic plan of the municipalities.*

It is clear from these results that the selected municipalities are facing numerous challenges vis a vis records management. In particular, the issues of training and the lack of appropriately qualified staff are, arguably at the forefront. However, it is apparent that the selected municipalities are not unique in facing records management-related challenges – records management practices in Africa are beset by challenges (as outlined in the literature review). According to a study by Ngulube (2000), “some of the challenges encountered by registry staff in managing records in the public sector in Zimbabwe include: inadequate and inaccurate records; unauthorized access; mutilation; mishandling; denying access and use; compromising security; used for criminal activities; used to intimidate others; and unauthorized destruction and disclosure”.

The issue of training was highlighted in a study by Nevhutu (2014). The study found that the inadequate training of registry officers in municipalities was hindering the improvement of records management practices. A study by Asogwa (2012) concluded that corrupt leaders in Africa do not provide adequate funds for records management programmes. Asogwa (2012) went on to add that some African leaders

“distort public policies, public records, decision-making apparatuses, and sometimes go to any length to transfer experienced records managers in a bid to create opportunities for embezzlement”. The study by Dewah (2018:75) on the records management service in Zimbabwe also emphasises the funding issue and concludes that:

The prevailing economic situation is presenting serious challenges to records management practices such that organisations’ executives both public and private are allocating far below adequate financial resources towards records management activities.

Magee’s (2014) study, referred to earlier, points out that the major challenge faced by records managers in the city of Bellingham was budget constraints resulting in too many departments fighting over extremely limited financial resources. Magee (2014) emphasised that the lack of funds leads to limited facilities and resources and, even more importantly, to records managers not being able to be sufficiently thorough.

When asked about the challenges faced in managing records, a majority of the municipal managers pointed to the lack of an adequate budget as the main challenge faced by municipalities in managing records. Also mentioned was the difficulty of acquiring qualified registry officers within the community. The findings also revealed that records management was not seen as a priority; hence the budget allocated to records management programmes was insufficient. It must be noted that it is common knowledge that municipalities in rural areas are grappling with the challenge of raising their own revenue for sustainable service delivery. In some cases, municipal officials have failed to put in place good credit control mechanisms to collect revenue from the community. However, the prevailing high unemployment rates could also be the reason for failure by municipal officials to collect revenue. A further reason is politicians fearing the loss of political support from the community if they introduce credit collection control mechanisms. Dikotla (2016) asserted that in the context of government agencies such as municipalities, the support of both political office-bearers (the mayor) and administrative officer bearers (the municipal

manager) is an essential aspect for the success of municipalities. While one could argue that politicians do not work for municipalities, and they themselves cannot put good credit control mechanisms in place they are, however, the ones who pass laws and regulations and it is the municipal officials and staff who implement these.

The records managers were asked whether their municipalities were taking any steps towards addressing the challenges faced in the management of records. The majority of the records managers were of the opinion that no steps were being taken by the municipalities to deal with the challenges faced. A similar question was posed to the municipal managers. Increased funding, as well as training, emerged, among others, as possible solutions:

- *Treasury must increase budget allocation to municipalities.*
- *Improved revenue collection for rural municipalities.*
- *SALGA to assist with records management like they do with knowledge management and financial management in municipalities.*
- *Introduction of records management course in TVET colleges and universities.*

The findings of the study by Maseh (2015) revealed that the majority of organisations in Africa are not coping with challenges related to the storage of records. Ngoepe and Keakopa (2011) observed that the biggest challenge in records management in the NARSSA was the lack of human resources. This observation is similar to an observation by Masimba (2014) that one of the fundamental challenges facing records management in South Africa was the shortage of staff. Masimba (2014) also revealed how insignificant the records management role in the public sector is. Katuu and Ngoepe (2015:192), referring to education and training, asserted that the absence of an “education and training programme is a key challenge to addressing the records management capacity deficit in South Africa”. Given the above, the findings of this study support, to a large extent, what has been recorded in the literature.

The records managers were asked to offer suggestions that could help improve the current records management practices in the municipalities. The suggestions made echo the findings outlined and discussed above and were as follows:

- *Politicians must stop interfering in the appointment of registry offices and only qualified personnel must be appointed to work with records.*
- *More financial resources must be made available to improve storage facilities.*
- *South African universities and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) must introduce records management training.*
- *Provincial Archives must assist with training of registry officers in the Province.*
- *Records management must be seen as a priority and form part of the strategic plan of the municipalities and integrated with the Integrated Development Plan (IDP).*

6.7 Summary

The purpose of the study was to establish the records management practices in selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province from the perspectives of three groups of staff members, namely, registry officers, records managers and municipal managers. This chapter comprised the discussion of the findings presented in Chapter Five in light of the theoretical framework and relevant literature as presented in Chapters Two and Three, respectively. The research questions underpinning the study served as a basis for the discussion. The majority of registry officers rated the records management practices as either good or fair. However, the fact that records are not always available and missing records are experienced point to real problems. The findings of the study revealed that records management practices in the surveyed municipalities were poor. Findings further revealed a number of factors hampering records management practices in the selected municipalities. These included the lack of funding, lack of support from the top management, insufficient staff and a lack of qualified staff in the registry offices, the unavailability of formal qualifications in records management in South Africa, and the lack of awareness of the records management policies.

The final chapter follows and comprises the main findings of the study, conclusions reached and recommendations made.

CHAPTER SEVEN: MAIN FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the main findings for each of the research questions as presented and discussed in Chapters five and six respectively. The is followed by the unique contribution of the study to the body of knowledge on records management, conclusions and summary, suggestions for future research and, finally, the recommendations emerging from the findings and discussion. The purpose of the study as described in Chapter One, Section 1.3, was to establish the records management practices of selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province. The population of the study consisted of registry officers, records managers and municipal managers in the selected municipalities. The Records Life Cycle and the Records Continuum models were used to underpin the study. The order of the presentation of the main findings, as has been done in previous chapters, follows the order of the research questions.

7.1 Main findings

This section presents the main findings of the study based on the research questions formulated for the study. For the purposes of this presentation research questions four (factors affecting records management practices) and five (challenges municipal officials faced with in managing records) are combined as the findings with regard to each, overlapped.

7.1.1 The current records management practices in municipalities in the Limpopo Province

The importance of a records management policy in records management cannot be overstated. Having a records management policy for municipalities is one thing, but being aware of the policy is another. All municipal employees must be aware of the written records management policy. The findings of the questionnaire survey revealed that while all municipalities have records management policies, the majority (84.9%) of the registry officials who were surveyed were of the opinion that employees in the municipalities were not aware of the records management policy. It is evident, therefore, that while municipalities have records management policies,

their employees generally are not informed of the existence of these policies. Successful implementation of the policies is thus compromised.

One of the notable findings of the study was that the records management policies of the municipalities do comply with government legislation and regulations. However, while the records management policies comply with the government legislation and regulations and the municipal officials in Limpopo are managing records in accord with the policies, there are other indicators which suggest that records management practices are not as they should be. These include, for example, records not been available when needed, missing records (and the reasons for this), lack of formal qualifications in records management, lack of support for records management from top management, and the lack of training, storage facilities and staff. This gives credence to the finding of Katuu (2015b) that there is a “substantial legislative and regulatory dissonance in the management of records in the country”. It must be noted, however, that there are a number of indicators pointing to, if not good, then acceptable records management practices. These include, for example, the ratings given by the officers to the practices (fair to good) and the appreciation of the role of records management. However, it is evident that there is room for improvement. In a similar vein, Magee (2014) revealed that in the USA, most local governments, and even the federal government and businesses, were most definitely not in a best-case scenario with regard to records management.

The findings from the interviews with municipal managers revealed that some employees were ignoring the records management policy for their own benefit. The findings, as reported by two municipal managers, also revealed that most of the municipal employees were cadre deployed and therefore loyal to those who deployed them. There is a need for municipalities to place a high priority on appointing capable and competent people in positions. According to Thebe (2017), the deployment of cadres who do not have the necessary qualifications is conquering the noble intents of improved service delivery. This may well apply to records management staff in the Limpopo municipalities which were part of the study.

The findings from both the interviews and the survey questionnaire revealed that the types of records created in municipalities are mainly paper-based and that once records are created, they are mainly kept in the registry offices. However, a substantial minority, 40 (46.5%), of the registry officials stated that staff in the municipalities store records in their offices after creation. This is an indication that records management practices in municipalities are not as good as they could be. The storage of records in employees' offices could have implications for the management and preservation of records as records storage plays an important part in ensuring that records are safe after creation and easily retrieved and accessed when required. Furthermore, the findings of the study from the interviews with the municipal managers revealed that the majority of them kept records in their offices or the secretary's office. This was to ensure easy access and retrieval of records for themselves. However, this is not in accordance with records management practices. It is also risky because when municipal managers are dismissed, suspended or resign (which is very common in municipalities), they could leave with valuable records or even delete them. Thus, municipal managers in particular, should be leading by example by ensuring that all created records are stored in the registry office/s.

A further factor negatively influencing records management in municipalities in South Africa is that after every five years, municipal elections are held and new political office bearers are elected. The practice is that the new political office bearers prefer to appoint their administrative office-bearers and this, among other negative consequences, results in a lack of continuity vis a vis records management practices.

A record that has been created properly is likely to lead to good records management practices. However, only people that have been trained on how to create records can do so properly. The study revealed that the vast majority (96.5%) of registry officers said that they did receive training in records creation. It would thus appear that the records managers are performing their duties by ensuring that registry officers are trained in records creation. The study found that the municipalities in the Limpopo Province file their records alphabetically, and, on a positive note the records are filed daily which is in accordance with good records management practices. However, the

filing system used in municipalities in the Limpopo Province, according to the results, makes it difficult for some junior staff members to retrieve and find records. This was confirmed by 81 (94.2%) of the registry officers, who indicated that they have problems with retrieving records as they are not readily available when required. While this could be the result of not being familiar with the filing system, it is more likely due to poor records management practices including staff keeping records in their offices.

The finding that records are not readily available when required points to poor records management practices in the municipalities and also gives credibility to the AG's report which referred to the poor records management practices in municipalities in Limpopo. Missing records (revealed by both the interviews and survey questionnaire) is evidently a problem in the Limpopo municipalities. The findings of the study from both the interviews and survey questionnaire revealed that missing records are indeed a problem in the municipalities. While the shortages of staff could well account for this situation (50% of registry officers pointing to this) the implementation of poor records management practices (mentioned by 39.5% of registry officers) is a more persuasive reason for records going missing.

On a positive note, the study further revealed that records were correctly stored in a secured storage area. This meant that they could not be easily stolen or damaged as access to the storage areas was controlled in order to prevent unauthorised access. However, it is of serious concern that there are line managers who still store their records in their offices and that the registry offices themselves were small and congested. It was found that the overall responsibility for the management of records in the municipalities in the Limpopo Province lay with the office of the municipal managers. This indicates that while the municipal managers have more authority in the management of records in municipalities, their lack of qualifications in the area means that they are really not in a position to give leadership advice on records management.

Also on a positive note was the finding from both the interviews and survey questionnaire that the municipalities in the Limpopo Province have file plans. In addition, the municipalities were found to be using climate control equipment such as air conditioners to control temperatures in the records storage areas. However, of serious concern was the absence of fire detection and suppression systems and disaster management plans. A possible reason for this absence was inadequate financial resources. Ensuring that adequate financial resources are made available for records management programmes in all municipalities is one of the challenges that still needs to be addressed by the South African government.

The findings of the study revealed that 84 (97.7%) of the registry officials stated that their municipalities have experienced pest infestations in the record storage areas in the form of bookworms, booklice and termites. However, fumigation is being used to control pest infestation, which means that the problem is being attended to. While it was found that the municipalities have records disposal policies and guidelines, it was also discovered that these policies and guidelines were not necessarily informing the disposal programmes. Furthermore, they were also not being followed when transferring records from the registry offices to the archives. An explanation for this could be the lack of knowledge of records management practices and records management legislation on the part of the registry officers.

An inquiry was made into who gives permission for the disposal of inactive records. The finding pertaining to this revealed that municipal managers gave authorisation for the destruction of records, which is in line with the earlier finding that municipal managers have the overall responsibility for records management. However, the provincial or national archivists were not mentioned as giving authorisation for the destruction of records. This is despite the NARRSA stipulating that no records shall be disposed of without permission being granted by the provincial or national archivist. Furthermore, in terms of the Limpopo Province Archives Act, it is the provincial archivist who has the overall responsibility of ensuring proper records management in the province. Lack of adherence to records disposal requirements is of concern and does reflect lack of knowledge on correct records management practices on the part of not only the municipal managers but the records managers

as well. This, in turn, points to the lack of qualifications in the field of records and archives management (this is further addressed under Section 7.1.2 below) on the part of the municipal officials.

The study found that most of the digital records created by municipalities in the Limpopo Province are municipal speeches (99%), municipal accounts (95%), and memoranda (94%) and these were mostly in PDF and MS Word format. These digital records were stored mainly in offsite storage and on the municipal computer servers. While the study revealed that municipalities in the Limpopo Province have an electronic records management policy, 83 (97%) of the registry officers stated that they experienced challenges in managing electronic records. It is evident that unless these challenges are addressed, the correct management of electronic records in the municipalities will continue to be at risk.

7.1.2 Knowledge of staff in municipalities about records management practices

The overall finding of the study revealed that the level of skills and knowledge of employees in the municipalities in the Limpopo Province regarding records management is inadequate. This could be directly attributed to the vast majority of the municipal officials working with records not having formal qualifications in records management. Only two of the 86 registry officers said they had a qualification in records management and only one of the six records managers was qualified (in this instance having a diploma in records management and archival studies). Perhaps understandably, none of the municipal managers had a qualification in records management. This is indeed a sad state of affairs and it could be argued that the lack of formal qualifications on the part of the records management staff is a significant factor in accounting for the unsatisfactory and disappointing state of current records management practices in the municipalities.

The problem of unqualified staff working in registry offices has been compounded by the lack of formal training in records management offered by tertiary institutions in South Africa. Until recently, UNISA was the only tertiary institution offering formal undergraduate qualifications in records management. Most of the qualifications in records management are at the postgraduate level, namely, postgraduate diplomas offered at UKZN, the University of Fort Hare and the University of Zululand. It does

perhaps go without saying that access to such training is problematic in that an undergraduate degree is required as well as adequate financial resources. Both are in short supply in the municipalities taking part in the study. The situation also, to some extent, reflects the municipalities' lack of prioritisation when it comes to the allocation of budgets and human resources *vis a vis* records management.

While most of the registry officers do not have formal qualifications in records management, the findings did reveal that the municipalities conduct their own in-house training in records management. However, the in-service training offered to employees was not done on a regular basis. This suggests once again that the training of employees in records management was not a priority in municipalities. Furthermore, it was found that when training was offered to the registry officers it was not taken seriously as no certificate was awarded and there was no possibility of promotion based on having done the training.

7.1.3 Activities and strategies used to support records management practices

It was found that various activities and strategies had been put in place by the municipalities and these included raising awareness on the importance of records as a strategic resource in the organisation, lobbying for support from top management and integrating the records management programme in the municipal strategic plan. The results also revealed that there was a perception among the study participants that top management in the municipalities do not support records management programmes. The level of support from top management would determine how resources and time are allocated for executing the records management programmes. The findings of the study further revealed that there is no service-level agreement between line managers and registry offices in terms of their roles and responsibilities with regard to records management. The lack of top management support and the absence of service-level agreements are further negative indicators of good records management practices.

In terms of records auditing and the regulatory role, the study revealed that there was no one, at the time, conducting records audits in the registry offices of the selected municipalities. The AGSA (2015) has lamented weaknesses in internal control, lack of decisive leadership and accountability in the municipalities as the root

causes for adverse audit findings. Responsibility for auditing and the regulatory role lies with the NARSSA and the provincial archivist and it does appear that both have failed in giving effect to this responsibility. Tsatsire, Taylor and Raga (2010:273) opined that “municipalities cannot fulfil their mandate without a partnership with provincial and national government”. This lack of partnership helps explain the low level of compliance with government legislation and regulations on records management.

With regard to finance, findings revealed that the budgets allocated to the records management functions in all the municipalities were insufficient. Findings further indicated that the records management section is the lowest priority of the municipality as it does not provide a direct service to members of the public. Thus, when there are vacancies available, the municipality prioritises the sections that deal with service delivery. It does need to be pointed out that budgets had been cut in all sections of the municipalities and the registry section was not an exception. However, it is probable that the budget allocated to the records management function was inadequate prior to budget cuts being made. A further finding of the study revealed that the human resources allocated to the municipalities were not adequate to deal with their records management programmes. This implies that there is a shortage of staff in the records management and registry sections and, in fact, staff shortages were identified by the study participants as a contributing factor to the poor records management practices in the municipalities.

As noted above, it was revealed that various strategies had been put in place by municipalities to support and improve records management practices. One such strategy was raising records management awareness by having a records management day to highlight the importance of records management. This had been put in place by the SALGA and the AGSA to improve records management practices in municipalities. It does appear that municipal managers are familiar with the benefits of records management and the role that records management can play in improving audit reports. However, the findings from the interviews revealed that the strategic plans of the municipalities do not include records management programmes. This implies that records management programmes are not seen as

strategic. Thus, while the findings of the study have demonstrated that the municipalities acknowledged records management as an important tool to promote accountability and transparency, they failed to include records management in their strategic plans. This once more suggests that records management is not seen as an important municipal function.

7.1.4 Factors that affect the current records management practices

The researcher sought to establish in which department within the selected municipalities records management falls. It was found that the registry sections in four of the municipalities fell under the Corporate Services Department, whereas the fifth fell under the Information and Communication Technology section. It would appear that municipal managers are aware of the importance of adopting records management systems in their municipalities. Indeed, municipal employees, in general, seem to appreciate the importance of records management in their municipalities. This became clear when participants in the study were asked to give their views on the significance of records management in their municipalities.

The main contributing factors to the poor current records management practices in the municipalities as identified by the three groups of participants were the lack of funding, unqualified staff in the registry offices, shortages of staff in registry offices and unsuitable storage facilities. It was established that some of the problems in the municipalities were damaged records, misfiling and missing records. This suggests that one of the main contributing factors to the current records management practices in the selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province are as a result of incompetent and unskilled staff working in the registry offices.

It was evident in the interviews with records managers that the staff in their municipalities appreciated the role of records in their areas of operation. This is positive for good records management practices. Furthermore, the study revealed that all the municipal managers indicated that in order for the municipalities to realise their mission, vision and core values, they must consider records management as a priority.

The fourth research question sought to investigate the challenges faced by municipal officials in managing records. There was a consensus among all the participants in the study that there were records management challenges in the selected municipalities. Challenges mentioned (and these overlapped to some extent with the contributing factors mentioned above) included the lack of training in records management, the lack of adequate storage facilities, records management not seen as a priority, political interference and the lack of political support.

It is clear from the findings of the study that there is a serious challenge with regard to training and qualifications in records management in the selected municipalities. This was also noted by Nevhutalu (2014) who identified that the inadequate training of registry officers in the Vhembe District Municipality was hindering the improvement of records management practices. The findings of the study also indicated that it was difficult to get qualified staff in the mainly rural communities in which the municipalities operated. Although there was no question asked on this, some responses from both the questionnaire survey and the interviews confirmed that the problem of only a few South African tertiary institutions offering qualifications in records management constituted a big challenge for the municipalities.

Both the questionnaire survey and interviews also identified the lack of adequate storage space for records in the registry offices as another challenge. In most cases, when the researcher visited the selected municipalities to distribute and collect questionnaires and conduct interviews, he found the registry offices to be small and congested. Further challenges mentioned were records management not being seen as a priority, as well as political interference and lack of political support. These challenges were combined as they are related. Politicians were seen to be interfering in the appointment of people in the registry offices even though they were not qualified to do so. Furthermore, the people appointed in this manner were seen to be protecting the interests of the same politicians. It would seem from the study that politicians have the power to make decisions in the running of municipalities. As noted above, it was found that in some cases there were many cadre deployments in the registry offices resulting in the registry officers not having appropriate qualifications and relevant skills.

The study also revealed inadequate budgets for records management as one of the challenges faced by municipalities in the Limpopo Province. While the challenge of inadequate budgets for records management programmes in municipalities cannot be overemphasised, there is also maladministration and mismanagement of funds that could have played a role in alleviating this challenge. For example, three of the six municipalities (Vhembe District Municipality, Fetakgomo/Tubatse and Ephraim Mogale Local Municipalities) that were sampled in the study were found to have deposited money intended for service delivery into the beleaguered VBS Mutual Bank. This was done despite an instruction by the National Treasury against this practice. This led to the AG's terminating auditing contracts with the external audit firms involved in the auditing of VBS. It is obvious that records can also provide fake accountability such as in the collapse of VBS.

The findings revealed that records management is not seen as a priority as evidenced by the inadequate budget allocations to records management programmes in municipalities in the Limpopo Province. It must be noted that other departments in the municipalities also experienced budget cuts and were a result of national government curtailing expenses in both government departments and local government. This finding is similar from the study in United States by Magee (2014) that revealed that the main limitation to properly implementing records management practices comes down to the root of most problems which is money.

As pointed to above, one of the contributing factors to the current records management practices was the shortage of staff. The allocation of human resources was thus a serious constraint for proper records management practices. It was clear that there was an insufficient number of people working in registry offices in the municipalities.

What emerged from the findings of the study was that municipalities in rural areas were grappling with the challenge of raising their own revenue for sustainable service delivery. In some cases, municipal officials had not put in place good credit control mechanisms to collect revenue from the community. This could also be a reason why municipalities in the Limpopo Province do not have adequate budgets for service delivery and records management programmes. What arose from the study was that

politicians feared the loss of political support from the community if credit collection control mechanisms were introduced. While politicians do not work for the municipalities, they make policies that municipal officials have to implement and the responsibility of the politicians is to oversee the implementation of the policies. This situation exacerbates the shortage of financial resources for funding records management programmes.

Lastly, the findings of the study indicated that little or no effort was being made to tackle the challenges that municipal officials were encountering in the management of records. This is clearly a concern given that five of the six records managers said this.

7.1.5 Challenges faced by municipal officials in managing records

The challenges of record management in both government and the private sector have attracted enormous attention in the literature. Municipalities are not exempt from this attention. The records management practices in most South African municipalities have been experiencing a number of challenges. It is clear from the findings of this study that the selected municipalities are facing numerous challenges vis a vis records management. In particular, the issues of training and the lack of appropriately qualified staff are, arguably at the forefront. However, it is apparent that the selected municipalities are not unique in facing records management-related challenges – records management practices in Africa are beset by challenges (as outlined in the literature review). The interviews with records managers also established the lack of adequate budgets as the main challenge faced by municipalities in managing records as well as the difficulty of acquiring qualified registry officers.

7.2 Contribution of the study to the body of knowledge

Tinkler and Jackson (2004:7) asserted that a study at the doctoral level should make a unique contribution to the body of knowledge, and the questions posed and answered by the study should move the field of study forward in terms of knowledge. This study set out to establish the records management practices of selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province. Better understanding of records management practices in these municipalities would enable other municipalities to

improve on their records management practices and ultimately achieve a clean audit (which is what any municipality would want). The findings of the study provide a strong basis for understanding the strategies that could be used by municipalities to improve on their records management practices. Although several empirical studies (Makhura, 2001; Kanzi, 2010; Nevhutalu, 2016,) have been conducted on records management practices in the municipalities of the Limpopo Province, this study differed in that it identified the factors that contribute to the current records management practices. A second difference is that the current study focused on those municipalities that received disclaimers and adverse audit reports in the 2015/2016 AGSA Municipal Audit Report. This makes the study original and unique in the field. Besides, this study exposed the actual state of records management in the municipalities of the Limpopo Province, the factors contributing to those practices and provided recommendations on how municipalities can address the challenges and improve their records management practices.

Thus, the study serves as an addition to the existing body of knowledge on records management in municipalities. The findings of the study also provide a strong basis for understanding the strategies that could be put in place to improve and support the records management practices in municipalities. Furthermore, the findings of the study will, arguably, also assist many other similar municipalities in South Africa which regularly receive disclaimers and adverse audit outcomes. The study thus fills a specific gap and, in doing so, adds to the growing literature of records management practices in Africa. Theoretically this study will serve as a platform on which municipalities in South Africa can base their planning towards understanding and combating records management issues. The findings of this study will also be of use to records managers, archival scholars, researchers and students undertaking studies in records management practices within and outside South Africa. The study will provide new insights into the challenges faced by municipal officials in managing records. In addition, the results of the study will contribute to policy-making by providing evidence to policy makers on the challenges and remedial interventions that are needed in developing effective and efficient records management policies.

Such policies will improve and strengthen records management practices in municipalities.

It is important to reflect on the evidence presented by the AGSA (2015) Annual Report on municipalities' management of records, because South African municipalities are reported to be struggling with this aspect. In their endeavours to improve their records management practices, it is proposed that the management of the selected municipalities consider the findings and recommendations of the study. This study comes at an opportune time when the AGSA is encouraging municipalities to improve on their records management practices so as to improve on their audit outcome reports. If the findings and recommendations of this study were to be followed and implemented by municipalities in South Africa, the study would make a significant contribution to improving records management practices. Also, if the municipalities implement the recommendations of the study, they will succeed in improving on their own records management practices. It is evident that despite recommendations and advice from other researchers, municipalities have failed to adequately address their records management practices. It is common knowledge (confirmed by findings of this study) that municipalities in South Africa, and particularly in the Limpopo Province, are struggling with a shortage of skilled staff, thus putting municipal programmes at risk and threatening service delivery. The study will contribute to the reduction of the workload of records managers by providing the answers and strategies necessary to resolve the problems bedeviling current records management practices in municipalities.

Through the findings of this study, it is hoped that stakeholders, politicians and municipal officials will be informed of, and guided by, the development and implementation of records management policies. This study is anticipated to bring about wide debate(s) and conversation(s) among policy makers in South Africa in the area of records management practices. The findings of the study revealed that without top management support, it is difficult to improve records management practices. If the findings are acted upon, records management practices in municipalities will be improved and, as a consequence, the audit outcomes of

municipalities will also be improved. Furthermore, the recommendations of the study could be used to lobby for more funding for records management programmes. It is common knowledge that only a few universities, universities of technology and TVET colleges offer training in records management. Thus, there is a need for other South African universities to consider offering programmes that specialise in records management. This will help in training and producing more specialists in the field of records management who would, in turn, assist organisations such as municipalities combat the challenges that emanate from poor records management.

7.3 Conclusions and summary of findings

This section presents the conclusions and a final summary of the study which investigated the records management practices in selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province, South Africa. An authoritative argument can now be constructed based on the findings of the study, that is, records management practices in municipalities in the Limpopo Province are poor and not seen as a priority like other municipal programmes. From the foregoing it can be deduced that municipal employees in the selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province do not manage records in accordance with their records management policies. As mentioned in Chapter One, Section 1.0, the AG reported that inadequate records management was one of the factors that resulted in poor audit outcomes of the municipalities. It can, therefore, be concluded that municipalities in the Limpopo Province would find it difficult to improve their audit outcomes from the AG for as long as they do not manage their records as guided by their records management policies. Worryingly, this is supported by the results of the report from the National Treasury's Municipal Finance Data that revealed that most of the municipalities in South Africa are in financial distress, lacking proper budget planning and not exercising adequate fiscal discipline, with expenses exceeding income.

The picture portrayed in the above “boils down” to what has been the concern of the AGs report, namely, that there is a lack of will on the part of the political office bearers to improve the records management practices and by so doing improve their audit report outcomes. It is evident from the findings of the study that one of the contributing factors to the current inadequate records management practices is the

lack of support from top management. However, the findings of the study also revealed that records managers do not have the capacity to train, mentor and guide the growing number of unqualified officers working in registry offices in municipalities in the Limpopo Province. The lack of tertiary institutions offering undergraduate qualifications in records management only exacerbates the situation.

Although the findings of the study revealed that the overall record management practices in the public sector have improved as compared to the findings of previous studies (Legodi, 2011; Marutha, 2011; Ngoepe, 2012, Marutha and Ngulube, 2012; Nevhutalu, 2016), the situation is still unsatisfactory and there is still a need for improvement. In view of the above, it is clear that municipalities in the Limpopo Province lack record-keeping capacity. This can be seen in the inadequate storage facilities, level of education and training of records management staff, the lack of support from top management, missing records, the inability to retrieve records when required and inadequate budgets. While municipalities in South Africa have made progress in improving records management practices, there are clearly a number of challenges that still inhibit this progress.

The purpose of the study was to establish records management practices in municipalities in the Limpopo Province, South Africa. It is interesting to note that records management practices in municipalities in the Limpopo Province are not seen as a priority as other municipal programmes are. This has arguably undermined the provision of basic services in the municipalities. Finally, the study recommends that there is a need for the existing records management practices to be improved. It is concluded that the findings of this study answered the research questions posed in Chapter one. Comparatively, the findings of this study support, to a large extent, what has been recorded in the literature.

The main objective of the study, namely, to establish the records management practices in selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province was achieved. The underlying principle of the study was that municipalities in South Africa are obliged by legislation to manage records systematically. Like many related previous studies in the records management and archival field in the public sector, the study revealed that records are not properly managed in the municipalities in the Limpopo Province.

This finding supports the AGSA's report on municipalities that pointed to poor records management practices causing audit outcomes to regress. The study further established that paper-based records are the main formats of records created in municipalities in the Limpopo Province. Evidently, most of the municipal officials working with records in the province do not have formal qualifications in records management. The need to train municipal officials working in the registry offices was also identified by the study. The study highlighted the need for government and municipalities to improve on the current records management practices to promote accountability and transparency. This cannot be achieved without political will on the part of the leaders in the municipalities.

7.4 Suggestions for future research

Several gaps have been identified in this study which need further probing. The researcher focused on records management practices in selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province, concentrating only on those municipalities that received adverse and disclaimer audit opinions from the AGSA Municipal Report of 2015/2016 and, by so doing, excluded those municipalities that got clean audits and qualified audits. The basis of the decision to delimit the research to these municipalities was that the AGSA report regards poor records management as one of the contributing factors to the municipalities' poor auditing results. Given this, future research could focus on those municipalities that obtained clean audit opinions. The researcher, therefore, suggests that a comprehensive study be conducted on the link between good records management practices and clean audit outcomes.

There is no known study to have investigated records management practices in the public sector in the Limpopo Province. While Ngoepe (2012) did a study on developing a framework to embed records management practices into the auditing process in the South African public sector, it was found that the study focused on government departments and not municipalities. This study focused on the records management practices in municipalities and there is thus a need for further studies on records management practices in the public sector generally and municipalities

more specifically. It is recommended that this research be extended to other provinces as well.

This study (supported by other studies such as Nevhutalu, (2016) and Dikotla, (2016) found that there is political interference from politicians and cadre deployment in municipalities. It is, therefore, recommended that further research be conducted on the negative impact of cadre deployment and political interference in records management practices.

The literature reviewed indicated that managing records is not only a major challenge but also increasingly a strategic issue in municipalities. A key factor in dealing with this challenge is the provision of education and training in records management. Katuu and Ngoepe (2015:192) shared the same view and point out that an education and training programme is the key to addressing records management challenges. Premised on the above, a thorough study should be conducted on the importance of education and training in records management and archival studies. A related study could be conducted on the current state of skills and knowledge of people working in records management in municipalities.

7.5 Recommendations

In their endeavours to improve their records management practices, it is proposed that management of the selected municipalities consider the findings and recommendations of this study. Records management challenges identified in the study pose a threat to the current records management practices in the selected municipalities in the Limpopo Province if no immediate action is taken by the municipal management. The researcher hopes that the recommendations provided below will assist municipalities in the Limpopo Province to effectively and efficiently manage their records. These recommendations are guided by the findings and discussion of each of the research questions. Thus, based on the research findings, their interpretation and discussion and the conclusions arrived at, the following recommendations are adduced:

7.5.1 Records storage facilities

The finding of the study revealed that the records storage facilities in the municipalities were inadequate and need to be improved. Records should be kept where they are easily reachable and protected against damage. The study, therefore, recommends that records storage facilities be improved to ensure that records are kept safe and are sufficiently accessible. While the findings revealed that in some municipalities there were efforts to try and improve the storage space for records, this still remains a serious challenge if municipalities truly want to improve their records management practices.

7.5.2 Fire detection and suppression system

It was found that the municipalities do not have fire detection and suppression systems and disaster management plans to keep the records safe in case of natural (and other) disasters. The very nature of records storage presents a unique challenge for fire detection and fire system safety. It is therefore recommended that municipalities take the necessary actions to implement fire detection and suppression systems in the records storage areas to ensure the safety of the records. Careful and immediate thought also needs to be given by municipal management to the development of disaster management plans.

7.5.3 Qualifications in records management

One of the crucial findings of the study was the lack of formal qualifications in records management for registry officers and records managers. In this regard, the study recommends that investigation be made on the possibility of more universities in South Africa introducing formal qualifications in records management. It is also recommended that more TVET colleges offer formal qualifications in records management to deal with the issue of the lack of qualified staff in records management in the lower positions. In order to give effect to the above, it is recommended that the National Archives coordinates meetings with the universities and TVET colleges to address the issue of training in records management, particularly for registry officers.

It is also recommended that archives and records management professional bodies such as the South African Society of Archivists (SASA) and ESARBICA be invited to

assist with the design of short learning programmes in records management and archival practice in South Africa. These recommendations are also made in the light of Marutha and Ngoepe's (2018) observation that records management officials "who are not trained in records management become demoralised and uninterested in the work and merely do it for the sake of receiving a salary". It is also recommended that trained personnel in records management be employed to deal with records. Alternatively, the officers who are already employed in the registry offices be assisted in obtaining the necessary qualification through, for example, being given time off to attend training. As observed by Svärd (2014), records need to be managed by skilled personnel who understand the entire life cycle of records – from creation, capture, organisation and management to either disposal or preservation.

7.5.4 In-house training in records management

It is recommended that records managers in municipalities introduce regular in-house training in records management for all employees in registry offices as well as from other sections. This will assist in addressing the high number of staff in registry offices with no formal qualifications in records management. As stipulated in municipal records management policies, records managers are responsible for providing in-house training in records management. It is also recommended that registry officers should regularly attend workshops, seminars and conferences hosted by the various professional bodies (such as the one organised by the SASA and ESARBICA), in order to ensure their continuous professional development.

7.5.5 Top management and political office bearers' support and buy-in

As observed by Zwikael (2008), top management support is seen to be an area that has a significant impact on project success. It is therefore crucial for top management and political office bearers in municipalities to support records management programmes. It is thus recommended that top management and political office bearers of all municipalities support good records management practices in the municipalities and ensure that adequate resources are allocated for the records management programmes. The records managers and registry officers have to devise strategies to shift the mind-set of senior managers and politicians about the value of records management. A mechanism to achieve this could be the

establishment, through SALGA, of a “Records Management Improvement Forum” as has been done with auditing. Moreover, it is crucial that records managers and registry officers work together with top management and other stakeholders such as the Office of the Premier, the SALGA and CoGSTA. One of the findings of the study is that records management programmes, unlike other programmes in the municipalities, are not given the attention they deserve. It is therefore recommended that records management programmes be given the same priority as other programmes. Records management needs to have a defined position within the organograms of the municipalities, where it can perform effectively and find support.

7.5.6 Auditing of records management programmes

The study revealed that the records management practices of the municipalities were not being audited. It is, therefore, recommended that both the provincial and national archives play their legislated role in auditing records management practices in the municipalities. Auditing of the records management practices will ensure that the municipalities comply with the legal and regulatory requirements of records management (as contained, for example, in the Limpopo Province Archives Act). For as long as no one is auditing records management and there is no accountability for poor records management practices, municipalities will continue to ignore good records management practices. As alluded to above, it is also recommended that the SALGA introduce records management support programmes as they did with the Municipal Audit Support Programme (MASP) that assists municipalities in improving their audit outcomes.

7.5.7 Records management policy awareness

According to the findings of the study municipal employees are not aware of their municipality’s records management policy. It is therefore recommended that all municipal employees must be made aware of the records management policy. This recommendation is in line with the recommendation made by Msibi (2015) that the Swaziland government ministries should create awareness in all staff responsible for the management of records, of the availability of records procedures and policies that regulate the management of records.

7.5.8 Review of records management policy

Finally, a finding of the study revealed that a majority of registry officers were unsure as to whether their records management policy was regularly reviewed or not. It is, therefore, recommended that the records management policies of the municipalities be reviewed on a regular basis as prescribed by legislation and that employees be informed of the review process.

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July 2016.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Request for permission to undertake research

P O Box 55178

Polokwane

0700

Attention: Municipal Manager

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR MUNICIPALITY.

The purpose of this letter is to request your permission for me to conduct research on records management practices in your municipality. I am a registered PhD student in Information Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal doing research on “Records management practices in selected municipalities in Limpopo Province, South Africa” As part of the requirements for the award of a PhD (Information Studies), I am required to undertake a research. I am required to collect data from the municipalities in the Limpopo Province through interviews and questionnaires. The purpose of this research project is to collect data on records management practices in municipalities in the Limpopo Province. All the information provided will be kept confidential and will be used for the purpose of this study only.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. My contact details are as follows: Lefose Makgahlela: 083 993 1412 OR 071 408 2227

Your permission to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Lefose Makgahlela

Appendix 2: Letter of Introduction: Thabazimbi Municipality



Mr Gopolang Cornelious Booysen
Municipal Manager
Private Bag X530
THABAZIMBI, 0380
26 August 2016

Dear Mr Gopolang Booysen

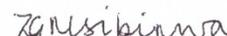
RE: Introducing Mr Lefose Makgahlela – PhD Student at University of KwaZulu-Natal

This letter serves to introduce and confirm that Mr Lefose Makgahlela is a duly registered PhD (Information Studies) candidate at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The title of his PhD research is **'Records management practices in municipalities in South Africa: a case of Limpopo Province'**.

The study aims to enlighten management and staff in municipalities on the importance of good and proper records management to help accountability, transparency and improve service delivery. As part of the requirements for the award of a PhD degree he is expected to undertake original research in an environment and place of his choice. The UKZN ethical compliance regulations require him to provide proof that the relevant authority where the research is to be undertaken has given approval. All the information provided will be kept confidential and will be used for the purpose of this study only.

We appreciate your support and understanding to grant Mr Lefose Makgahlela permission to carry out research in your organisation(s). Should you need any further clarification, do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you in advance for your understanding


Dr Zawedde Nsibirwa
Supervisor and Lecturer
Information Studies Programme
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Private Bag X01 Scottsville 3209
Pietermaritzburg

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

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Telephone: +27 (0) 33 260 5685 Facsimile: +27 (0) 33 260 5092
Email: nsibirwaz@ukzn.ac.za



Appendix 3: Letter of Introduction: Vhembe District Municipality

Mr Makondelele Helton Mathivha
Municipal Manager
Private Bag X5066
THOHOYANDOU, 0950
26 August 2016



Dear Mr Makondelele Mathivha

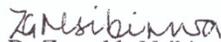
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Appendix 4: Letter of Introduction: Tubatse/Fetakgomo Municipality



Ms Angie Ramaipadi (Acting)
Municipal Manager
PO Box 206,
BURGERSFORT, 115026 August 2016

Dear Ms Angie Ramaipadi

RE: Introducing Mr Lefose Makgahlela – PhD Student at University of KwaZulu-Natal

This letter serves to introduce and confirm that Mr Lefose Makgahlela is a duly registered PhD (Information Studies) candidate at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The title of his PhD research is '**Records management practices in municipalities in South Africa: a case of Limpopo Province**'.

The study aims to enlighten management and staff in municipalities on the importance of good and proper records management to help accountability, transparency and improve service delivery. As part of the requirements for the award of a PhD degree he is expected to undertake original research in an environment and place of his choice. The UKZN ethical compliance regulations require him to provide proof that the relevant authority where the research is to be undertaken has given approval. All the information provided will be kept confidential and will be used for the purpose of this study only.

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Email: nsibirwaz@ukzn.ac.za



Appendix 5: Letter of Introduction: Ephraim Mogale Municipality

Ms Monica Mathebela
Municipal Manager
PO Box 111
MARBLE HALL, 0450
26 August 2016



Dear Ms Monica Mathebela

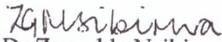
RE: Introducing Mr Lefose Makgahlela – PhD Student at University of KwaZulu-Natal

This letter serves to introduce and confirm that Mr Lefose Makgahlela is a duly registered PhD (Information Studies) candidate at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The title of his PhD research is **'Records management practices in municipalities in South Africa: a case of Limpopo Province'**.

The study aims to enlighten management and staff in municipalities on the importance of good and proper records management to help accountability, transparency and improve service delivery. As part of the requirements for the award of a PhD degree he is expected to undertake original research in an environment and place of his choice. The UKZN ethical compliance regulations require him to provide proof that the relevant authority where the research is to be undertaken has given approval. All the information provided will be kept confidential and will be used for the purpose of this study only.

We appreciate your support and understanding to grant Mr Lefose Makgahlela permission to carry out research in your organisation(s). Should you need any further clarification, do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you in advance for your understanding


Dr Zawedde Nsibirwa
Supervisor and Lecturer
Information Studies Programme
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Private Bag X01 Scottsville 3209
Pietermaritzburg

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

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Appendix 6: Letter of Introduction: Mopani District Municipality



Mr Risimati Hitler Maluleke
Municipal Manager
Private Bag X9559
GIYANI, 0826

26 August 2016

Dear Mr Risimati Maluleke

RE: Introducing Mr Lefose Makgahlela – PhD Student at University of KwaZulu-Natal

This letter serves to introduce and confirm that Mr Lefose Makgahlela is a duly registered PhD (Information Studies) candidate at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The title of his PhD research is **'Records management practices in municipalities in South Africa: a case of Limpopo Province'**.

The study aims to enlighten management and staff in municipalities on the importance of good and proper records management to help accountability, transparency and improve service delivery. As part of the requirements for the award of a PhD degree he is expected to undertake original research in an environment and place of his choice. The UKZN ethical compliance regulations require him to provide proof that the relevant authority where the research is to be undertaken has given approval. All the information provided will be kept confidential and will be used for the purpose of this study only.

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Thank you in advance for your understanding

Zgnesibinwa
Dr Zawedde Nsibirwa
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Appendix 7: Letter of Introduction: Mogalakwena Municipality



Mr Puledi Selepe (Acting)
Municipal Manager
PO Box 34
MOKOPANE, 0600

26 August 2016

Dear Mr Puledi Selepe

RE: Introducing Mr Lefose Makgahlela – PhD Student at University of KwaZulu-Natal

This letter serves to introduce and confirm that Mr Lefose Makgahlela is a duly registered PhD (Information Studies) candidate at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The title of his PhD research is '**Records management practices in municipalities in South Africa: a case of Limpopo Province**'.

The study aims to enlighten management and staff in municipalities on the importance of good and proper records management to help accountability, transparency and improve service delivery. As part of the requirements for the award of a PhD degree he is expected to undertake original research in an environment and place of his choice. The UKZN ethical compliance regulations require him to provide proof that the relevant authority where the research is to be undertaken has given approval. All the information provided will be kept confidential and will be used for the purpose of this study only.

We appreciate your support and understanding to grant Mr Lefose Makgahlela permission to carry out research in your organisation(s). Should you need any further clarification, do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you in advance for your understanding

Z. Nsibirwa
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Appendix 8: Approval to conduct research from SALGA

Enq. : Seroba Malepe
Cell : 071 219 1927
E-mail : smalepe@salga.org.za
Date : 24 November 2016



Mr Lefose Makgahlela
University of Kwazulu - Natal
Private Bag X01
Scotville
3209

Dear Mr Makgahlela

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON RECORD MANAGEMENT IN MUNICIPALITIES

In response to your letter dated 25 October 2016, permission is hereby granted to conduct research on records management in the following municipalities:

1. Mopani District Municipality;
2. Vhembe District Municipality;
3. Tubatse/Fetakgomo Local Municipality;
4. Mogalakwena Local Municipality;
5. Ephraim Mogale Local Municipality and
6. Thabazimbi Local Municipality.

As indicated in your letter, we hope the research will provide us with recommendations for addressing the records management challenges faced by our municipalities.

I hope you find the above in order.

Yours Faithfully,

MR THAPELO MATLALA
PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE OFFICER

TEL: (015)-291-1400 | FAX: (015)-291-1414
PHYSICAL: 127 Marshall Street, Polokwane, 0699
POSTAL: Private Bag X9523, POLOKWANE, 0700
www.salga.org.za

Appendix 9: Ethical Clearance letter



5 December 2017

Mr Lefose Alfred Makgahlela 216075843
School of Social Sciences
Howard College Campus

Dear Mr Makgahlela

Protocol reference number: HSS/2143/017M

Project Title: Records management practices in selected municipalities in Limpopo Province, South Africa

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 8 November 2017, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

Cc Supervisors: Dr Zawedde Nsibirwa
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor Maheshvari Naidu
Cc School Administrator: Mr N Memela

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000

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Website: www.ukzn.ac.za



Founding Campuses  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

Appendix 10: Questionnaire for registry clerks

Questionnaire for collecting data about records management practices in selected municipalities in Limpopo Province

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF REGISTRY CLERKS.

1.1 Please indicate your gender

1	Male	
2	Female	

1.2 Please indicate your age category

1	25 years and below	
2	26-30 years	
3	31-35 years	
4	36-40 years	
5	41 years and above	
6 Other (specify).....		

1.3 What is your current job title?

1	Record Officer	
2	Registry Clerk	
3	Senior Registry Clerk	
4	Admin Officer	
5 Other (specify).....		

1.4 How many years have you been working for municipality?

1	Less than year	
---	----------------	--

2	1 – 3 years	
3	4 –6 years	
4	7 –9 years	
5	10-12 years	
6	12 years and above	

2. RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

2.1 What types of records does your municipality create more? Choose ONE of the options.

1	Paper-based	
2	Audio-visual	
3	Electronic	
4	All the above	
5 Other (<i>Specify</i>).....		

2.2 Where are records kept after creation?

1	Offices	
2	Registry	
3	Other, please specify.....	

2.3 Did you received training on records creation?

1	Yes	
2	No	

2.4 If yes to 2.3, which method was used when providing staff education concerning the creation, distribution and use, storage and maintenance, and retention and disposition?

1	Orientation and induction process	
2	Service advertisements on internal media	
3	Policy manuals	
4	Awareness campaigns	
5	All the above	
6	Other (specify).....	

2.5 Does your municipality have a written records management policy?

1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Unsure	

2.6 If yes to 2,4, are all employees aware of the records management policy?

1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Unsure	

2.7 Is the policy reviewed at regular intervals?

1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Unsure	

2.8 Do staff members manage records according to this policy?

1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Unsure	

2.9 How are the records filed and/or arranged?

Alphabetical	
Numeric	
Alphanumeric	
Other (<i>Specify</i>).....	

2.10 How often do you file the office records? Choose ONE of the options.

1	Daily	
2	Weekly	
3	Monthly	
4	Other (<i>Specify</i>)	

2.11 Which of the following is used for storing paper records in municipality?

Choose ONE of the options.

1	Filing cabinets	
2	Shelves	
3	Boxes	
4	Carousel storage	
5	Other (<i>Specify</i>).....	

2,12 Who has access to the records storage areas? Choose ONE of the options.

1	Registry Officials	
2	All municipality staff members	
3	Authorised personnel	
4	Other (<i>Specify</i>).....	

2.13 How is the access to records storage areas controlled?

1	Doors are always locked	
2	Selected staff granted access	
3	Access only granted to registry staff	
4	Other (<i>specify</i>)	

2.14 Which method of delivery is used to distribute records to users?

1	Hand-to-hand	
2	E-mail, fax or mail	
3	All the above	
4	Other (<i>specify</i>).....	

2.15 Which of the following indicates the methods used to request files?

1	Telephone call	
2	Personal visit by action officers	
3	All of the above	
4	Other (<i>specify</i>).....	

2.16 Are records readily available when required?

1	Yes	
2	No	

2.17 Do you experience missing records?

1	Yes	
2	No	

2.18 What would you attribute the problem of missing records to?

1	Poor records management	
---	-------------------------	--

2	Shortage of staff	
3	Inaccurate filing	
4	Lack of storage space	
5	Lack of training	
6	Other (<i>Specify</i>).....	

2.19 Do you have artificial climatic control equipment installed in the storage areas?

1	Yes	
2	No	

2.20 If yes to 2.19, which of the following do you use to control temperature and relative humidity in record storage area? Choose ONE of the options.

1	Fans to ensure good air circulation	
2	Use of dehydrating agent	
3	Use of dehumidifiers	
4	Air conditioning	
5	All of the above	
6	Other (<i>Specify</i>).....	

2.21 Is there a fire detection and suppression system?

1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Unsure	

2.22 Is there a disaster management plan in place?

1	Yes	
2	No	

3	Unsure	
---	--------	--

2.23 Have you experienced pest infestations in the record storage area?

1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Unsure	

2.24 If yes, to 2.23, which of the following pests have you experienced in the record storage area?

1	Silverfish	
2	Termites	
3	Booklice	
4	Bookworms	
5	Rats	
6	Cockroaches	
8	Other (<i>Specify</i>)	

2.25 How do you control pest infestations in the record storage area? Please select all the applicable options

1	Use of insect repellent chemicals	
2	Use of fumigation	
3	Removing debris regularly	
4	Thorough vacuuming of the record storage area	
5	Use of traps	
6	All the above	
7	Other (<i>Specify</i>).....	

2.26 Does the municipality have records disposal policy?

1	Yes	
2	No	

2.27 Is the disposal programme informed by a retention and disposal policy?

1	Yes	
2	No	

2.28 Are developed policies and procedures followed in safely transferring records from active to inactive?

1	Yes	
2	No	

2.29 In your opinion, is the retention and disposal schedule a useful tool in the management of records

1	Yes	
2	No	

2.30 What guides you in determining, which record to destroy?

1	National Archive act	
2	Records management policy	
3	Municipal records management act	
4	Other (<i>Specify</i>)	

2.31 Who gives authorisation for the destruction of inactive records?

1	Records Manager	
2	Municipal Manager	
3	Provincial Archivist	

4	Other (<i>Specify</i>).....	
---	-------------------------------	--

2.32 Where do you keep records which have permanent retention value? Choose ONE of the options.

1	Registry	
2	Municipal archive	
3	Provincial archive	
4	Private archive	
5	Other (<i>Specify</i>).....	

2.33 What kind of records is being created in your municipality? Please select all the applicable options

1	Municipal Accounts	
2	Invoices	
3	Emails	
4	Memorandum	
5	Press statement	
6	Policy documents	
7	Municipal official's speech	
8	All of the above	
9	Other (<i>Specify</i>)	

2.34 Which of the following formats do you use to create electronic records? Please select all the applicable options

1	Microsoft word	
2	PDF	
3	Database format	
4	Spreadsheet format	

5	Audio-visual	
6	Audio	
7	All of the above	
8	Other (<i>Specify</i>).....	

2.35 Does the municipality have a policy on managing electronic records?

1	Yes	
2	No	

2.36 Do you have guidelines on the disposal of electronic records?

1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Unsure	

2.37 Do you face challenges in managing electronic records?

1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Unsure	

2.38 Which of the following medium do you use for the storage of electronic records? Please select all the applicable options

1	PC hard drive	
2	Offside storage	
3	CD-ROMS	
4	Server	
6	Other (<i>Specify</i>).....	

3 SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE OF STAFF ABOUT RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

3.1 Please indicate your highest level of education completed.

1	Standard 10(Gr.12)	
2	Certificate	
3	Diploma	
4	Degree	
5	Honours	
6	Masters	

3.2 Do you have any formal qualification in records management?

1	Yes	
2	No	

3.3 Did you receive in-house training in records management?

1	Yes	
2	No	

3.4 How often do you attend records management training? Choose ONE of the options.

1	Once a year	
2	Twice a year	
3	More than twice a year	
4	Never	
5	Other (<i>Specify</i>).....	

4. ACTIVITIES AND STRATEGIES PUT IN PLACE TO SUPPORT RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

4.1 Do you think a sound records management strategy is required in the municipality?

1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Unsure	

4.2 Is records management aligned with the municipal strategic plan?

Yes	1
No	2

4.3 How can you rate the current records management practices in the municipality?

1	Good	
2	Very good	
3	Fair	
4	Poor	
5	Very poor	

4.4 Does the municipality have sufficient budget for records management functions and activities?

Yes	1
No	2

4.5 Is the registry section allocated sufficient human resources to deal with records management?

Yes	1
No	2

5. FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE CURRENT RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

5.1 Which of the following factors contribute to the current state of records management practices in the municipality?

1	Poor records management	
2	Shortage of staff	
3	Insufficient funding	
4	Lack of storage space	
5	Inadequate training	
6	Other (<i>Specify</i>).....	

5.2 Do believe that staff in your municipality appreciate the role of records in their areas of operations?

1	Yes	
2	No	

5.3 In your view, is there relationship between records management and clean audit outcome?

1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Unsure	

6. CHALLENGES IN RECORDS MANAGEMENT

5.4 What value would you place on sound records management as a key component of the clean audit outcome?

1	Essential	
2	Very important	
3	Important	
4	Less important	
5	Not Important	

5.5 Do you believe that top management support good records management practices in the municipality?

1	Yes	
2	No	

6.1 What are some of the main challenges that you face in managing records in the municipality?

Thank you very much for your honesty and co-operation

Appendix 11: Interview schedule for Records Managers

Records Manager's Interview Schedule for collecting data about records management practices in selected municipalities in Limpopo Province.

My name is Lefose Makgahlela, a PhD candidate in Information Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus, South Africa. I am conducting this study as part of the requirements for the Doctoral degree. The purpose of this study is to establish "records management practices in municipalities in Limpopo Province".

The findings may assist municipalities in the province to improve on their records management practices. I would like to ask you a number of questions for a survey I am conducting for my University programme I will be extremely grateful if you could assist me in this endeavour by answering the following questions. Your permission is required for audio-recording. It will take you approximately 45-60 minutes of your time to complete the interviews. Your responses will be kept anonymous and confidentiality is guaranteed.

SECTION A: Background information

1. Age.....
2. Gender.....
3. Position.....
4. Number of years in the position.....
5. Highest qualification.....
6. Qualification in records management.....
7. Date of interview
8. Place of interview

SECTION B: Records management practices

Objective: To determine records management practices in municipalities in Limpopo Province

1. How are records created?
2. What types of records are created?
3. In what formats are records created?
4. Where records are kept after creation?
5. How are records filed in your municipality?
6. Do you have sufficient space for storing records?
7. Does the record-filing system make it easy to retrieve a file?
8. Are the records readily available when required?
9. Do you experience missing records?
10. What could be the reason for experiencing missing records?
11. How does the municipality ensure the safety and security records?
12. Does your municipality have a disaster management program?
13. In the event of a fire, flood or other natural disasters can you explain how the records would be safeguarded?
14. Do you monitor temperature and relative humidity in the record storage area?
15. Do you control pest infestations in the record storage area?
16. Does the municipality have records disposal procedure manual?
17. Does the municipality have records appraisal policy?
18. How do you destroy records?
19. Who give authorisation for the destruction of inactive records?
20. Where do you keep records which have permanent retention value?
21. Does your municipality have a written records management policy?
22. Are all employees aware of the records management policy?
23. Do employees manage records in accordance with the records management policy?
24. Do you have guidelines in the records management policy on the kind of records to be kept?

25. Does the policy comply with government regulations for records management?

SECTION C: Level of knowledge on records management

Objective: To establish level of knowledge about records management of staff in municipalities

1. Is the number of registry officers sufficient to deal with records?
2. Does all staff in the records management section or registry have sufficient training in records management?
3. Do staff undergo regular staff development training in records management?
4. Do you believe regular training for staff is necessary to realise the full potential of the management of records?

SECTION D: Factors that contribute to the current records management practices

Objective: To identify factors that affects the current records management practices in municipalities in the Limpopo Province.

1. What are some of the factors that contribute to the current records management practices?
2. Is there a service-level agreement between line managers and the registry offices in terms of the roles and responsibilities regarding the keeping and management of records?
3. Do you have anyone conducting records audit to evaluate record management practices against accepted standards?
4. Do you receive full support from top management?

SECTION E: Activities and strategies used to support records management.

Objective: 4. To identify activities and strategies used to support records management practices in municipalities

1. What resources are required so that your office can manage records effectively?
2. What facilities are required so that your office can manage records effectively?
3. What are some of the activities that are used to support records management in the municipalities?
4. What are some of the strategies that are used to support records management in the municipalities?

SECTION F: Challenges in managing records

Objective: To identify challenges faced by municipal officials in managing records.

1. What challenges are you facing in ensuring effective records management in the municipality?
2. Is the municipality taking any step towards addressing the challenges faced in the management of records?
3. What suggestions can you recommend to help improve records management practices in the municipality?

Thank you very much for the time taken to answer these questions.

Should you wish to be informed of the outcomes of this research please leave your email address or contact number below.

.....

Appendix 12: Interview schedule for Municipal Managers

Interview schedule for municipal managers for collecting data about records management practices in selected municipalities in Limpopo Province

1 Background information

1.1 Gender

1.2 Age

1.3 Highest qualifications

1.4 Number of year/s in the position?

Less than one year	1
1 – 2 years	2
3 – 4 years	3
5 years and more	4
Other (<i>Specify</i>).....	5

2 Records management practises in municipalities

2.1 Do you create records that need filing?

Yes	1
No	2

2.2 Do you receive records that need filing?

Yes	1
No	2

2.3. Where do you file the records?

Office	1
Registry	2
Secretary's Office	3
Other, please specify	4

2.4 Have you ever had a problem in accessing a certain record which you wanted to use in your daily work routines?

Yes	1
No	2

2.5 Are the municipal's records stored securely so that they cannot be stolen, damaged or altered?

Yes	1
No	2

2.6 Do you monitor the compliance with standards, policies and regulations relating to the records management?

Yes	1
No	2

2.7 Does your municipality have a records management disaster management plan in place?

Yes	1
No	2

2.8 Who has overall responsibility for the management of records in the municipality?

Records manager	1
Municipal Manager	2
Mayor	3
Other, please specify	

2.9 How can you rate the current management records practices in your municipality?

Very good	1
Good	2
Fair	3
Poor	4
Very poor	5

3 Knowledge about records management practices

3.1 Have you attended training on records management?

Yes	1
No	2

3.2 Do you provide advice to the registry personnel relating to records management?

Yes	1
No	2

3.3 Do you provide advice to registry staff on how to manage records in electronic formats?

Yes	1
No	2

3.4 How do you rate the level of skills of registry officers in your municipality?

Very good	2
Good	1
Fair	2
Poor	0
Very poor	0

4. Factors affecting the current records management practices

4.1 Where is the records management programme located within the municipality?

4.2 Do you think adopting a records management system is important to your municipality?

Yes	1
No	2

4.3 What do you think are the most serious administrative problems for records management in your municipality? *Indicate by marking with a × next to all that are applicable*

Shortage of Filing Space	1
Misfiling and Missing records	2
Damage to Record	3
Incompetent/unskilled staff	4
Shortage of Staff	5
Insufficient budget	6
Lack of general staff awareness about the importance of records	7

All of the above	8
Other (<i>Specify</i>).....	9

4.4 Which of the following factors contribute to the current records management practices in the municipality? *Indicate by marking with a × next to all that are applicable*

Lack of records management policy	1
Inadequate funding	2
Inadequate trained records	3
Lack of secured storage of records	4
Inappropriate supplies and equipment	5
All of the above	6
Other (<i>Specify</i>).....	7

5 Activities and strategies used to support records management.

5.1 Does the municipality have sufficient budget for records management functions and activities?

Yes	1
No	2

5.2 Is the registry section allocated sufficient human resources to deal with records management?

Yes	1
No	2

5.3 Do the senior managers in your municipality support good records management?

Yes	1
No	2

5.4 Do you consider records management as being essential in the attainment of the municipality's mission, vision and core value?

Yes	1
No	2

4.5 Is records management aligned with the municipal strategic plan?

Yes	1
No	2

4.6 Does the municipality put any value on good records management as a means of promoting accountability and transparency?

Yes	1
No	2

6 Challenges faced with management of records

6.1 Do you face particular challenges in providing advice relating to management of records in the municipality?

Yes	1
No	2

6.2 What do you think can be done to deal with these challenges for effective records management in your municipality?

Please give your opinion:

Thank you very much for your honesty and co-operation

Appendix 13: Consent form

Informed Consent form

Dear Participant

My name is Lefose Makgahlela. I am a PhD (Information Studies) candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus, South Africa. The title of the research is: Records management practices in municipalities in Limpopo Province. The aim of the study is to establish the current records management practices in the municipalities in Limpopo Province. I am interested in interviewing you so as to share your experiences and observations on the subject matter. Please note the following

- The information that you provide will be used for scholarly research only.
- Your participation is entirely voluntary. You have a choice to participate, not to participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Your views in this interview will be presented anonymously. Neither your name nor identity will be disclosed in any form in the study.
- The interview will take about one hour.
- The record as well as other items associated with the interview will be held in a password-protected file accessible only to myself and my supervisors. After a period of 5 years, in line with the rules of the university, it will be disposed by shredding and burning.
- If you agree to participate please sign the declaration attached to this statement (a separate sheet will be provided for signatures)

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in this study, please feel free to contact myself or my supervisor at the numbers or addresses indicated below.

I can be contacted at: School of Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus, Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg. Email: Lefose.makgahlela@gmail.com or Cell: 083 993 1412

My supervisor is Zawedde Nsibirwa who is located at the School of Social Sciences, Pietermaritzburg Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Contact details: email Nsibirwaz@ukzn.ac.za Phone number: 033 260 5685.

The College of Humanities Research Ethics Officer is Phumelele Ximba who is located at Humanities Research Ethics Office, University of KwaZulu-Natal. Contact details: email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za Phone number 033 260 3587.

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I..... (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire. I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....

Appendix 14: Letter from the editor

Athol Leach (Proofreading and Editing)



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11 November 2020

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To Whom It May Concern

This letter serves to confirm that I have edited the following PhD Dissertation:

RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN SELECTED MUNICIPALITIES IN
LIMPOPO PROVINCE OF SOUTH AFRICA.

By Lefose Alfred Makgahlela

The document was edited in terms of grammar, spelling, punctuation and overall style. In doing so use was made of MS Word's "Track changes" facility thus providing the student with the opportunity to reject or accept each change. Please note that while I have checked for consistency of referencing in terms of format (both in-text and in the list of references) I have not checked the veracity of the sources themselves or that the bibliographic information is complete. Nor have I checked for possible plagiarism.

The tracked document is on file.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Athol Leach".

Athol Leach
(MIS, Natal)