

Implementation of Records Retention and Disposal Schedule for Secondary School Students: A Case Study of Tabora Municipal Schools

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Abstract

This study examined the management of student records and the implementation of retention and disposal schedules in selected secondary schools in Tabora Municipality. The study employed a mixed-methods research approach. Respondents were selected using simple random and purposive sampling, and data were collected via a survey and semi-structured interviews with 62 respondents. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse quantitative data in R, while qualitative data were analysed thematically in NVivo. The findings revealed significant challenges in current practices, including the absence of trained records management personnel, a lack of standardised retention and disposal schedules, and limited awareness among school management regarding the strategic value of records. Although records were categorised as vital, academic, and non-essential, the lack of proper disposal procedures has led to congestion and insufficient storage space. The study concludes that improving records management requires increased awareness, capacity-building, and strict adherence to existing legal frameworks, particularly the Records Management Act, No. 3 of 2002. Based on the findings, it is recommended that qualified personnel be recruited and continuous training programmes be implemented to strengthen records governance, enhance accountability, and improve service delivery in the education sector.

Keywords: Academic records, records management, records retention, disposal schedule, electronic records management system.

1.0 Introduction

The evolution of records management in educational institutions has been driven by changes in administrative demands, legal requirements, and technological advancements. Before the 21st century, record-keeping was primarily manual, using paper-based systems to document vital students' information (Chacha et al., 2024). However, these systems often resulted in misplaced records, document deterioration, and difficulties in accessing and retrieving information (Almustapha & Dahiru, 2024; Yakubu & Isa, 2025).

A heightened emphasis on proper records management gained momentum in the late twentieth century, particularly in developed countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom. In these countries, government agencies established policies and

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regulations to guide the retention and disposal of public records, including those within the education sector (Franks, 2021; Sakaguchi, 2024). The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and the United Kingdom's Public Record Office promoted structured records lifecycle management by emphasising standard retention periods and controlled disposal procedures to enhance institutional accountability and transparency (Colavizza et al., 2021).

In developing countries, the importance of records retention and disposal schedules gained prominence in the early 2000s due to the recognised benefits of systematic records management (Olalere et al., 2021). Many African countries began introducing records retention and disposal schedules in line with international best practices. However, the pace of implementation varied across countries because of limited capacity to regulate records management in public institutions, including schools (Shinde et al., 2024). Consequently, governments enacted legislation requiring institutions to develop records retention and disposal schedules and to invest in information and communication technology infrastructure to support effective records management (Thomas, 2024). In Tanzania, the government enacted the Records and Archives Management Act No. 3 of 2002 to guide the retention, preservation, and timely disposal of records, while ensuring the protection of vital and historically significant records (URT, 2002).

Despite these efforts, implementation at the institutional level remains a challenge. Many secondary schools in Tanzania lack adequate resources, trained personnel, and sufficient awareness of the importance of proper records management (Assey & Mwinami, 2024). As a result, schools often experience poor records management practices, including disorganised recordkeeping systems, excessive retention of outdated records with little historical value, and the premature destruction of important student records (Chacha et al., 2024; Malekani & Mubofu, 2023). This historical context underscores the growing importance of records retention and disposal schedules and highlights the need to strengthen records management practices at global, national, and local levels.

Effective records management in educational institutions is essential for maintaining accurate students' records, ensuring smooth administrative operations, and supporting informed decision-making (Thomas et al., 2025). A critical component of records management is adherence to records retention and disposal schedules, which facilitate timely access, preservation, retention, and disposal of records (Adeyemi, 2022). Despite the existence of frameworks and policies that guide records management practices, secondary schools in Tanzania continue to face significant implementation challenges. These challenges include a shortage of trained records management personnel, inadequate storage facilities, and limited awareness of the importance of proper records management procedures.

Consequently, poor records management practices have led to the accumulation of redundant records, disorganised recordkeeping systems, loss of valuable information, and gaps in institutional memory (Rutta & Ndenje-Sichalwe, 2021). Such deficiencies undermine accountability, compromise the quality of decision-making, and contribute to non-compliance with national regulatory requirements, including the Records and Archives Management Act No. 3 of 2002. These problems are further exacerbated by weak

enforcement of records management policies and inadequate implementation at the school level (Mzigo et al., 2025).

The persistence of these challenges has been attributed to inadequate oversight, limited financial and material resources, low levels of awareness, insufficient follow-up mechanisms, a shortage of qualified records managers, and the absence of clear operational guidelines (Assey & Mwinami, 2024). Given the importance of effective records management in educational institutions, this study investigated the implementation of records retention and disposal schedules in secondary schools in Tabora Municipality, identified the challenges affecting their implementation, and proposed strategies to improve records management practices.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theory Underpinning the Study

This study was informed by Records Life Cycle Theory, developed by Theodore R. Schellenberg in 1956. The theory is one of the most influential frameworks in records and archives management, explaining how records are managed throughout their existence. According to Schellenberg (1956), records pass through a series of stages from their creation and active use to semi-active use, and ultimately to their final disposition, either destruction or permanent preservation. The theory emphasises the need for systematic record management at each stage to ensure accessibility, usability, and accountability, while minimising unnecessary storage and administrative costs.

The Records Life Cycle Theory assumes that records have different values and levels of usefulness at different stages of their existence. While some records retain long-term administrative, legal, fiscal, or historical value and should therefore be preserved permanently, others lose their usefulness over time and should be disposed of in accordance with established retention and disposal schedules. The theory further assumes that organisations should establish clear procedures and policies for the creation, maintenance, retention, and disposal of records to ensure efficiency, legal compliance, and effective information management. Proper appraisal and classification of records are, therefore, essential components of the records management process.

The theory was considered suitable for this study because it directly addresses the concepts of records retention and disposal, which are central to the research. The study sought to investigate the implementation of records retention and disposal schedules in secondary schools in Tabora Municipality. The Records Life Cycle Theory provides a useful framework for understanding how schools manage records throughout their life cycle and whether they adhere to prescribed retention and disposal procedures. The theory also helps explain the consequences of ineffective records management practices, including the accumulation of obsolete records, difficulties retrieving information, loss of important records, and non-compliance with regulatory requirements.

Furthermore, the theory guided the study in examining the extent to which secondary schools implement retention records and disposal schedules, as well as the challenges that affect

their implementation. By emphasising the importance of systematic records management from creation to final disposition, the theory provided a relevant lens for identifying gaps in current practices and proposing strategies to improve records management in secondary schools. Therefore, the Records Life Cycle Theory was appropriate for explaining and analysing records retention and disposal practices in the context of educational institutions.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

Record management is crucial in any academic institution, underpinning operational efficiency, transparency, and accountability (Fitsilis et al., 2024). One pivotal component of records management is the use of well-structured retention and disposal schedules, which provide an institutional framework for records lifecycle management, ensuring that records are retained and disposed of securely and in compliance with applicable requirements (Grepon et al., 2023). This scheduling approach helps prevent premature disposal of records and the excessive accumulation of obsolete and redundant documents, thereby improving information accessibility and reducing storage costs.

In developed countries, the implementation of records management frameworks has received considerable attention. For example, in the United Kingdom and the United States, educational institutions adhere to recommended retention schedules supported by legal and regulatory frameworks (Franks, 2021), whereas the United States' National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) provides retention guidelines for educational institutions to ensure the preservation of records based on their legal, fiscal, and administrative significance (Sakaguchi, 2024).

In contrast, most developing countries, particularly those in Africa, experience challenges in implementing such frameworks due to limited resources, a lack of guiding policies, inadequately trained records management personnel, and weak enforcement mechanisms (Amaefule & Ekwesianya, 2022). Developing countries such as Tanzania continue to face difficulties in establishing effective records management practices due to low levels of awareness of records management principles and the absence of standardised retention schedules (Omgie et al., 2023; Manase et al., 2025). Consequently, vital records are often misplaced due to poor organisation and storage or become inaccessible, thereby undermining effective decision-making and service delivery and compromising student data privacy.

In Tanzania, the Records and Archives Management Act No. 3 of 2002 mandates all public institutions to manage records systematically and adhere to approved retention and disposal schedules. Despite this legislative framework, studies indicate that most teachers and school heads are not fully aware of the legal requirements for records retention and disposal. This results in inconsistent application and non-compliance with proper records management principles and practices (TARURA, 2020). Furthermore, inadequate digital infrastructure in Tanzanian schools hinders the implementation of records management information systems. As a result, records are predominantly maintained in paper format, making them more vulnerable to deterioration, misplacement, infestation, physical damage, and unauthorised access (Mzigo et al., 2025).

There is a growing consensus on the importance of structured records management practices; however, a significant implementation gap persists, particularly in developing countries. This study focuses on secondary schools in Tabora Municipality, critically examining local records management practices, challenges, and prospects regarding student records.

3.0 Research Methodology

This study employed a descriptive research design using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, enabling an in-depth examination of context-rich issues within a specific institutional setting. This research design enables the researcher to explore complex organisational processes and stakeholder perspectives on the implementation of the records retention and disposal schedule for secondary school students in Tabora Municipal (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

The research was conducted in Tabora Municipality across five selected secondary schools: Tabora Boys, Tabora Girls, Kazima Secondary, Milambo Secondary, and Isevyia Secondary. A total of 62 respondents from a population of 100 were drawn to participate in the study. Simple random sampling was used to select academic staff and class teachers, as they form a larger group of respondents with similar responsibilities in handling students' records. Purposive sampling was used to select head teachers, records officers, and education officers at the district and regional levels, given their specialised roles and direct involvement in implementing and overseeing records management policy.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with key informants. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and focused on current practices, levels of awareness, compliance, and challenges related to implementing records retention and disposal schedules in Tabora Municipal secondary schools. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes, allowing respondents to provide detailed and in-depth information on the subject. On the other hand, surveys with structured questionnaires were used to collect data from teachers.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Respondents' Characteristics

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics and Position Held N=62

Category/Sex	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Male	34	54.8
Female	28	45.2
Age		
20–29 years	12	19.4
30–39 years	22	35.5
40–49 years	18	29.0
50 years and above	10	16.1
Educational level		
Diploma	15	24.2
Bachelor's degree	35	56.5
Postgraduate qualification	12	19.3
Working experience		
Less than 5 years	10	16.1
5–10 years	20	32.3
11–15 years	18	29.0
Above 15 years	14	22.6
Position held		
Records officers/RMA	4	6.45
Administrative staff	4	6.45
Academic masters	5	8.06
Heads of schools	5	8.06
Teachers	20	32.26
Class teachers	28	45.16

Source: Field Data (2025)

The results show that the majority of respondents were aged 30 to 39 years (35.5%), followed by those aged 40 to 49 years (29.0%). Respondents aged 20 to 29 years accounted for 19.4%, while those aged 50 years and above constituted the smallest proportion at 16.1%. The findings indicate that most participants were in the productive middle-age group (30–49 years), suggesting that the study largely captured respondents with relatively active working experience in records management and school administration.

On the other hand, the results indicate that male respondents slightly outnumbered female respondents, with males accounting for 54.8% ($n = 34$) of the sample and females accounting for 45.2% ($n = 28$). This shows a relatively balanced gender representation, suggesting that both male and female participants were fairly involved in the study, although with a slight dominance of male respondents.

Moreover, the results show that the largest proportion of respondents had 5–10 years of working experience (32.3%), followed by those with 11–15 years (29.0%). Respondents with more than 15 years of experience accounted for 22.6%, while those with less than 5 years accounted for the smallest group at 16.1%. Overall, the findings indicate that most respondents had moderate to extensive work experience, suggesting that the study involved participants with sufficient practical experience in records management and school administrative processes.

Furthermore, the majority of respondents held a Bachelor's degree (56.5%), making it the most common level of education among participants. This was followed by those with a Diploma qualification (24.2%), while respondents with a postgraduate qualification accounted for 19.3% of the sample. Overall, the findings indicate that most respondents had a relatively high level of formal education, suggesting that they were adequately qualified and likely capable of understanding and engaging with records management practices in secondary schools.

Not only that, but also the largest proportion of respondents were class teachers (45.16%), followed by teachers (32.26%), indicating that teachers constituted the majority of participants in the study. Heads of schools and academic masters accounted for 8.06%, while records officers/RMA staff and administrative staff each accounted for 6.45% of the sample. The findings suggest that the study included a wide range of participants involved in student records management, with stronger representation of teaching staff directly engaged in day-to-day handling of student records.

4.2 Availability of Institutional or National Records Retention and Disposal Schedule

The researcher asked respondents whether an institutional or national records retention and disposal schedule was in place. The study aimed to capture information on the availability and awareness of such schedules within secondary schools, as well as their use in guiding records management practices. This was important in determining whether schools operate under standardised procedures for the retention and disposal of records or whether practices are carried out informally in the absence of clear guidelines. A summary of the findings is shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Availability of Institutional or National Records Retention and Disposal Schedule

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	19	30.6%
No	19	30.6%
Not sure	24	38.7%
Total	62	100

Source: Field Data (2025)

The findings in Table 4.2 indicate mixed awareness and availability of institutional or national records retention and disposal schedules among respondents. Specifically, an equal proportion of respondents (30.6%) reported that such schedules are available at their institutions, while another 30.6% reported that they were not. However, the largest proportion (38.7%) of respondents were unsure whether such schedules exist.

This distribution suggests that although some institutions may have records retention and disposal schedules in place, staff awareness was generally low. The high percentage of respondents who were uncertain suggests weak communication, inadequate training, or limited access to school records management policies. Overall, the findings point to inconsistencies in the implementation and dissemination of records retention and disposal frameworks, which may negatively affect proper records management practices. Similarly, one of the respondents commented:

In our school, we have never disposed of students’ records since the school’s establishment. Therefore, we need a policy to guide records management, including retention, disposal, and preservation, and to improve records management” (Interview, Institution E).

4.3 Format Used to Keep Records

The respondents were asked about the formats used to store data. The study aimed to capture information on the different record-keeping systems adopted in schools, whether manual, electronic, or a combination of both. This was intended to determine the level of technological integration in records management practices, as well as the reliability, accessibility, and efficiency of the formats used. Table 4.3 summarises the study’s findings.

Table 4.3: Format Used to Keep Records

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Paper-based (manual)	9	14.5%
Electronic/digital	3	4.8%
Both formats	50	80.6%
Total	62	100

Source: Field Data (2025)

The findings indicate that the majority of respondents used a combination of paper-based and electronic/digital systems to maintain student records. Specifically, 80.6% (n = 50) reported using both formats, showing that most institutions or offices preferred a hybrid record-keeping approach. This suggests an effort to balance traditional documentation methods with modern digital systems, likely to enhance accessibility, backup, and efficiency.

On the other hand, 14.5% (n = 9) of respondents reported relying solely on paper-based (manual) record-keeping. This shows that a significant minority still relies on traditional systems, possibly due to limited access to digital tools, a lack of ICT skills, or infrastructure challenges. A very small proportion (4.8%, n = 3) reported using only electronic/digital systems. This implies that fully digital record management was not yet widely adopted, possibly due to resource constraints, system reliability issues, or transitional phases in record-management practices. Generally, the results suggest that while digitalisation is gradually being embraced, most institutions are still operating in a mixed-record environment rather than fully transitioning to electronic systems.

4.4 Availability of Written Policy for Retaining and Disposing of Students’ Records

Respondents were asked whether a written policy on the retention and disposal of students’ records was available. This question sought to assess the extent to which formal guidelines governed the management, retention, and disposal of students’ records within institutions. The availability of such a policy was important because it ensured standardised procedures, accountability, and proper records management practices in line with institutional or national requirements. Table 4.4 summarises the study’s findings.

Table 4.4: Availability of Written Policy for Retaining and Disposing of Students’ Records

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	38	61.3%
No	7	11.3%
Not sure	17	27.4%
Total	62	100

Source: Field Data (2025)

The findings in Table 4.4 indicate that a majority of respondents acknowledged the existence of a written policy for the retention and disposal of students’ records. Specifically, 61.3% (n = 38) of the respondents confirmed that such a policy was available. This suggests that most institutions had established formal guidelines to support the standardised, structured management of student records, thereby enhancing accountability and ensuring proper documentation practices. However, 11.3% (n = 7) of respondents reported that no written policy was in place. This points to gaps in policy development or implementation within some institutions, which may lead to inconsistent or improper record handling.

In addition, 27.4% (n = 17) of respondents were unsure whether such a policy existed. This relatively high level of uncertainty reflected inadequate communication, limited staff awareness, or poor dissemination of policy information within institutions. Overall, the

results suggest that while written policies for records retention and disposal were in place at many institutions, a notable gap in awareness and implementation persisted, affecting the effectiveness of records management systems.

4.5 Compliance with Retention Schedules

Respondents were asked whether they complied with retention schedules. The study aimed to assess the extent to which institutions adhered to established guidelines for the retention and disposal of students' records. This was important for assessing whether records management practices were consistently followed in line with institutional or national standards, and whether staff responsible for records were aware of and adhered to the required retention schedules. Table 4.5 summarises the study's findings.

Table 4.5: Compliance with Retention Schedules

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Fully compliant	16	25.8
Partially compliant	22	35.5
Not compliant	7	11.3
Not applicable	17	27.4
Total	62	100

Source: Field Data (2025)

The findings in Table 4.5 indicate that compliance with retention schedules varied across institutions. Specifically, 25.8% (n = 16) of respondents reported that their institutions were fully compliant with retention schedules. This suggested that only a quarter of the institutions consistently followed established guidelines for the retention and disposal of students' records, reflecting a relatively strong but limited level of adherence. Meanwhile, the largest proportion of respondents, 35.5% (n = 22), indicated that their institutions were only partially compliant. This implies that although some retention procedures were in place, they were not fully implemented or consistently followed, leading to irregularities in records management.

Furthermore, 11.3% (n = 7) of respondents stated that their institutions did not comply with retention schedules. This highlights serious gaps in records management systems, possibly due to a lack of awareness, inadequate enforcement, or the absence of clear operational guidelines. In addition, 27.4% (n = 17) of respondents indicated that the question was not applicable to their context. This suggested that some respondents were not directly involved in records management functions or that retention schedules were not formally applied in certain departments.

Generally, the results suggest that while some institutions demonstrated strong compliance practices, many were either partially compliant or noncompliant, indicating a need for stronger policy enforcement, training, and awareness of proper records-retention procedures.

4.6 Awareness of Legal or Policy Related to Student Records Retention

The respondents were asked whether they were aware of any legal or policy-related to student records retention. The study aimed to capture staff knowledge and understanding of the laws, regulations, and institutional policies governing the proper management, retention, and disposal of student records. This was important in determining whether compliance challenges are linked to a lack of awareness or insufficient dissemination of policy information within institutions. Table 4.6 summarises the study's findings.

Table 4.6: Awareness of Legal or Policy Related to Student Records Retention

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	27	43.5
No	35	56.5
Total	62	100

Source: Field Data (2025)

The findings in Table 4.6 indicate that fewer than half of the respondents are aware of legal or policy provisions regarding student record retention. Specifically, 43.5% (n = 27) of respondents reported awareness of such laws or policies. This suggests that a relatively moderate proportion of staff were knowledgeable about the legal framework governing records management, which was essential to ensuring proper compliance and accountability in handling student records.

However, 56.5% (n = 35) of respondents reported being unaware of any legal or policy provisions regarding students' record retention. This finding was critical as it created a significant knowledge gap among staff responsible for records management. Lack of awareness contributed to poor compliance, improper record handling, and inconsistent application of retention and disposal procedures. These results suggest that awareness of the legal and policy frameworks governing student record retention was relatively low, thereby undermining the effectiveness of records management practices within institutions. This highlights the need for increased training, sensitisation, and dissemination of policy information to improve compliance and professional practice.

5.0 Discussion of the Findings

The discussion analysed the study's findings in the context of effective records management and institutional accountability. The discussions are arranged thematically.

5.1 Personnel Capacity and Professionalism

The findings showed a critical challenge in the personnel capacity of Tabora Municipal Schools. This lack of experience and specialised training likely contributed to the inconsistencies observed in the implementation of retention schedules. Records management is a technical field that requires specific knowledge of categorisation, preservation, and legal requirements; without dedicated and experienced personnel, institutions risk losing important data or failing to dispose of sensitive information

securely. These findings align with the Records Life Cycle Theory, which states that records go through distinct stages of creation, use, maintenance, and final disposition, and that each stage requires proper management by competent, trained personnel to ensure accuracy, security, and compliance with legal and institutional requirements. The theory further emphasises that effective records management depends on the availability of skilled professionals who can systematically classify, store, retrieve, and dispose of records.

The findings also resonate with those of Katuu (2015), who found that inadequate professional training and limited capacity among records personnel significantly undermine the effective implementation of records management systems in public institutions. Katuu (2015) further noted that when staff lack specialised competencies in classification, preservation, and disposal of records, institutions experience inconsistencies in applying retention schedules and increased risks of poor record security and loss of institutional memory.

5.2 The Policy-Practice Gap

The study found a disconnect between the existence of policies and their practical implementation. This gap was attributed to a lack of leadership support, insufficient resources, or the absence of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. These findings align with the Records Life Cycle Theory, which posits that records pass through a systematic cycle of creation, use, maintenance, and final disposition, with each stage governed by established policies, procedures, and standards to ensure effective records management. The findings also align with Ngulube (2009), who emphasises that the existence of policies alone is insufficient; their successful implementation depends on adequate institutional support, including leadership commitment, resource availability, and continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

5.3 Format Used to Keep Records

The results showed that while digitalisation was being gradually embraced, most institutions were still operating in a mixed-record environment rather than fully transitioning to electronic systems. These findings resonate with the Records Life Cycle Theory, which posits that records are dynamic assets that move through distinct stages of creation, use, maintenance, and disposition, and that their management must adapt to changing formats and technologies over time. The theory further emphasises that effective records management systems should support both traditional and electronic records during transitional phases, ensuring continuity, accessibility, and preservation of information. Therefore, the presence of a mixed-records environment in institutions reflects a transitional stage in the records life cycle, where organisations are gradually shifting from manual systems to fully electronic records management systems while still maintaining legacy paper-based records to support operational and administrative needs.

5.4 Availability of Written Policy for Retaining and Disposing of Students' Records

The study found that while written policies for records retention and disposal were present in many institutions, a notable gap in awareness and implementation persisted, affecting the effectiveness of records management systems. These findings are consistent

with records management policy frameworks, which emphasise that the mere existence of written policies is not sufficient to ensure effective records management unless they are well communicated, understood, and consistently implemented across all levels of an institution. According to ISO 15489 (Records Management Standard), organisations must not only establish documented policies and procedures for records retention and disposal but also ensure staff awareness, training, and compliance monitoring to guarantee their effective application.

Through the lens of the Records Life Cycle Theory, these findings indicate a breakdown in the effective management of records across the records continuum, particularly during the maintenance and disposition phases. The theory posits that records must be systematically created, organised, stored, accessed, and ultimately disposed of in accordance with established policies and procedures to ensure their integrity and usability over time. However, the presence of written policies without adequate awareness and implementation suggests weaknesses in the transition between the active and semi-active stages of records, where proper retention decisions and disposal actions should be guided by clear schedules and competent oversight.

5.5 Compliance with Retention Schedules

The results showed that while some institutions demonstrated strong compliance practices, many were either partially compliant or noncompliant, indicating a need for stronger policy enforcement, training, and awareness of proper records-retention procedures. These findings support Ngulube's (2009) findings that many public institutions in developing countries experience weak compliance with records retention schedules due to inadequate enforcement mechanisms, limited staff capacity, and insufficient awareness of records management policies. Ngulube further observed that partial compliance is more common than full adherence, particularly in institutions where records management functions are not prioritised or staffed by professionals. Similarly, Katuu (2015) noted that inconsistent application of retention schedules often results from weak institutional frameworks and a lack of continuous training and monitoring systems. These studies collectively emphasise that compliance with retention schedules depends primarily on institutional commitment, staff competence, and effective policy enforcement mechanisms.

On a similar note, these findings align with the Records Life Cycle Theory, which posits that records must be systematically managed through distinct stages: creation, classification, storage, use, retention, and final disposal. The theory emphasises that compliance with retention schedules is a critical component of the maintenance and disposition phases, in which records are evaluated and either preserved for administrative, legal, or historical purposes or securely disposed of when no longer required.

5.6 Awareness of Legal or Policy Related to Student Records Retention

The study found that awareness of the legal and policy frameworks governing student record retention was relatively low, thereby undermining the effectiveness of records management practices within institutions. This highlights the need for increased training, sensitisation, and dissemination of policy information to improve compliance

and professional practice. The findings align with ISO 15489 (Records Management Standard, 2016), which emphasises that effective records management depends not only on the existence of policies and procedures but also on staff awareness, training, and continuous communication of the legal and institutional requirements governing records. The standard further stresses that without adequate awareness, compliance with records retention policies becomes inconsistent and ineffective, leading to poor records control and increased risks of mismanagement or loss of institutional memory.

Not only that, but also, in the lens of the Records Life Cycle Theory, the findings indicate a weakness in the early and middle stages of the records lifecycle, particularly in the use and maintenance phases, where users are expected to understand and correctly apply retention requirements. The theory posits that for records to be effectively managed throughout their life cycle, stakeholders must possess adequate knowledge of their legal and procedural obligations. Therefore, low awareness of legal and policy frameworks leads to breakdowns in the communication and implementation mechanisms that support effective records lifecycle management, ultimately affecting compliance and the proper disposition of student records.

6.0 Conclusion

The implementation of records retention and disposal schedules in Tabora Municipal Schools is currently characterised by a significant gap between policy and practice. While the institution recognises the need for records management, the reliance on inexperienced, non-specialised staff has led to disposal schedules being largely ignored or unknown. The challenges of managing mixed-format records without a clear legal or administrative framework further complicate the issue. The widespread lack of awareness regarding the Records and Archives Management Act No. 3 of 2002 suggests that the current system is not only inefficient but also legally vulnerable. Addressing these issues is essential to ensuring that students' records are managed in ways that support the school's administrative goals and comply with national standards.

7.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings and discussion, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the implementation of records retention and disposal schedules. To support targeted professional training, the Municipal Council should organise regular training workshops for both class teachers and records officers. These workshops should focus on the practical application of retention schedules, the management of digital records, and the provisions of the Records and Archives Management Act No. 3 of 2002. Given the small percentage of specialised staff, schools should strive to appoint or designate more individuals with specific training in records management to oversee the systematic disposal of student records.

School administrations must ensure that the records retention and disposal schedule is not only available but also easily accessible to all staff involved in record-keeping. Digital copies should be distributed, and physical copies should be posted in administrative offices. For schools developing a unified digital-physical strategy, a clear plan for managing mixed-format records is essential. This includes creating digital filing systems that mirror their physical counterparts and ensuring the disposal schedule is applied consistently across both formats. Establishment of Monitoring and Evaluation Units: The Municipal Education Office should establish a unit to periodically monitor records management practices in schools to ensure compliance with national standards and institutional policies.

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