

**ROLE AND TRENDS OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE
TO VHEMBE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY, LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

BY

NEVHUTALU TAKALANI

(Student No: 9317485)

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Supervisor: Prof M.P Khwashaba

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DECLARATION

I, **NEVHUTALU TAKALANI**, hereby declare that the dissertation for the degree of Master in Public Management at University of Venda hereby submitted by me, has not been submitted previously for a degree at this or any other university; that it is my own work in design and execution, and that all reference material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.

Nevehutalu Takalani

NEVHUTALU TAKALANI

07/08/2015

DATE

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DEDICATION

On a personal note, I dedicate this project to my parents, You were there for me all the way.

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the role and trends of records management with specific reference to Vhembe District Municipality, Limpopo Province. In order to achieve the research objectives, an in-depth literature study was undertaken. A survey was also conducted to examine the current records management practices at Vhembe District Municipality and the data was collected by means of self-administered questionnaires. The literature study proved the hypothesis to be correct, which stated that effective records management plays a significant role in the effective administration of an organization. The empirical study revealed that the records management function is not receiving the attention it deserves at Vhembe District Municipality. Even though participants acknowledged the importance of records management in the decision-making process, strategic planning process (Integrated Development Plan), the realisation of the Batho Pele Principles and the overall performance of Vhembe District Municipality, it was evident that ignorance was displayed with regard to the management of records. It has been discovered that Vhembe District Municipality has a good Records Management Policy, Procedure manual and File Plan, but adherence to these policies should be continuously monitored. Regular training has been identified as one of the areas on which Vhembe District Municipality should apply its focus to ensure sound records management

The study uses both quantitative and qualitative techniques for data collection and analysis. Quantitative techniques were mostly used in that they provide the researcher with an understanding the role and trends of records management with specific reference to Vhembe District Municipality, Limpopo Province Random and purposive samplings were used for the selection of sample for the study. Both primary and secondary data were used for analysis in this study. Secondary data were obtained from government publication, research publication, and report. Primary data were obtained through personal observation and questionnaires survey.

Major findings pertaining to the research conducted:

- No compliance. The Records Control Schedule was still at the drafting stage at the time of conducting this study. This implies that there is no record of what records, other than correspondence, exists at Vhembe District Municipality and where they are kept.
- No compliance. No existence of the register, implying that Vhembe District Municipality does not have a record of the number of files in its possession per subject, and how many volumes per file.
- The register of file movements is currently in existence. However, there is no proper control and monitoring; officials keep borrowed files in their offices for long periods.
- Training is identified by NARS as one of the crucial elements in ensuring sound records management but there is no adequate training for the Records Manager, records office staff and records users.

Major recommendations following the research are:

- Vhembe District Municipality to speed up the process of developing a Records Control Schedule so as to be able to control and manage all Vhembe District Municipality records and prevent unauthorised removal and destruction of records.
- A register of all files that were opened since the adoption of the current file plan needs to be developed. This will also make the work of records office staff easier when requested to retrieve a file, to check first whether that particular file exists or not.
- It should be stipulated that borrowed files should not be kept for more than three (3) days and this should be communicated to officials, particularly at the time when they borrow a file. Records office staff should closely monitor this register and make constant follow-ups with officials who do not return the files after the stipulated timeframe.
- It is recommended that training programmes on records management be intensified at Vhembe District Municipality. Training should be provided to the Records Manager, records office staff and users in general.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------------|--|
| VMD | Vhembe District Municipality |
| IDP | Integrated Development Plan |
| NARS | National Archives and Records Service of South Africa |
| NARS Act | National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Act 43 of 1996 |
| MFMA | Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 |
| PAIA | Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000 |
| PAJA | Promotion of Administrative Justice Act 3 of 2000 |
| PM | Records Management Procedure Manual |
| RMP | Records Management Policy |
| MM's Office | Municipal Manager's Office |
| EMS | Executive Mayoral Support Services |
| CS | Corporate Services |
| ES | Engineering Services |
| BTO | Budget and Treasury Office |
| L, HS | Land, Human Settlements and |
| LED | Local Economic Development |

CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 Background of study

The primary responsibility of a municipality is to make sure that its citizens are provided with services to satisfy their basic needs. Leach, Stewart and Walsh (1994:5) define local authorities as service providers who aim to meet the demands, needs and aspirations of those for whom the service is provided. Different pieces of legislation are in place to enable municipalities to carry out their mandate effectively and efficiently. Chapter 5 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 requires a municipality to adopt and implement an Integrated Development Plan (thereafter referred to as IDP), which serves as an instrument that guides and informs budgeting, management and decision making related to service delivery and development in a municipality.

In essence, the IDP is used by municipalities as a tool to enhance service delivery. The ability of Vhembe District Municipality (thereafter referred to as VDM), or any other institution, to carry out its mandate effectively depends on the availability of necessary and sufficient resources. Although it is always underestimated, information is one of the key resources in enabling the accomplishment of organisational goals. According to Van der Waldt, Van Niekerk, Doyle, Knipe and Du Toit (2002:129), information is a fundamental resource to both government and the private sector alike. Van der Waldt et al (2002:129) further states that information can be maintained and enhanced through appropriate records management.

The National Archives' Records Management Policy Manual (2003: iv) (thereafter referred to as Procedure Manual) concurs by stating that sound records management is fundamental for good governance and effective and efficient administration. It forms the basis for formulating policies, managing resources and the delivery of services to the public. It also enables an organisation to find information easily and the orderly and efficient flow of information enables the organisation to perform its functions successfully and efficiently. According to Dearstyne (1985:33), records are essential to the administration of local government. Records contain the information that

keeps government programmes functioning and they give government officials a basis for making decisions, administering programmes and providing administrative continuity with past operations. Records also show the legal responsibilities of the government and they protect the legal rights of citizens (Van der Waldt *et al*, 2002:253).

Records increase the accountability of the government and its officials. In summary, to support continuing service delivery and provide the necessary accountability, governmental bodies should create and maintain authentic, reliable and usable records (Policy Manual, 2003:iv). Records play a significant role in a municipality throughout the stages of the IDP, namely, development, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reviewable, and they are therefore an essential informational resource. Records management is based on the premise that records require managing, in the same sense that other local government resources need managing.

Records should be regarded as fully important as other administrative functions since records are at the heart of governmental operations. The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (Batho Pele White Paper) was enacted in 1997 to improve the delivery of public services to the citizens of South Africa. The Batho Pele White Paper lays down a set of moral guidelines in terms of which public servants must do their work to provide services to the satisfaction of their customers (Van der Waldt *et al*, 2002:253). Sound records management plays a vital role in putting the Batho Pele principles into practice.

For example, openness and transparency can be achieved by giving the public the right of access to information and this can only be achieved through sound records management. In essence, sound records management is the foundation any government needs to provide services, to fulfill its obligation of accountability towards its citizens and to protect their rights (Ngoepe, 2004:1).

1.2 Statement of the problem

In terms of chapter 7 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, Section 152(1), one of the objects of local government is to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner. Furthermore, Section 41(1)(c) stipulates that all spheres of government and

organs of state must provide effective, transparent, accountable and coherent government for the Republic as a whole. Effective records management enables municipalities to document the delivery of services and to promote accountability and transparency. Section 56(2)(c) of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998, requires the Executive Mayor to recommend to the municipal council strategies, programmes and services to address priority needs through the Integrated Development Plan. Section 56(3)(e) states that the Executive Mayor must oversee the provision of services to communities in a municipality in a sustainable way. Sound records management is the foundation any government needs to provide services. The primary object of the Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 (MFMA) is to secure sound and sustainable management of the fiscal and financial affairs of municipalities and municipal entities and to prevent corruption. Effective management of records contribute towards ensuring accountability and records are a key resource to fight corruption. In addition to this, Section 122 (1) of the MFMA requires that every municipality and every municipal entity must for each financial year prepare annual financial statements. In terms of the Public Audit Act 25 of 2004, the Auditor-General is given powers to have unrestricted access to any document, book or written or electronic record or information of the auditee or which reflects or may elucidate the business, financial results, financial position or performance of the auditee. This statement illustrates the importance of sound records management when the municipality's financial statements are being audited. Many municipalities get qualified audit reports due to lack of information or unavailability of the required records.

Despite the provision of legislation records management are not regarded as an important resource that may influence the effectiveness of the institution in Vhembe district municipality. Although legislation regulating the management of records exists, there is ignorance on the part of certain officials, and that could have adverse effects on the performance of Vhembe district municipality and ultimately on service delivery. There is, therefore, a need to improve the management of records at Vhembe district municipality. The primary objectives explored in this research were whether the management of records, as one of the valuable resources, receives the attention it deserves at VDM.

- What is the legislative framework regulating the management of public records?
- To recommend best practices of ensuring effective records management.

1.3 Research Aim

The overall aim of the research is to investigate the role and trends of records management with specific reference to Vhembe District Municipality, Limpopo Province

1.4 Research objectives

The objectives of the study are set out as follows:

- To evaluate the performance of the records management programme in the public sector of Vhembe District;
- To assess the level of top management support on records management practices in the public sector of Vhembe district;
- To investigate the impact of the placement of records management unit in the Vhembe district municipality.
- To examine and investigate the legislative framework regulating the management of public records;
- To create and enhance awareness and sensitize Vhembe district municipality officials of the contribution of effective records management towards the fulfillment mandate; and
- To recommend best practices of ensuring effective records management.

1.5 Research Questions

- What is the performance of the records management programme in the public sector of Vhembe District?
- What is the level of top management support on records management practices in the public sector of Vhembe district?
- What are the impacts of the placement of records management unit in the Vhembe district municipality?
- What is the legislative framework regulating the management of public records?
- To recommend best practices of ensuring effective records management.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study may be illustrated in a variety of ways. Vhembe District Municipality will benefit from the research as it is envisaged that after, implementation of the recommendations, there will be an improvement in the record management by municipal employee. As mentioned in section 1.1 most government departments in South Africa are faced with the challenge of managing records properly due to resource cuts, lack of skills, lack of top management support, etc. Therefore this study is important because it may serve as a worthwhile guide for government departments that are faced with challenges of managing records through their life cycle. It is hoped that the study will serve as a catalyst for modification and formulation of records management strategies and policies in the South African public sector. Furthermore, it is hoped that this study will facilitate future investigations in records management in South Africa. Moreover, if the recommendations of the study are implemented, they are likely to lead to the improvement of records management practices in the VDM, as well as in other government departments that are faced with similar problems.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

Funds are a limiting factor as the study required a lot of funds for travelling, typing, binding and photocopying. Due to the sensitivity of the topic, some people will feel uncomfortable to answer research questions because they are not sure where the information will be taken to. Every level of analysis is often restricted to a certain parameters. The researcher may encounter problems when collecting information from the respondents. Time frame for collecting information may be another problem due to the fact that VDM is big. Most of the affected communities need to be visited for observation purposes. Negative responses may arise from Vhembe District Municipality officials. To compile the documents for questionnaires and to be transport to the affected municipalities to collect data may be a serious limitation.

1.8 Delimitation of the Study

The study was confined to the Vhembe District Municipality (VDM) in Limpopo province. The population of the study was limited to the VDM employees only. People contracted by the Vhembe district municipality on consultancy basis were not covered in this study. Furthermore, the study was limited to records management trends in the district municipality.

1.9 Definitions of terms

The key terms and concepts are explained in this section to provide the context in which they are used.

- **Record**

According to the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa (2004:x), a record can be defined as “recorded information, in any form, created or received and maintained by an organisation or person in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business and kept as evidence of such activity”. In this regard, in archival terms a record occurs in four types of recording media, i.e. paper, electronic, audio-visual or microfilm. While all records convey information, not all sources of information are necessarily records.

- **Records management**

Records management is the process by which an organisation manages all the elements of records, whether externally or internally generated and in any format or media type, from their inception/receipt all the way through to their disposal (Ngulube 2000:164; Wallace 1987:2; Yusof & Chell 1999:10). On the other hand, Place and Hyslop (1982:4) view records management as a “process of controlling organisational information from creation through to its final disposition”. The thrust of all the above definitions is that records management manages records from creation to disposal. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, records management is defined as the systematic control of records through the entire life cycle.

• **Record keeping**

Record keeping involves making and maintaining complete, accurate and reliable evidence of business transactions in the form of recorded information (Yusof & Chell 1999:10). Record keeping systems are not simply software applications designed to manage records, they are organised collections of people, policies, procedures, tools and technology. These combinations enable organisational business to be adequately documented. For the purpose of this study, record keeping is defined as the making and maintaining of complete, accurate, reliable evidence of business transactions.

• **Records creation and capturing**

Records creation and capturing involves developing consistent rules to ensure integrity and accessibility, deciding on systems to log and track records, and procedures for registering, classifying and indexing (Yusof & Chell 1999:10). When pen is put to paper or data is generated by the computer or information is captured on film/tape, a record is generated. Doing business sometimes results automatically in a record being created.

1.10 Organisation of the study

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The chapter gives a brief outline of the problem statement, research objectives and methods of investigation.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Relevant books, articles and other publications on the topic were reviewed. The records management systems and procedures used at VDM was examined and their compliance with legislation thereof. Chapter two opens with an overview of the historical trends of records and records management. It also examines the role of records management, particularly within the public sector, and discusses the strategies to manage records as a strategic resource.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3 provides the overall research design which outlines research methodology and methods of data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER 4: DATA INTERPRETATION, PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Chapter 4 deals with data presentation, interpretations and analysis of the findings.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Chapter 5 is a summary of findings, recommendations and conclusions, suggestions and issues for further research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The face of records management has changed tremendously. Records management has evolved from a paper-based function responsible for the storage of an organisation's miscellaneous documents, to one concerned with the management of specified internal records in a multitude of media (De Wet & Du Toit 2000:74). Despite these changes, the basic underlying principles of record keeping are still of paramount importance. The records should still be created to support and fully chronicle all business, legal, fiscal, social and historical needs.

Efficient and effective service provision, accountability, security and integrity, completeness, etc. are still core issues that need to be addressed, whether in hard- or soft-copy environments (Pember 1998:64). In view of the above, this chapter gives a brief overview of the historical trends of records and records management. It also examines the role of records management, particularly within the public sector, and discusses the strategies to manage records as a resource. It is worth mentioning that in discussing the importance of records and records management, the discussion will overlap in some instances.

2.2 The role and trends of records management with specific reference to Vhembe District Municipality, Limpopo Province

An appropriate place to begin is by exploring the issue of why records are created and why they need to be managed. Records are created by all sorts of people and institutions as a result of an activity being undertaken. In the course of doing business, records are created through a variety of government activities such as vehicle registration, procurement contract transactions, etc. For example, if the Vhembe District Municipality is responsible for buildings maintenance and as part of its responsibilities it might create architectural plans for a new building. It might also take photographs of that building as it is built and it might create minutes of meetings and reports at various stages of construction. Therefore records can either be created internally or be received

from an external source (Thomassen 2002:375). Creating records is a fundamental part of doing business. Business processes that involve the creation and transmission of documents routinely result in the creation of records as evidence of those processes. Records are also created to document what was decided or done. They are a means of providing evidence of business activity or of remembering events and transactions that have occurred. There are legal and regulatory requirements for creating and keeping records. In this regard, as indicated by Wamukoya (2000:25), the need for records and the role of record keeping operates in three distinct domains, i.e. the business domain, the accountability domain and cultural domain.

- Business domain: government departments need records to conduct their business and to support further service delivery.
- Accountability domain: records are an indispensable ingredient in organisational accountability, both internal (such as reporting relationships) and external (to regulators, customers, shareholders and the law). Records show whether the organisation or individuals in it have met defined legal, organisational, social or moral obligations in specific cases. In all accountability forums, records are consulted as proof of activity by senior managers, auditors, etc.
- Cultural domain: demands that records are preserved and made available to society for posterity and for historical research. This provides the basis for writing a country's cultural and national history. This is when records are used for any purpose beyond the support of the business activity which created them or for accountability for that business activity. Records may be regarded as becoming part of the resources available to society to account for its collective behaviour. Records function as the memory of individuals, organisations and society.

Trustworthy records contain reliable evidence of decisions taken, rights acquired and commitments made. Without records, no assessment can be made of whether individuals and public organisations have actually carried out the actions and transactions that they had to execute, whether they have performed these actions and whether they have done the things which they were not supposed to do (Thomassen 2002:376). In the above context, a distinction is made between the primary and secondary functions of records. The primary functions of records

are the functions that the creator had in mind when creating them and in particular the evidential functions (NARS 2004:34; Thomassen 2002:376). The primary or administrative value is the current value that records have for the office from which they originated. In their primary function records play an active role: they document and regulate social relations. These records are used:

2.2.2 The role of record keeping in demonstrating accountability and good governance

- for administrative and accounting purposes;
- to ensure logical, responsible and consistent actions;
- for the protection of the legal and financial rights and obligations of the office of origin;
- and • to ensure proper control of activities.

The secondary function of records is the function which the creator generally does not have in mind and which records only acquire once they have fulfilled their primary functions: the cultural-historical function or the function of source for historical research (NARS 2004:34; Thomassen 2002:376). It is the long-term practical and cultural value that records have for the public and researchers at large. The practical value lies in the use of records in family history studies, proof of property and other rights and evidence in court. From the cultural value, records can be used for research into, amongst others, political, social and economic matters. In other words, records can be used to describe or reconstruct an event or situation of the past.

2.2.1 Record keeping and information retrieval

Time spent on searching for missing or misfiled records is non-productive. It has been estimated that staff spend as much as 10% of their time at work searching for information, a figure which could be improved upon through the timely removal of duplicate and unnecessary records, the standardisation of a filing system and the application of meaningful descriptions of information resources often referred to as metadata (Egbuji 1999:93; Gill 1993:2).

A good RM programme can help any organisation upgrade its record keeping systems so that information retrieval is enhanced with correspondence improvements in office efficiency and productivity. A well designed and operated filing system with an effective index can facilitate

retrieval and deliver information to users as quickly as they need it (NARS 2003b:1). Where the organisation is small and few records are produced, it goes without saying that it will be easy to trace a particular record. However, the larger the organisation and the more voluminous the records, the more difficult will be the process.

2.2.2 The role of record keeping in demonstrating accountability and good governance

“Accountability implies that organisations and individuals should be able to explain their actions to others in a transparent and justifiable manner” (Ngulube 2004:2). To be accountable in the sense expected by modern governance is no easy matter. Accountability requires that the systems of reporting and controls in the organisation are appropriate and transparent. At the base of many of these systems lies the basic system of record keeping (Ngoepe 2004:3). The mechanisms for accountability within the government cannot work properly without proper records management practices.

Records are the primary means by which governmental bodies explain their decisions and prove what they have done. A government department’s ability to function efficiently and give account of its actions could be negatively affected if proper records management practices are not applied. To this end, it is imperative that a government department should take responsibility for ensuring that its records management practices are aligned with the broader principles of good governance (NARS 2004:13).

2.2.3 The role of records management in exposing corruption and fraud

Poor record keeping affects the entire accounting function, with the result that reporting and auditing may become virtually impossible (IRMT 1999:37). “Without proper records management, fraud cannot be proven, meaningful audits cannot be carried out, and government actions are not open to review.” (Health Service Circular 1999:9; Mnjama 2004:4).

Virtually all approaches to improving financial management rely on more efficient use of information but these approaches cannot succeed if financial records are badly managed (Egbuji

1999:99). In this regard the primary value of a records management is to act as a control system that reinforces other control systems such as internal and external audits.

2.2.4 Records management and decision-making

In order to make appropriate decisions, managers must have appropriate information. “In today’s business environment, the manager that has the relevant data first often wins, either by making the decision ahead of competition, or in case of a government department, by making a better, more informed decision” (Venter 2004:4). A RM programme can help to ensure that managers and executives have the information they need when they need it. Decisions are only as good as the information on which they are based. “To make professional decisions, managers should have background information (documentation provided by records) to use as a basis for evaluating the alternatives (forecasting past experiences, consequences experienced by other organisation, provided by records) and means for validating the decisions (feedback and control mechanism provided by records)” (IRMT 1999:15).

2.2.5 Record keeping and the preservation of corporate memory

The records constitute what might be termed “corporate memory” of the organisation, for it is impossible for officials to remember everything (Kirkwood 2002:3). Every business day, the records created by the organisation could become background data for future management decisions and planning, and also future scholars may use these records to research the working of the organisation. Each person’s memory of an event is different. Therefore an organisation cannot depend on the elusive memory and conflicting recollections. Even if someone was capable of remembering everything, there is still the problem of staff changes and that later arrivals must know what occurred previously in order to carry on sensibly and purposefully, and therefore avoid reinventing the wheel. There has to be evidence of what was done and how it was done. In other words, records help to establish communications between the past and future generations (Griffin 1964; Van Albada 2001:39).

2.2.6 The role of records management in minimising litigation risk

Organisations without a RM programme run the risk of destroying records too soon and consequently of not being able to produce them when legally required, or else they adopt the costly practice of keeping everything forever a practice that can also backfire in legal proceedings. The organisation is then required to produce everything it has relating to the proceedings, not just what it is legally required to have. At the very least, producing all related records is time-consuming and expensive (Diamond 1995:3).

2.2.8 The role of records management in fostering professionalism

A government department with files stashed on top of file cabinets and in boxes everywhere creates a poor working environment (Hare 1998:115). The perceptions of the public, and the 'image' and 'morale' of the staff, though hard to quantify in cost-benefit terms, may be among the best reasons to establish a good RM programme. Nearly all business functions need to be documented to record and regulate the activity of the organisation. The importance of this activity was recognised thousands of years ago when marks were made on clay tablets to record sales and taxes as discussed in section 2.2.

2.2.9 Promoting good governance

Governments around the world are often praised for good governance or rebuked for bad governance (www.baobabconnections.org). For an organisation to be praised for good governance, there are many contributing factors, of which availability of records and the effective management thereof is one of the critical factors. Sebina (2004:45) argues that good governance is predicated on the adoption of functional records management and the enactment of freedom of information legislation by government.

Good governance has eight (8) major characteristics, transparency being one of them. Transparency means that information is freely available and accessible to those who will be affected by such decisions and their endorsement means that enough information is provided and

that it is provided in easy forms and media. Management of records enables government to operate in a transparent fashion and the being able to account to the public who brought it to power (Ngulube 2004:2). Good governance can only be realised where records management is functional or comes to play.

In other words, for good governance to exist, citizens must be empowered to participate in meaningful ways in decision-making process and they should have a right to information. For good governance to be sustained, good records management programmes need to be introduced and practised. Information is crucial to good governance as it reflects and captures government's activities and processes. Cox & Wallace (2002:67) indicate that open government is an essential requirement for good government. For this to happen, there must be a free flow of information. Agere *et al* (1999:1) argue that the keeping of records and storing of information in an organisation has, in the last few years become critical not only for historical purposes but also, and more importantly, for current and future managerial and policy development.

Records are being used as tools and instruments with which to understand organisations and as a basis for improvement. Agere *et al* (1999:4) proceed by stating that in reviewing the performance of the entire public service machinery, it has always been necessary to review the objectives, functions, rules and regulations, procedures and practices. The overall outcome of these reviews would be the development of organisational manuals, policies and procedures which would guide staff towards best practices and ways of doing things. These outcomes are to be underpinned by recorded information which is properly stored and with a potential of being retrieved easily.

According to Dearstyne (1988:5) records document the origin, evolution, and operation of government and show how it responds to needs and serves its citizens. Effective officials routinely consult records in order to plan, to analyse and track programmes. Good records provide officials with the right information for decision making. Records have an impact on the administration and management of government departments.

2.2.10 Supporting democratic accountability

Lawton and Rose (1994:19) define accountability as a process where a person or groups of people are required to present an account of their activities and the way in which they have or have not discharged their duties. Accountability can be linked to the concept of responsibility as one cannot be accountable to anyone unless one has responsibility for doing something. Lawton and Rose (1994:19) further indicate that accountability can be achieved by:

- Compliance with the law and internal and external regulations;
- Fulfilling auditing requirements; and
- Response to challenge.

Records are clearly a key element in supporting accountability. In the words of Australian lawyer, Willis (2005), sound information and records management underpins ... many of the vital aspects of corporate governance (Orr, 2008:165). Management of records enables government to operate in a transparent fashion and being able to account to the public who brought it into power.

According to Shepherd (2006:6) one of the reasons for keeping records is that organisations use records to support accountability when they need to prove that they have met their obligations or complied with best practices of established policies. Agere *et al* (1999:7) concur with the above sentiments by stating that for the instrument to be effective, it must have records and information available for the users to assess for themselves the extent to which the state is being accountable to society. One of the pillars of accountability and transparency in a democratic state is the extent to which people have access to information to assist them in evaluating whether the government is transparent or not.

Hence the promulgation of the Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000, which gives effect to the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996, which gives the public the right of access to public records. The Act is an assurance that governance is carried out to reflect and protect the will of the people. Cox & Wallace (2002:67)

expresses a similar view by stating that accountability and transparency cannot be achieved in an environment where information is not available. Records management underpins accountability. According to Dearstyne (1985) good record keeping ensures open government which, in turn, promotes more confidence in public officials and more accountability in the use of public funds (Ngulube 2004:2).

Information flow is meant to keep the public informed on government activities and processes and is presented as a measure of its comfort to account to the people who brought it to power. From the above discussion, it is evident that information is at the centre of the relationship between government and the public. Without the availability of information, the public cannot understand how and why decisions are made on their behalf. Records are therefore reflective of the activities undertaken and the processes that have or are being initiated on behalf of the public; hence they should be properly managed.

2.2.11 Supporting continuing service delivery

According to the Worldbank (2000:3), the effectiveness and efficiency of the public service, generally, across the range of government functions depends upon the availability of and access to information held in records. For example, development projects are often difficult to implement and sustain effectively in the absence of well managed records. Records document past policies, decisions and alternatives. By consulting the records, local officials do not waste time and resources by “re-inventing the wheel” when they approach similar problems and issues (Dearstyne, 1985:8). Implying that when records are readily available and accessible, delays in decision-making affecting service delivery can be prevented. In terms of the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa’s Records Management Policy Manual (2003:2), governmental bodies should have ready access to the information they require to deliver their services to the public in an accountable manner.

Without adequate records, the effectiveness of development projects must suffer. There will be no means of verifying that funds for development are used as intended (Ngulube 2004:2). The public suffers when inadequate information systems affect programme delivery. Indeed, essential

services such as municipal environmental health, primary health, the provision of water, all depend upon well kept and well-managed records. Hence record keeping is of vital importance in the strategic planning processes of an organisation.

The successful planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) in municipalities, for example, relies on the availability of information and well kept records. The IDP sets out strategies, priorities, programmes and projects that need to be undertaken to realise the objectives of a municipality. These cannot be successfully implemented when records are neglected as records are reflective of the activities undertaken or to be undertaken on behalf of the public. Effective records management in this regard eliminates duplication of services and ensures that all the communities get a fair share in as far as the delivery of services is concerned.

2.3 Legal Framework

In South Africa a legal framework exist for both public and private bodies to have effective control and management of their records and to be able to make information available when required. Statutory bodies were also established to ensure proper management and care of records and accessibility of the public to the records to protect their rights. Examples of such bodies are the Human Rights Commission which should ensure that mechanisms are put in place for the public to exercise their constitutional right of access to information held by the public and private bodies, and the National Archives and Records Services which is assigned with the responsibility of ensuring proper care and management of records by public bodies (NARS Act 43 of 1996).

2.3.1 Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996

Section 32(1)(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 (thereafter referred to as the 1996 Constitution) states that everyone has the right of access to information held by the state or held by another person when that information is required for the exercise or protection of any right. This clause demonstrates the importance of records management to

protect human rights as information can only be accessed when there is a sound records management system.

Section 32(2) of the 1996 Constitution culminated in the promulgation of the Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000 as it provides that national legislation be enacted to give effect to this right. In terms of Section 41(1)(c) of the 1996 Constitution, all spheres of government and all organs of state must provide effective, transparent, accountable and coherent government for the Republic as a whole. Section 95(1)(f) requires governmental bodies to grant access to the Office of the Auditor-General to information on the financial transactions entered into in order to give account to taxpayers. As already discussed, accountability and transparency can only happen if the public, to which governmental bodies are accountable, has ready access to all information that underpins the decision-making processes. It can also happen if the Office of the Auditor-General, or any other governmental body that plays a guardian or watchdog role, has ready access to information on the transactions entered into by government.

2.3.2 Promotion of Access to Information Act no. 2 of 2000 (paia)

The above-mentioned Act gives effect to the constitutional right of access to any information held by public or private bodies, and which is required for the exercise or protection of any rights. The Act seeks to foster a culture of transparency and accountability in public and private bodies. It is also empowering and educating the public to understand and exercise their rights, to understand the functions and operations of public bodies and to effectively scrutinise and participate in decision-making by public bodies that affect their rights. In accordance with Sections 14(1) to (4) and 5(1) to (4) of the PAIA, the information officers of all public and private bodies are required to compile a manual containing all the details of the body. The manual should categorise all the records held by a particular body and spell out the procedures that need to be followed by the public to access the records. Public and private bodies are further required to update this manual on a regular basis and make it available when requested.

As this Act impacts on the protection of rights of the public, Information Officers are required to report annually to the South African Human Rights Commission with statistical data relating to

the number of requests accepted and/or rejected. The South African Human Commission was assigned with the task of monitoring the implementation of this Act and recommending best practices to Parliament.

The Commission must also assist persons and public/ private bodies wherever possible (PAIA, 2 of 2000). In terms of the above Act, public and private bodies are required to disclose information of public interest and provide records, which could reveal substantial contravention of, or failure to comply with the law; or where the information relates to imminent and serious public safety or environment risks; or where the public's interest outweighs the harm. (Source) For an effective and practical implementation of this Act, there should be easy access to records and this can only be possible where there are sound records management practices.

2.3.3 Promotion of Administrative Justice Act 3 Of 2000

The right to just administrative action is entrenched in the Bill of Rights, Section 33 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996. The Promotion of Administrative Justice Act 3 of 2000 (hereafter referred to as PAJA) was promulgated to give effect to the rights mentioned in subsections (1) and (2) of the Constitution, which are: (1) the right to administrative action that is lawful, reasonable and procedurally fair, and (2) when a person's rights have been adversely affected by such action, the right to be given written reasons.

Section 4(2)(b)(iii) of PAJA requires an administrator to compile a written report on the inquiry and give reasons for any administrative action taken or recommended. The availability of authentic and accurate records plays a vital role in ensuring fair and reasonable administrative action against persons and the public, as they are produced as evidence in such cases. Essentially, to ensure compliance with PAJA, governmental bodies should keep proper records of administrative actions and decisions.

2.3.4 National Archives and Records Services of South Africa Act 43 Of 1996

The above-mentioned Act provides for the establishment of the National Archives and Records Services (NARS) which is entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring proper management and care of public records and preservation and use of national archival heritage. The National Archivist in particular is charged with this responsibility. In terms of Section 3 the NARS shall: (c) ensure the proper management and care of all public records; and (h) promote an awareness of archives and records management, and encourage archival and records management activities.

Section 13(2)(a) of the Act stipulates that no public record under the control of a governmental body shall be transferred to an archives repository, destroyed, erased or otherwise disposed of without the written authorisation of the National Archivist. In accordance with Section 13(5) of Act 43 of 1996, the head of a governmental body shall, subject to any law governing the employment of personnel of the governmental body concerned and such requirements as may be prescribed, designate an official of the body to be the Records Manager of the body.

The Records Manager is responsible for the overall control and management of records. If Records Managers can perform their duties diligently and effectively, records would be correctly filed and easily accessible, and that would facilitate transparency, accountability and democracy. Further to that, controls would be exercised to ensure that only authorised persons have access to the information, thus preventing information and/or the records from being stolen or damaged. This will ultimately lead to the eradication of corruption and fraud.

2.3.5 Municipal Finance Management Act 56 Of 2003

According to the Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 the objective of this Act is to secure sound and sustainable management of the financial and fiscal affairs of municipalities and other institutions in the local sphere of government. The Act seeks to ensure that financial resources are directed at promoting the general welfare, thereby preventing corruption and fraud. In accordance with Section 61(2)(b) of Act 56 of 2003, 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. Effective records management contributes towards combating corruption and fraud. Section 62(b) of the Act urges municipalities to take reasonable steps to ensure that full and proper records of the financial affairs of the municipality are kept in accordance with any prescribed norms and standards.

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. The Accounting Officer is required to submit reports on, amongst others, asset and liability management, revenue management, expenditure management, on funds transferred to organisations and bodies outside government and irregular or fruitless and wasteful expenditure. Without well-kept records this requirement cannot be fulfilled. Section 112(1)(m) stipulates that measures should be taken for (i) combating fraud, corruption, favouritism and unfair and irregular practices in municipal supply chain management; and (ii) promoting ethics of officials and other role players involved in municipal supply chain management.

Corrupt activities in supply chain management could be prevented when records are well managed. Sections 121(1) and 122(1) require municipalities to prepare and adopt annual reports and financial statements, respectively. Availability of records is fundamental to fulfilling this requirement as records provide evidence of actions and decisions taken. In terms of Section 149 of the Act, if a provincial executive intervenes in terms of section 139 of the Constitution, the provincial executive and its representatives have access to such information, records and documents of the municipality. This section demonstrates the importance of records in determining the past activities, the current state of affairs and what course of action need to be taken. Records serve as a guideline and direction to officials, whether they are old or new in an organisation.

2.4 Elements of records management

According to the National Archives and Records Services Act 43 of 1996, elements of a sound records management programme are as follows:

2.4.1 Appointment or Designation of a Records Manager

Heads of governmental bodies should designate or appoint a staff member at senior management level to whom they can delegate the responsibility of ensuring that sound records management practices are implemented and maintained. This official is referred to as the Records Manager

2.4.2 Records Management Policy

Records Managers should develop and implement records management policies, which are endorsed by the head of the governmental bodies and their top management teams, as well as by the National Archives and Records Service. Adherence to these policies should be continuously monitored and the policies should be reviewed on an annual basis.

2.4.3 Records Management Procedures

The records management policy should be backed by the governmental body's records management procedures, which are simplified to guide officials of an organisation at large on acceptable records management practices.

2.4.4 Records Classification Systems

File Plan which is a plan by which documentation is arranged and stored to facilitate efficient retrieval and disposal. It also guides officials on how to allocate file numbers. Schedule for records other than correspondence files – which enables governmental bodies to manage records other than correspondence, for example, plans, agendas and minutes, microfilms, diagrammes, CDs, and others.

2.4.5 Disposal Programme

Records Managers should determine retention periods for all records, apply for the disposal authority from National Archives and Records Service and ensure that disposal authorities are

carried out on a regular basis. Excessive retention of records will cause difficulties in retrieving records and will result in space problems.

2.4.6 Training

Records managers and records office staff should be equipped with the necessary skills to enable them to carry out their functions properly. Records Managers should in turn ensure that all staff members of an institution are conversant with proper registry procedures and that they are capable of reading the filing system and allocate file numbers.

2.5 Managing records as a strategic resource

Although records constitute a vital resource as indicated above, they continue to be neglected in many government departments (Chinyemba & Ngulube 2005; Mnjama 2004:6; Ngulube 2004:6; Wallace 2004:6). Maintaining and controlling records in a government department is itself a costly operation because of the large expenditure on personnel, equipment, etc. (Wallace 1987:54). The greatest need in government departments or any other organisation is to develop strategies for managing records as a strategic resource for competitive advantage. As with any other business activity, it is important to devise a strategy for the introduction of records management into a government department. It must be seen as a means of furthering the aims and objectives of the department and as making a direct contribution to the critical success of business.

“It is important that records management should be seen as a dynamic activity which develops along with the business and changes” (Diamond 1995:3). According to ISO 15489 (2001), for a RM programme to succeed, it must be closely aligned to the needs of the organisation and in particular to the organisation’s strategic and policy objectives. ISO 15489 (2001) provides a practical design and implementation methodology which supports the introduction of a sustainable RM programme to meet organisational requirements. This ISO emphasises that this methodology is valid both for the establishment of a RM programme as a whole and for the development of particular systems within it. The effective RM programme must begin with a

records survey, supported by well-defined policies and procedures, a team of well qualified and competent staff and support from top management (Mnjama 2004:9).

It would seem from the discussion above that developing a RM programme to meet business needs is a difficult task, so much so that it is common for records management projects to exceed scheduled completion dates or to not be completed at all.

One strategy for improving or developing a proper RM programme is to divide it into several steps, each with a well-defined goal and set-off tasks to accomplish as shown in table 5 below. People within the organisation can develop RM systems or organisations can opt for outsourcing. Outsourcing allows an organisation to focus on what it does best and delegate other functions to consultants with expertise.

2.5.1 Preliminary investigation and records survey

As noted by Shepherd and Yeo (2003:6) no records management programme can be established, maintained or improved without an understanding of the organisation's existing records management system. Whether a government department is embarking on a RM programme or if it simply intends to improve the existing one, the starting point is to gain an understanding of the department's role, purpose and environment (ISO 15489-1:2001, clause 8.4).

This involves examining why the department exists, what products or services it offers, how it operates in the present, how it plans to operate in the future and what changes to its operations and methods have been made in the past. It also involves an investigation of external factors affecting the way in which the department operates, including its economic, political, legal, regulatory and social environment (Stairs & Reynolds 2006:32).

The next step will be to undertake a records survey in order to establish the extent to which records are contributing to an organisation's objectives (Diamond 1995:3; Mnjama 2004:9). Without this information it will be virtually impossible to plan for the RM programme. The information gathered at this stage can be utilised to develop retention schedules, identify vital

records, justify the appointment of a records manager, assign responsibilities, design a records management policy, etc.

2.5.2 Identification of strategies for satisfying records requirements

The next step when developing a RM programme is to gain the support of senior managers. It is essential to involve senior managers from the start, so that they support the programme, endorse the policy and provide resources. Senior managers often feel records management programme is not cost-effective (Diamond 1995:4). Without the support of senior management the project is doomed to fail. One of the first steps is to educate them in this area by explaining what records management is and the benefits it provides. While records management is not a profit centre it does save money through greater productivity, time saving, space saving, etc. (Wallace 1987:55)

2.5.3 Systems investigation and design

The goal of systems investigation is to gain a clear understanding of the problem to be solved or opportunity to be addressed (Stairs & Reynolds 2006:33). The next step is to ascertain whether the problem is worth solving. If the decision is to continue with the solution, the next step, system analysis, defines the problem and opportunities of existing system. When appropriate strategies have been agreed upon, RM systems can be designed in detail. According to ISO 15489 (2001) designs should be based on the requirements and strategies that have been identified and must take into account the size and resources of the organisation, and the extent to which its operations are concentrated on one site or geographically dispersed. At an operational level, systems must be designed so that they comply with regulatory or best practice requirements for health and safety in the workplace.

A single, organisation-wide RM system may be feasible in a small organisation, but in larger organisations separate systems will probably be needed in different functional areas (Mnjama 2004:9; Wallace 1987:56). While common models should be used where appropriate, it is also important that each system should be designed to match the needs of the relevant business processes and activities. When technological solutions are to be employed for record-capturing,

the relevant functionality should be built into operational systems as far as possible (Stairs & Reynolds 2006:32).

If operational staff members are going to be required to follow specific procedures, instructions can be incorporated into guidelines which have a wider scope, for example, RM rules about the capturing of email messages can be included in corporate guidelines on email use, or instructions for managing records of a particular business process can be included in procedural manuals relating to the process concerned (Venter 2004:6).

2.5.4 Planning and managing implementation

When the prerequisites are in place decisions must be taken about priorities for implementation. New systems may have to be introduced in stages, allowing time for piloting and testing each component before full implementation (Wallace 1987:56). Existing systems may have to be partly or wholly restructured, “while it is sometimes possible to implement a new system independently of any need to resolve problems inherited from past practice, more usually existing arrangements must be integrated into the new design“ (Venter 2004:6).

Priorities will vary according to organisational needs, but in general it is unwise to attempt the implementation of new systems for electronic records until paper systems are in good order. Government officials sometimes assume that the introduction of IT is all that is needed to solve problems relating to the managing of paper records, but if the paper records are in disarray, automation may simply transfer the problem to a different medium (Stairs & Reynolds 2006:32).

2.5.5 Post-implementation review

No project will be complete without a post-implementation review. Experience has shown that frequent minor maintenance of a records management programme, if done properly, can prevent major failures. Some of the reasons for RM programme maintenance according to Stairs and Reynolds (2006:646) include the following:

- Changes in business processes
- New requests from stakeholders, users and managers
- Government regulations
- Additions to, or relinquishing of, functions to other organisations,

After implementation the programme and each of its components must be reviewed and evaluated. The purpose of such reviews is to monitor progress and measure success so that senior management can be informed of the results and revisions to the programme can be made as necessary. Review and evaluation should also be ongoing processes. Policies and procedures should be examined regularly to ensure that they still meet the organisation's requirements (NARS 2003a:40).

Targets may be set and performance measured against them. Successful implementation of principles and strategies for record keeping will require the informed support of senior management of all organisations. All individuals in organisations should be involved in record keeping in that they are responsible for ensuring that evidence of their business activities is created. From there, the record keeping professionals should be responsible for ensuring that records are successfully managed for as long as they are required (Wamukoya 1999:7).

2.6 The management of electronic records in South Africa

Widespread use of the computer for record keeping by the state developed in the 1970s. In 1974 the SAS issued a circular to government offices (see appendix B for the circular) pointing out the fact that records in electronic format were public records and should be dealt with in terms of the Archives Act (Kirkwood 1994:8). It was only in the early 1990s that the SAS began developing strategies for establishing an electronic archive (Abbot 1999:74; Kirkwood 1991).

This was primarily in realisation that many governmental bodies were creating electronic records (Abbott 2001:63). The concern with managing electronic records was further encapsulated in the National Archives and Records Service Act (Act No. 43 of 1996). The Act defines electronic records systems and gives NARS specific authority for their management, for example, in terms

of section 13(2)(b)(ii) and (iii) the National Archivist shall determine the conditions under which records may be electronically reproduced and the conditions subject which electronic records systems should be managed. Given its mandate of managing electronic records, the NARS earlier envisaged that certain types of electronic records systems with archival value would be best preserved permanently in the offices of origin (Abbot 2001:63).

However, the NARS realised that the idea of governmental bodies maintaining custody of their own records for preservation, with archival value and records management direction, may not be a beneficial solution to the problem of e-records preservation. The problem with this approach is that records would not really be managed unless additional staff are hired and trained for this purpose of dealing with the new responsibility.

The governmental bodies may view the responsibility in a negative way as something that takes away valuable time and funds needed to perform their mission. This non-custodial approach is only a relocation of the problem, instead of a solution. Prior to 1993, electronic records were not accepted into archival custody in digital form. The relevant records first had to be converted into an acceptable archival medium, which at that stage was paper and microfilm (Abbot 2001:63). However, in 1993 the NARS' policy changed to accepting custody of electronic records in a digital format, provided that adequate guidelines and facilities could be provided for their archival retrieval and preservation (Ngulube 2001/2002:33).

Nevertheless, in 2007 the archive of electronic record keeping remained slight. The NARS has a small and rudimentary electronic archive, while none of the provinciaarchives services has capacity in this area (Abbot 2007:7). According to Abbot (2007:8) and Ngulube (2006:161) the only electronic records that the NARS had accepted into custody were in the form of snapshots of government's personnel database (PERSAL) and a Department of Foreign Affairs database, as they did not have the resources or infrastructure to preserve and facilitate access to records stored on optical media. The NARS has experienced problems with preserving the physical media on which these records were recorded as well as preserving the means of retrieving them (Ngulube 2006:162).

In addition to that, the NARS has little expertise in the area of electronic records management, although electronic records are proliferating throughout government departments (Abbot 2007:8; Ngulube 2006:162). Ngulube (2001/2002:32) argues that the NARS has taken a number of initiatives regarding the management and preservation of electronic records, for example, in January 1993 the Committee on Machine-Readable Archives (COMMA) was established in order to formulate an electronic policy for the SAS. In 2000 the NARS published guidelines for the management of electronic records.

These guidelines were updated in 2003, 2004 and 2006 (Keakopa 2006:14). They explain the mandatory requirements and procedures for managing electronic records. The major shortcoming according to Ngulube (2006:122) is that the guidelines are not simple or modular enough. Therefore they cannot be easily applied as procedures. Processes in these guidelines are not clearly articulated (Ngulube 2006:122).

However, in a comparative study Keakopa (2007:74) observed that South Africa is ahead of Namibia and Botswana as far as the management of electronic records is concerned. She argued that South Africa has established the necessary policies and procedures to guide the management of electronic records in government departments. Policies and procedures are important in guiding the proper management of electronic records. However, designing policy is one thing and implementation is another. It is of no use to have a well-developed policy but fail to implement it. This is the case in South Africa, as there are policies and directives for the management of electronic records from the NARS. Even though there are guidelines on the management of electronic records in the South African public sector, many government departments have not customised those guidelines (Ngulube 2006:123).

The NARS itself does not have infrastructure to take electronic records into archival custody. Even though the NARS propagate migration as its strategy for preservation of electronic records, the responsibility for migrating content to new technology remains with the governmental bodies. This is due to lack of infrastructure for ingesting electronic records into the NARS custody. As a result, the responsibility of migrating electronic records is left with the governmental bodies which do not have a mandate to preserve those records (Ngoepe 2008:13).

2.7 Records management training and education in South Africa

It is generally accepted that education plays an important role in updating knowledge and skills. It applies to both those who are already working and to prospective workers. Yusof and Chell (1998:26) point out that the most obvious way for records managers to enhance their resourcefulness is through education. The training and upgrading of skills can be achieved through workshops, vendor-sponsored programmes, professional seminars and college or university-level courses. There are a great many records management practitioners in South Africa but few records management qualifications. According to Metrofile(2007:6) there is no formal academic training programme specifically designed for records management in South Africa.

As a result, records management modules at the South African universities are encapsulated as an insignificant part of degrees and diplomas in Information Science/Studies. Most RM practitioners in South Africa have not received any formal training in records management (Metrofile 2007:7). Record keeping in South Africa has traditionally been viewed as a low-level routine work, such that investment in training and development of record keepers was deemed not cost-effective.

The point of lack of professional training in South Africa is also stressed by Keakopa (2006:186). Her studies found that there was a shortage of fully trained staff in South Africa. At the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa, for example, only one person was self-trained in electronic records management. The NARS has more than 4 000 client offices across the country. One person would not be able to cope with the continuous research that is necessary to keep up to date with electronic records management developments.

The historical trends show that when the idea of offering formal archival training was put forward in 1946 by the government, South African universities did not show any interest in taking up the challenge (Harris 1997:42). As a result, the SAS took up the challenge and designed a curriculum for the National Diploma in Archival Science, which was approved by the Department of Education and Culture in 1950 (Vos 1992:5). In the 1980s this Diploma was

moved to Technikon Southern Africa (TSA), which began developing it into a distance-learning qualification better suited to a wide range of students (Ngulube 2003:168).

However, it must be noted that the NARS did not totally withdraw from the training arena, as the National Archives and Records Service Act of 1996 obliges it to provide training to records managers employed by governmental bodies. Therefore the NARS still offers training in the form of a week-long course in records management (NARS 2006b:87). According to Abbot (2001:65; 2007:3) the provision of education for records managers in South Africa is very poor; however, the need to offer archival studies and/or records management was recognised by a number of tertiary institutions since the 1990s.

The University of KwaZulu-Natal has expanded its information studies courses at honours, masters and doctorate levels to accommodate archival science and records management (Ngulube 2003:153). In 1999 the University of the Witwatersrand launched an archives course within its heritage studies programme at postgraduate diploma and masters level (Harris 2000:100). In 2000 the University of South Africa introduced archives modules into its information science courses. In January 2004 the former Unisa merged with Technikon Southern Africa and incorporated the distance education component of Vista University (VUDEC) to form the new Unisa. The merger brought together vast resources and infrastructure, while consolidating the knowledge bases built up over the years by the three former institutions. With the merger, Unisa continued to offer records management and archival courses through the Departments of Information Science. The University of Johannesburg offers an overview of records management as part of their information management diploma.

2.8 Records management skills in South Africa

The NARS Act requires the head of a governmental body to designate an official of the body to be its records manager. The records manager is responsible for ensuring that the governmental body complies with the requirements of the Act. According to Kirkwood (2000:5) it has generally been a shortcoming in governmental bodies in the past that no one at an appropriately senior level has been assigned to the overall responsibility to manage records.

2.9.1 Municipal manager

Often records management is seen as a low-level function and, despite the commitment of registry and records clerks, they simply do not have the authority to formulate and implement overall records policies that are enforceable for staff at all levels. The regulations in terms of the NARS Act therefore stipulate that the official designated as the records manager shall (a) be in possession of an appropriate university or technikon qualification, and/or have appropriate professional experience; (b) have successfully completed the NARS' Records Management Course; (c) possess a thorough knowledge of the body's organisational structure, functions and records system; and (d) be responsible for promoting the effective, efficient and accountable management of the body's records and ensuring, by inspections and other means, the body's compliance with the Act and all other relevant legislations.

However, despite the above provisions, records managers in governmental bodies are appointed at a relatively low level (Abbot 2001:66). Normally, records management is just one of their responsibilities and often not a high priority. Furthermore, governmental bodies generally ignore the qualification criteria contained in the Archives Regulations when appointing records managers (Abbot 2001:66). This low level of the records managers and the fact that they are unable to focus on records management issues because of other responsibilities impact negatively on their ability to manage the records of their offices effectively, let alone trying to tackle the issues presented by electronic records.

2.9 Roles and Responsibilities

The role players involved in the management of VDM's records include the Municipal Manager, Director: Corporate Services, Records Manager, Information Technology Manager, Manager: Auxiliary Services, Senior Admin Officer: Fleet and Archives, Admin Officer: Archives (Registry head), Registry/ records office staff and records users. The roles and responsibilities are discussed henceforth. Some information in points 3.2.1 to 3.2.8 in the next discussion has been extracted from the job descriptions of the respective officials.

2.9.1 Municipal manager

As the accounting officer of the institution, the Municipal Manager is ultimately accountable for the record keeping and records management practices of VDM. He/ she should ensure implementation and maintenance of sound records management practices to enhance accountability, transparency and improved service delivery. As the head of the governmental body, the Municipal Manager is required, in terms of Section 13(5)(a) of the National Archives and Records Service Act 43 of 1996 (NARS Act), to designate an official of the body to be the Records Manager of the body.

2.9.2 Director: Corporate Services

The Corporate Services Department is the custodian of VDM's records. The Director: Corporate Services has delegated authority from the Municipal Manager to ensure the effective and efficient management of VDM's records. The Director manages the performance of the Records Manager.

2.9.3 Records Manager

The main responsibility of the Records Manager is to ensure that VDM complies with the requirements of the NARS Act. According to the National Archives and Records Service's (NARS) Performance Criteria for Records Managers of governmental bodies in South Africa, the functions of the Records Manager include, but not limited to the following:

- Drafting and implementing a records management policy and the records procedure manual for VDM;
- Ensuring that VDM has an approved Filing System/ File Plan;
- Ensuring the safe custody and storage of all VDM records in all formats;
- Ensuring proper maintenance and management of VDM records;
- Ensuring that a proper disaster management programme is in place and communicated throughout VDM; and

- Responsible for implementing and managing a suitable training programme for managers, employees and records management staff, to make them aware of their joint responsibility in maintaining sound records management practices.

To successfully carry out the above mentioned functions, the official must ensure that the records management programme is allocated with the appropriate resources, that is, finance, staff and equipment.

2.9.4 Information Technology (IT) Manager

The IT manager is responsible for the day-to-day maintenance of electronic systems that store records. He/she should work in conjunction with the Records Manager to select an appropriate electronic records management system that will meet the needs of the organisation. He/ she should also ensure that electronic public records are properly managed, protected and appropriately preserved for as long as they are required for business, legal and long-term preservation purposes.

2.9.5 Manager: Auxiliary Services

The Manager: Auxiliary Services is a unit manager under which records management is located. These officials have delegated authority from the Records Manager to co-ordinate and oversee the records/ archives management function. Among the responsibilities of this official is to ensure that a Records Management Policy, Procedure Manual and systems are developed, compilation and updating of a File Plan and disposal of VDM's records.

2.9.6 Senior Administration Officer: Assets and Archives

This official ensures the centralisation of the records management function. This official works hand in hand with the registry head to workshop VDM officials on the requirements of the NARS Act and their record keeping responsibilities to ensure sound records management. This task involves communicating VDM's Records Management Policy, Records Management

Procedure Manual and the File Plan to VDM officials. This official also acts as a liaison between the registry staff and management.

2.9.7 Administration Officer: Archives (Registry Head)

The registry head is responsible for the day-to-day management of the registry office staff. This official drafts the Records Management Policy and Procedure Manual and communicates these to all officials. The Administration Officer also compiles and updates File Plans and arrange for the disposal of records. In consultation with the Senior Admin Officer, the official identifies performance gaps and communicates training needs of registry staff to managers, to improve their performance standard.

This official also ensures that registry staff is provided with sufficient resources to enable them to perform their duties effectively. The registry head is responsible for controlling the movement of files and ensuring safe custody and storage of documents.

2.9.8 Registry/ Records Office Staff

The registry staff is responsible for the physical management of the records in their care. They file documents and retrieve them when requested. They also assist VDM staff with the allocation of file reference numbers.

2.10 Historical trends of records management practices in the VDM

In many government departments in South Africa, including the DPLG, structured records management systems were common before 1994, operating as part centralised registry, often with a well-trained and experienced registry staff component. Senior public servants had an understanding of the importance of records management because the majority of them started their careers in the registry (NARS 2000/2001). In this environment, records were well kept because records management requirements were known and observed.

Furthermore, the quality of registry staff was relatively high (NARS 2000/2001). This was the norm across government departments in South Africa. Like in other government departments, at the VDM in the years following democracy this situation deteriorated progressively. Informal practices supplanted formal rules; and registries were no longer taken seriously. While the public service expanded steadily, bringing with it a corresponding increase in the flow of paper, the more formal ways of working gradually collapsed; informal and often ad hoc work methods prevailed.

Typically a departmental culture developed that made little use of records of the previous apartheid government for reference purposes. As a result, little resources were allocated for records storage and staff (Vosloo personal communication, 16 November 2006:88). Eventually, the registry stopped acting as a point of entry for new recruits. Instead, people who were ineffective or disruptive were relegated to the registry.

For example, according to the previous records manager, in 2003 when the restructuring started in the VDM, one security officer and two cleaners who could not be placed anywhere were dumped in the registry (Vosloo personal communication, 16 November 2006:22). This was due to the fact that records management was considered one of the lowliest of administrative functions. Its ranks were decimated, even as new and complex electronic information systems were overwhelming the Department.

As a result, records management systems collapsed because registry clerks did not have the authority to formulate and implement overall records policies that are enforceable on staff at all levels. People working in the VDM registry had limited training or experience with record keeping work. This led to a decline in attention to the structure and management of current records and respect for record keeping in general. Records classification designed to meet the record keeping requirements of the apartheid government became unwieldy and ultimately unmanageable.

However, despite the low usage of records, there was an extreme reluctance to destroy records, even after they ceased to have any value to the Department (Vosloo personal communication 16

November 2006). This is evident by the mass of records that the VDM inherited from the previous dispensation. According to A Vosloo (personal communication, 16 November 2006), from 1994 the VDM's registry existed only to provide messenger, courier and postal services. It became apparent that the move from the old dispensation to the new has resulted in a new workforce which was unaware of proper records management practices. During the 2003/2004 financial year the VDM conducted business process mapping in order to align the organisational structure to the strategic plan of the Department. This process resulted in restructuring which increased the number of personnel in the VDM and the creation of new branches such as the Urban Renewal Programme (URB), Free Basic Services (FBS), Local Economic Development (LED), Disaster Management, etc.

This major restructuring process had an impact on the information needs of the VDM. The following symptoms of a failure to manage records as explained by IRMT (1999:40-45) were realised during restructuring at the VDM:

- The loss of control over the creation and use of records.
- The loss over access.
- Fragmentation of official records.
- Existence of different versions of the same information and the absence of authentic records.
- The loss of contextual information, such as the originator and the date of creation.

As a result of the restructuring, there was a necessity for the newly restructured VDM to accommodate the needs of all its functions in the record keeping system as well as to revive the deteriorating system. The VDM then realised and recognised the value of records management in its normal operations. More efforts regarding records management were taken in 2004 after the process of restructuring was completed. For the first time, qualified records management professionals were appointed with the mission of establishing a fully-fledged registry that provides an efficient records management service to the whole Department.

On 2 April 2004, the VDM decided to appoint a service provider to develop a records management system for the newly structured Department (DPLG 2005b:99). A formal quotation was developed in consultation with the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa. The specification of the formal quotation covered the following:

- Studying (understanding) the structure and functions of the VDM.
- Studying (understanding) the business processes of the VDM
- Consultation with Branch Heads, Chief Directors, Directors and staff involved in generating and receiving of records.
- Consultation with NARS.
- Development of classification systems, i.e. file plan and records control schedule.
- Obtaining disposal authority regarding all the records of the VDM to enable the VDM to allocate proper retention periods to all its records to enable it to comply with the requirements of accountability and transparency.
- Develop a records management policy and procedure manual.
- Develop an implementation plan and provide an after-service support during the implementation process.

After a thorough evaluation and several consultations with all stakeholders, AIMS was appointed to develop the records management system for the VDM. On 1 December 2004, AIMS embarked on a project to develop a records management system with several information audits being done.

2.11 Conclusion

From the above discussions, it can be deduced that records are inextricably entwined with increased transparency, accountability and good governance. It also became apparent that fraud cannot be proven, meaningful audits cannot be carried out and government actions are not open to review when records are not well managed. Records provide verifiable evidence of fraud and can lead investigators to the root cause of corruption.

Sound records management is therefore at the centre of increased accountability and good governance, it is one of the best weapons in fighting corruption, it plays a vital role in the advancement of human rights and contributes towards ensuring sound financial management. Records should therefore be managed in the same manner that the other organisational resources, such as finance and staff, are managed. Furthermore, the discussion has revealed that sound records management is not a choice, but compulsory as it is regulated by legislation. Advocating the management of records as an organisational and societal benefit is therefore not an activity to be taken for granted. Ignorance on records management can have adverse effects to the organisation's performance and can drain financial resources, and that will ultimately affect service delivery.

Although VDM's records management practices are satisfactory, VDM still needs to go a long way to improve its records management systems. It is evident from the above discussion that institutions should have skilled and experienced Records Managers if they aspire to have proper records management systems. This is due to the fact that the responsibility of ensuring compliance with legislation regulating records management, particularly the NARS Act, vests with the Records Manager.

This official is also assigned with the responsibility of influencing the institution's strategic planning process and ensuring that all officials are works hopped and acquaint themselves with the contents of the VDM's Records Management Policy, Records Management Procedure Manual and File Plan. VDM should thus consider capacitating its Records Manager and inculcate the culture of caring for public records on senior management and staff at large. Training programmes on records management should also be intensified. Neglecting the records management function can detrimentally affect VDM and that could culminate in the permanent loss of institutional memory. Ideally, the Records Manager should be dedicated to records management, so as to completely focus on the records management function.

Given the fact that records management is a collective responsibility whereby all users are required to play a role in ensuring its effectiveness, the next chapter will focus on the results of the survey in which respondents were VDM employees (records users).

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the research design and the process of investigation based on the two research paradigms, namely the quantitative and the qualitative research paradigms (Leedy, 2004:89). A suitable research paradigm for this study was selected after the two paradigms were studied and discussed. A justification for the research paradigm chosen is provided. The data collection method including ethical measures is discussed. The procedure employed for data analysis is provided. In general, this chapter will illustrate an overall methodology together with the methods used to achieve the objectives of this research as stated in chapter one. It also describes the overall methodology adopted, population identification, sampling procedures and unit of analysis, the means to study site methods for data collection and analysis.

3.2 The study area

The study was in the form of an exploratory, descriptive cross-sectional survey, which was conducted on role and trends of records management with specific reference to Vhembe District municipality, Limpopo Province. Vhembe District Municipality are found in the Limpopo province. It forms part of the far north region of the province. It is located on the western side of the Punda Maria gate. Its coordinates are 23°30`S and 29°30`S latitude and 30°30`E and 22°30`E longitude (Kabanda, 2001:16).

3.3 Research design

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:647), a research design is a plan or structured framework of how you intend conducting the research process in order to solve a problem. The type of inquiry conducted was instrumental in determining the type of research design to be used. Since the attitudes, behaviour and experience of VDM employees, amongst other things, had to

be studied in order to thoroughly investigate the role of records management at VDM, the survey research was used in this study.

Bryman (1992:11) argues that the survey's capacity for generating quantifiable data on larger numbers of people who are known to be representative of a wider population in order to test theories or hypotheses, has been viewed by many practitioners as a means of capturing many of the ingredients of science.

The primary question that was explored in this study was whether the management of records, as one of the valuable resources, receives the attention it deserves at VDM. To answer the primary question and the sub-questions, a questionnaire with structured questions was constructed and distributed to selected respondents within VDM.

3.4 Research Methods

The descriptive survey method was used in the present study because it was appropriate for investigating an existing situation or current condition. The study used descriptive survey method to collect data by means of questionnaires and interview. Despite the main disadvantage of being somewhat artificial and superficial, the survey research method had advantages in terms of the data that could be collected, and the data could be standardised (Babbie, 1990:254-255). The hallmarks of the descriptive survey methods were its strength as a tool for inquiring the survey status quo of the phenomenon. This study will use both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

3.4.1 Quantitative research methodology

Quantitative research places emphasis on understanding through looking closely at people's words, actions and records. Quantitative approach to research looks past these, to their mathematical significance and the results of the observations are quantified. According to the study guide (2008:13), a major difference between the two approaches is not the counting or lack of counting of the occurrences of a particular word or behavior, but rather the meaning given to

the words, behaviours or documents as interpreted through quantitative or statistical analysis as opposed to patterns of meaning which emerge from the data, and are often presented in the participant's own words.

It is stated by Henning (2004:1) that if one wants to look into social reality, using a prepared questionnaire with specific items to which people must respond by choosing a predetermined set of scaled responses, the study will be known as a quantitative inquiry. The researcher perceived quantitative research methodology to be more relevant for this study as it would enable the researcher to obtain relevant information from the sample group through a questionnaire with closed and open-ended questions.

A combination of both the descriptive and analytical approaches was also used. According to Neuman (2006:34) a descriptive research presents a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting, or relationship. In other words, the research can only report on what has or is happening.

In this study the researcher used VDM's Records Management Policy, Procedure Manual and other relevant documentation as a source to describe the current records management practices at VDM. An analytical approach was also applied to do a critical evaluation of VDM's records management practices against legislative requirements.

3.4.2 Qualitative research methodology

De Vos (2001:240) defines qualitative research as a multi-perspective approach making sense of interpreting or reconstruction this interaction in terms of meanings that the subjects attach to it. This approach deals with data that are principally verbal. It is the approach in which the procedures are not as strictly formalized as in quantitative research and the scope is more likely to be undefined and a more philosophical mode of operation is adopted. It aims at understanding and interpreting the meanings and intentions that underlie everyday human action. Qualitative researchers maintain that many natural properties cannot be expressed in quantitative terms; they will lose their reality if expressed simply in terms of frequency (Kincheleo, 1991:143).

Qualitative methodology refers to research which produces descriptive data: generally no numbers or counts are assigned to observations. The indispensable condition or qualification for qualitative methodology is a commitment to seeing the world from the point of view of the actor (the participant). Because of this commitment to see through the eyes of one's subjects, close involvement is advocated (Bryman, 1984:78).

Creswell (1998:12) states that it is clear that in qualitative research one gets closer to the people, talks to them and tries to get into their subjective feelings to understand the reasons why they do what they do. Reality is, therefore, subjective and one seeks to understand phenomena. Concepts are in the form of themes, motifs and categories. The research design is therefore flexible. Inductive logic is employed in the quest to derive meaning from subjects. These are meanings people attach to everyday life. Applied qualitative methodologies allow the researcher to know people personally and to see them as they are, to experience their daily struggles when confronted with real situations. Using a qualitative research methodology, the researcher interprets and describes the actions of people when confronted with life situations.

Furthermore, the sensitivity of certain issues and issues identified as impacting the research negatively in the environment being evaluated, not only demanded intimate personal involvement, but also demanded the "personal experience" of the researcher to be exploited to the fullest, a view upheld by Meulenber- Buskens (1997) as imperative to assure in a qualitative research being undertaken. Checkland (1989) supports this view, however extends the concept and is of the opinion that the researcher becomes a participant in the action, and the process of change itself becomes the subject of research.

3.5 Population of the study

Babbie, Haley and Zaino (2003:112) describe a population for a study as that group (usually of people) about whom the researcher wants to draw inferences. However, with limited time and money, researchers are unlikely to study the entire body of relevant facts about the whole group of people under investigation. Therefore the findings and conclusions in survey research are

based on information gathered from a limited number of people from whom generalisations can be made about the whole number. The population for this study was all the VDM employees. The VDM internal telephone directory that listed 300 employees and their designations according to directorates was used as a sampling frame to select the sample.

3.6 Sampling

The population was constituted of VDM officials from all departments since records management is a cross-departmental collective responsibility. However, due to limited time, the researcher could not study the whole population and had to select a sample of (40) participants. As Neuman (2006:19) puts it, that by sampling, the primary goal of researchers is to get a small collection of units from a much larger collection or population, such that the researcher can study the smaller group and produce accurate generalizations about the larger group.

3.7 Sampling Methods

Mouton further mentions that the aim of sampling is to produce representative's selection of population elements. With regards to presentation Wimmer and Dominick (1983:58) mentioned that a sample that is not representative of population, regardless of its size, is inadequate for testing purposes-the results cannot be generalised for the population.

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2001:218), in non-probability sampling, the researcher has no way of forecasting or guaranteeing that each element of the population will be presented in the sample. Furthermore, some members of the population have little or no chance of being sampled. The selected type for this research was therefore the purposive or purposeful sampling. Purposive sampling has been selected for this research. It is appropriate for the research problem for this study.

3.8 Sampling Size

According to Wimmer and Domminick (1988:68), determining an adequate sample size is one of the most controversial aspects of sampling. How large a sample should be in order to be representative of the population has no simple answer (1983:68)? Best and Kahn (1993:19) stated that there is no fixed number or percentage of subjects that determine the size of an adequate sample. It may depend upon the nature and the population of interest or data gathered and analysed.

Table 3.1: Sampling size

| TARGET | STUDY POPULATION | STUDY SAMPLE |
|-------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Municipal mangers | 20 | 5 |
| IDP officers | 50 | 5 |
| Ward Committee | 100 | 10 |
| Asset manager | 30 | 10 |
| VDM workers | 100 | 20 |
| Total | 300 | 20 |

3.9 Data collection techniques

According to Mouton (1996:67) data collection involves applying the measurement to the sample or cases selected for the investigation. "We must constantly remind ourselves that the human senses (our eyes, ears, and occasionally even our taste and touch) are our "first-order" measuring instruments if they are qualitative (Mouton, 1996:7)). On the basis of our visual auditory and tactile observations and perceptions, we begin to classify responses, people, actions and events.

However, because we aspire to truthful representations of the social world, we have to augment our observations by more reliable and valid measuring instruments, such as scales, questionnaires and observation schedules. If properly constructed and validated such instruments

assist in collecting data that are more likely to be reliable than they would be had instruments not been used.

3.9.1 Questionnaire Design

This study used a combination of data collection tools with the self-administered questionnaire as the principal instrument for data collection. Self-administered questionnaires are easily distributed to a large number of people and they often allow anonymity (Anderson & Poole 2001:17; Mitchell & Jolley 2004:180). However, the method relies on other people to complete the questionnaire.

The questionnaire consisted of (25) questions as the researcher did not want to demoralize respondents by asking too many questions. Fourteen (14) of the questions were closed-ended and two (2) were open-ended. The fact that the study was conducted at the time when VDM officials had a hectic schedule due to the auditing, strategic planning and budgeting processes that were taking place, was also taken into account when the questionnaire was administered.

The average amount of time taken to complete the questionnaire was fifteen (15) minutes. The questions were preceded by the research title and instructions. Participants were assured of their anonymity and it was further mentioned that confidentiality would be observed. Consent forms were issued to participants to be completed and signed prior to answering the questions. Respondents were expected to choose one response from a series of questions and mark the appropriate answer with an X.

The questions intended to reveal the shortcomings and inadequacies of the current VDM's records management practices. Hence in certain questions respondents were required to motivate their answers. Questionnaires were distributed to selected respondents from different job levels or categories, ranging from senior management, middle management to lower levels not below level 10 (between Level 2 and 10, Level 2 being the third highest level at ADM).

3.9.2 Open-ended Interviews

The interview is, in a sense, an oral type of questionnaire. Instead of writing the response, the respondents or interviewee gives the needed information verbally in a face to face relationship. As a research method however, the interview can be viewed as more than an exchange of small talk. It represents a direct attempt by the researcher to obtain reliable and valid measures in the form of verbal responses from one or more respondents

Difficulties were also present during the interviews that were held. Many of the respondents were at times reluctant to render an interview slot at work due to work overload or legitimate tiredness on their part as well them as being discouraged by the working environment. At first the respondents were very tense in reaction to the questions, but as the interview progressed they became more relaxed and started reacting more positively towards the interviewing process. Interviews were conducted during December 2012 which lasted between 30-40 minutes. Most of the interviews were conducted at the homes of the respondents.

3.10 Data analysis

Miles & Huberman (1994:90) state that data analyses is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcription, field note, and other materials that are accumulated to increase the researcher's own understanding of them and to enable one to present what one has discovered.

The data gathered was grouped into categories. An analysis was done using Statistical Package Social Sciences (SPSS) immediately after the data has been collected and thereafter the results were interpreted in order to generate research report. The results were presented in the form of tables and percentages. A brief discussion representing tables are given to summarize the whole data.

3.11 Ethical Consideration

The previous sections have dealt with the technical side of social research, with issues of research methodology up to data collection techniques. Besides these technical aspects, there is another dimension to the social science that must be considered i.e. the moral dimension. When researchers think about how to conduct research, they must think not only of using the right techniques they have learned. They must think about research ethics (Singleton 1998:144). There are some vital non-scientific concerns that shape the activities of social researchers.

These are the ethical considerations that must be kept in mind as the researcher learns the logic and techniques of social research (Babbie, 1998:38). According to Babbie and Mouton (2003:520), an ethical issue arises out of our interaction with other people, other beings (such as animals) and the environment especially where there is potential for, or is, a conflict of interests. The scientist has the right to the search for truth but not at the expense of the rights of other individuals. For example, researchers have the right to collect data by interviewing people but not at the expense of the interviewees' right to privacy. Just as practical considerations can prevent researchers from implementing research design or obtaining as large or diverse a sample as possible, so too can ethical considerations constrain scientific enquiry.

Ethics may prohibit researchers from using experimental treatments that could harm research participants, from asking questions that would prove extremely embarrassing or threatening, from making observations that would deceive or place subjects under duress, and from reporting information that would constitute an invasion of privacy. In addition, researchers are expected to be completely honest in observing, analysing, and reporting findings, and to be responsible about the limits and application of scientific knowledge (Singleton, 1988:444). Some of the ethical considerations will be briefly outlined.

3.11.1 Protection from harm

Researcher should not expose research participants to unnecessary physical or psychological harm. Participants should not risk losing life or limb, nor should they be subjected to unusual

stress, embarrassment, or loss of self-esteem. In cases where the nature of study involves creating a small amount of psychological discomfort, participants should know this ahead of time, and any necessary debriefing or counseling should follow immediately after the participation.

3.11.2 Informed consent

According to Paul and Jeanne (2010:101) they say when people are intentionally recruited for participation in a research study, they should be told the nature of the study to be conducted and given the choice of either participating or not participating. Furthermore, they should be told that, if they agree to participate, they should have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Any participation in a study should be strictly voluntary.

3.11.3 Right to privacy

Paul and Jeanne (2010:102) further say that any research study involving human beings should be respect participants' right to privacy. Under no circumstances should a researcher report, either oral or written, be presented in such a way that others become aware of how a particular participant has responded or behaved. In generally, a researcher must keep the nature and quality of participants' performance strictly confidential.

3.11.4 Honesty with professional colleagues

Researchers must report their findings in a complete and honest fashion, without misrepresenting what they have done or intentionally misleading others about the nature of their findings. And under no circumstances should a researcher fabricate data to support a particular conclusion, no matter how seemingly "noble" that conclusion may be.

In this study, respondents were assured of anonymity and that information provided by the participants would be regarded as confidential unless agreed upon by the participant and the researcher.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter offered a detailed description of the method used in the empirical study. The research instrument used to collect data was described as well as sampling procedures followed and methods of data analysis employed. The following chapter interprets data gathered from the survey.

On 1.7 the choice of research methodology and data collection used adopted in this study were discussed and justified. The purpose of the study was to assess current financial management practices in the Vhembe District Municipality. The purpose of this chapter is to present an analysis of data collected through questionnaires and interviews. A copy of the questionnaire and interview schedule are attached as Appendix 1 and 2.

4.2. Biographical information of the respondents

Table 4.1: Age distribution

| Age (Years) | Frequency | % of the Respondents |
|-------------|-----------|----------------------|
| 20-29 | 4 | 8% |
| 30-39 | 18 | 36% |
| 40-49 | 10 | 20% |
| 50-59 | 6 | 12% |
| 60-69 | 6 | 12% |
| >70 | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |

The age of the respondents was assessed using a scale from 20 years to more than 70 years. As seen in Table 4.1, the majority of the respondents were between the ages of 30 and 39 years (36%: 18; n=18). There were no respondents in the age group over 70 years.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

| Gender | Frequency | % of the respondents |
|--------|-----------|----------------------|
| Male | 12 | 24 |
| Female | 18 | 36 |
| Total | 30 | 100 |

4.1 Introduction

In section 1.7 the choice of research methodology and data collection tools adopted in this study were discussed and justified. The previous chapter (four) discussed records management practices in the Vhembe District Municipality. The purpose of this chapter is twofold: to present an analysis of data collected through questionnaires (see appendix B for a copy of the questionnaire and interviews to discuss the findings of the study.

4.2. Biographical information of the respondents

Table 4.1: Age distribution

| Age (Years) | Frequency | % of the Respondents |
|--------------|-----------|----------------------|
| 20-29 | 4 | 16 |
| 30-39 | 18 | 36 |
| 40-49 | 10 | 20 |
| 50-59 | 6 | 12 |
| 60-69 | 8 | 16 |
| >70 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

The age of the respondents was recorded using a range from 20 years to more than 70 years. As seen in Table 4.1, the majority of the respondents were between the ages of 30 and 39 years (36%: 11, n=18). There were no respondents in the age group above 70 years.

Table 4.2: Gender of the respondents

| Gender | Frequency | % of the respondents |
|--------------|-----------|----------------------|
| Male | 12 | 24 |
| Female | 38 | 76 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

The following Table 4.2 presents the number of women and men in the research population. Of the 25 respondents, 76% were female and 24% (were male. On consideration of both age and gender, it was evident that the majority of the respondents were female between the ages of 30 to 39 years. There were only three female respondents between the ages 20-29 years and an equal number of male and female respondents between the ages of 60 to 69 years.

Table 4.3: Education and Qualifications of the respondents

| Qualification | Frequency | % of the respondents |
|------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| Certificate | 0 | 0 |
| National Diploma | 42 | 84 |
| Honours | 4 | 8 |
| Masters | 2 | 4 |
| Post Graduates | 2 | 4 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

When participants were asked questions about their education and qualifications, the results revealed that 8% of them had BSc degrees and 84% diplomas (Table 4.3). Of those who had diplomas, 70% were females and all had qualified as treasurers before 2000. At 8%, it was only a relatively few respondents who already had postgraduate degrees, and 4% who said that they were currently pursuing them. Furthermore, 20% of the respondents already had other qualifications.

Table 4.4: Marital Status of the respondents

| Status | Frequency | % of the respondents |
|--------------|-----------|----------------------|
| Single | 24 | 28 |
| Married | 30 | 60 |
| Divorced | 6 | 12 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Table 4.4 shows that the majority of the respondents (60%) were married. When the marital status was combined with gender (Table 4.4) it was found that the predominant group was married women (48%). No items were asked regarding the number of dependants or home and family life situation. This information would have helped in determining the existence of any work-life conflict as discussed in Chapter 2. Research on the work-family life conflict indicates that the greater the conflict, the lower the financial management. This conflict is seen mostly in two career families and when a child is sick. However, the effect of work-family conflict amongst the respondents was not investigated in this research.

4.3 Quantitative data analysis

The data was analysed using a SPSS computer based programme for analysing data from social science studies.

Table 4.5: The impact of records management is vital in decision-making

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Strongly Agree | 20 | 40 |
| Agree | 10 | 20 |
| Neutral | 10 | 20 |
| Strongly Disagree | 5 | 10 |
| Disagree | 5 | 10 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Table 4.5 indicates that 30 respondents which constituting 60 percent of the total sampled was strongly agree with statement while 10 respondents which constituting 20 percent of the total sampled was neutral with statement. 10 respondents which constituting 20 percent of the total sampled was strongly disagree with the statement. 60 percent of the respondents who answered this question confirmed the vital impact of effective records management in decision-making. Effective records management facilitate timely and efficient decision-making, promote public participation, inform future decisions, produce evidence in litigation cases, increases accountability of decision-makers and fast-track service delivery

Table 4.6: Role of records management in the implementation of the Batho Pele Principles

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Strongly Agree | 30 | 60 |
| Agree | 5 | 10 |
| Neutral | 3 | 6 |
| Strongly Disagree | 6 | 12 |
| Disagree | 6 | 12 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Table 4.6 revealed that 35 respondents which constituting 70 percent of the total sample was strongly agreed with the statement while 3 respondents which constituting 6 percent of the total sampled was neutral with the statement. 12 respondents which constituting 24 percent of the total sampled was strongly disagree with the statement. 70% of the respondents believe that records management plays a crucial role in the implementation of Batho Pele Principles. It must be emphasised that without a proper records management system, the Batho Pele Principles cannot be implemented or upheld.

Table 4.7: Contribution of records management towards effective administration at VDM

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Strongly Agree | 18 | 36 |
| Agree | 15 | 30 |
| Neutral | 5 | 10 |
| Strongly Disagree | 5 | 10 |
| Disagree | 7 | 14 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Table 4.7 indicates that 33 respondents which constituting 66 percent of the total sampled was strongly agreed with the statement while 10 percent of the total sampled was neutral with the statement. 66 respondents agree that records management contributes towards effective administration at VDM, and consequently towards effective and efficient delivery of services to the communities. Respondents stated that records management ensures the orderly and efficient flow of information which enables VDM officials to perform their functions successfully and efficiently. Records management also forms the basis for formulating policies, future plans and informed decision-making. Without records, an organization cannot operate.

Table 4.8: Current records management practices at VDM is essential

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Strongly Agree | 33 | 66 |
| Agree | 6 | 12 |
| Neutral | 4 | 8 |
| Strongly Disagree | 5 | 10 |
| Disagree | 2 | 4 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Table 4.8 shows that 39 respondents which constituting 78 percent of total sampled was strongly agreed with the statement while 8 percent of the total sampled was neutral with the statement. 7 respondents which constituting 14 percent of the total sampled was strongly disagreed with the

statement. The opinion of a large proportion of the respondents (78%) is that records management at VDM is not receiving the attention it deserves. Some of the reasons cited for this view are non-usage of the File Plan, lack of training of both records office staff and users (staff), unskilled and de-motivated records office staff and lack of support from top management.

Neutral

Table 4.9: Records management policy and procedures is well implemented

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Strongly Agree | 6 | 12 |
| Agree | 9 | 18 |
| Neutral | 15 | 30 |
| Strongly Disagree | 11 | 22 |
| Disagree | 9 | 18 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Table 4.9 revealed that 15 respondents which constituting 30 percent of the total sampled 30 were strongly agreed with the statement while 30 percent of the total sampled. 20 respondents which constituting 40 percent of the total sampled was strongly disagreed with the statement. Table 4.9 indicates that only 30 percent of the respondents were unaware of the fact that the Vhembe District Municipality had a records management policy. They indicated that they were neither invited to comment on the policy nor made aware of the existence of such a policy. Table 4.9 indicated that 40 percent they were not sure whether the policy had been endorsed by top management. As a result, some were not managing records according to the policy. Others argued that the consultants who were outsourced to develop the system did not understand the nature of the Vhembe District Municipality business. Therefore the system did not make provision for their needs.

Agree

Neutral

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Total

Table 4.10: Records management is the responsibilities of municipal managers

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Strongly Agree | 28 | 56 |
| Agree | 6 | 12 |
| Neutral | 4 | 8 |
| Strongly Disagree | 7 | 14 |
| Disagree | 5 | 10 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Table 4.10 indicates that 34 respondents which constituting 68 percent of the total sampled was strongly agreed with the statement while 8 percent of the total sampled was neutral with the statement. 12 respondents which constituting 24 percent of the total sampled was strongly disagreed with the statement. Records management is a shared responsibility between users, senior managers and records management staff. The purpose of this section was to establish if records management responsibilities had been communicated to all staff members in the Vhembe District Municipality. Only 68 percent indicated that records management responsibilities within the Vhembe District Municipality had been communicated, but not clearly. According to the responses, the communication had been done through an electronic memo issued by the head of the department committing to establishing and maintaining proper records management. Responses from senior managers indicated that their secretaries were responsible for records management.

Table 4.11: There is lack of Records control

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Strongly Agree | 17 | 34 |
| Agree | 13 | 26 |
| Neutral | 6 | 12 |
| Strongly Disagree | 8 | 16 |
| Disagree | 4 | 12 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Table 4.11 indicate that only 60 percent of the respondents indicated that files did get lost in the Department due to lack of tracking mechanism; negligence of the registry clerks; staff members borrowing files and keeping them too long in their offices; transfer of records from one office to another without informing the registry; the registry not registering files borrowed or difficult staff members who do not want to sign for borrowed files. The other respondents (28) indicated that they had never experienced losses of files in the registry or in the Vhembe District Municipality.

Table 4.12: Access and usage of records is good

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Strongly Agree | 6 | 12 |
| Agree | 8 | 16 |
| Neutral | 5 | 10 |
| Strongly Disagree | 20 | 40 |
| Disagree | 11 | 22 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Table 4.12 revealed that 14 respondents which constituting 28 percent of the total sampled was strongly agreed with the statement while 10 respondents was neutral with the statement. 31 respondents which constituting 62 percent of the total sampled was strongly disagreed with the statement. 62 percent of the respondents indicated that the Vhembe District Municipality was able to deal with PAIA requests successfully. However, they were not sure who was responsible for PAIA implementation in the Vhembe District Municipality between the RM unit and the Legal Services Directorate. Their feeling was that the RM unit should implement the PAIA while Legal Services should monitor the implementation. Others also called for the two units to work together as the responsibility was not clearly communicated. This was due to the fact that their offices were located in other buildings that were either two or three blocks from the registry

Table 4.13: Electronic records management is well controllable

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Strongly Agree | 35 | 70 |
| Agree | 3 | 6 |
| Neutral | 6 | 12 |
| Strongly Disagree | 4 | 8 |
| Disagree | 2 | 4 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

As shown in Table 3.13, only 76% (38) of the respondents mentioned that they filed electronic records on an Electronic Document and Records Management System called Hummingbird. A further 12% (6) made print-outs and filed the hard copy. 12 percent of the total sampled was neutral with the statement. In South Africa, electronic records are also subject to the same requirements provided in the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Act that applies to the management of other records. The purpose of this section was to establish how the Vhembe District Municipality managed records that were created or received electronically.

Table 4.14: Records management training is poor

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Strongly Agree | 20 | 40 |
| Agree | 11 | 22 |
| Neutral | 4 | 8 |
| Strongly Disagree | 10 | 20 |
| Disagree | 5 | 10 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Table 4.14 indicates that 31 respondents which constituting 62 percentage of the total sampled were strongly agreed with the statement while 4 respondents were neutral with the statement. 15 respondents which constituting 30 percent of the total sampled was strongly agreed with the statement. The respondents were asked to indicate whether they have attended the internal

records management training. Table 4.14 also indicates that 62 percent of the respondents revealed that they attended the training on file plan usage only once during the implementation in 2005. A further 30% (15) attended the training during induction. Only 8%% (4) mentioned that they never attended the training. As reflected in figure 9 below, the training was offered by both the records manager and consultants. The respondents felt that the department spent lots of money on the consultants and there was no skills transfer. Interviews with the records manager revealed that during the implementation of the records management system several training sessions were organised for the users. The biggest challenge for training was attendance.

Table 4.15: Retention and disposal of records is well identified

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Strongly Agree | 10 | 20 |
| Agree | 6 | 12 |
| Neutral | 4 | 8 |
| Strongly Disagree | 20 | 40 |
| Disagree | 10 | 20 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Table 4.15 indicate that 16 respondents which constituting 32 percent of the total sampled was strongly agreed with the statement while 4 respondents were neutral. As reflected in table 4.15, 60% (30) of the respondents destroyed records regularly while 8 percent) did that randomly. A total of 59.6% (31) indicated that they did not destroy records at all. The other 32 percent indicated that it was the responsibility of the registry to destroy records. Those who destroyed records indicated that records were destroyed when the owners or creators resigned or when they wanted to decongest their storage area. It appears from the responses that the municipality did not have a retention schedule for its records.

Table 4.16: Strength and weaknesses of the records management function in the VDM

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Strongly Agree | 8 | 16 |
| Agree | 11 | 22 |
| Neutral | 9 | 18 |
| Strongly Disagree | 14 | 28 |
| Disagree | 8 | 16 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Table 4.16 indicates that 19 respondents which constituting 38 percent of the total sampled was strongly agreed with the statement while 9 respondents were neutral with the statement. 22 respondents which constituting 44 percent of the total sampled was strongly disagreed with the statement. When asked about the strength of the municipal records management function, 38 percent indicated compliance with legislation as one of the strengths. For example, they indicated that there was an approved records classification system as well as records management policy and procedures. Some indicated the support from the Director-General as a strength, but lack of understanding of records management by senior managers as a weakness.

Some of the challenges mentioned by respondents included: users wanted to file in their own way; duplication of records in different locations and thus utilising a lot of space; unqualified records management staff; registry operated without a records manager for a long time (approximately nine months); high turnover of records management staff (for example, the registry lost ten staff members from director to registry clerk level in less than two years). The other concern by respondents was that the NARS was not helping as it had not done the audits or inspection at the Municipality for a long time. Lack of records disaster recovery plan was mentioned as a risk.

4.4 Qualitative data analysis

An open-ended structured questionnaire was used. This was meant to allow respondents to bring out as much information as possible as compared to a closed questionnaire, which allows respondents to choose between predetermined responses

4.4.1 The need and value of records

Respondent 1 indicates that:

An appropriate place to begin is by exploring the issue of why records are created and why they need to be managed. Records are created by all sorts of people and institutions as a result of an activity being undertaken. In the course of doing business, records are created through a variety of government activities such as vehicle registration, procurement contract transactions, municipality is responsible for buildings maintenance and as part of its responsibilities it might create architectural plans for a new building.

Respondent 2 indicates that:

It might also take photographs of that building as it is built and it might create minutes of meetings and reports at various stages of construction. Therefore records can either be created internally or be received from an external source.

Respondent 3 indicates that:

Creating records is a fundamental part of doing business. Business processes that involve the creation and transmission of documents routinely result in the creation of records as evidence of those processes. Records are also created to document what was decided or done. They are a means of providing evidence of business activity or of remembering events and transactions that have occurred.

Respondent 4 indicates that:

There are legal and regulatory requirements for creating and keeping records. In this regard, as indicated by respondents, the need for records and the role of record keeping operates in three distinct domains, i.e. the business domain, the accountability domain and cultural domain.

Respondent 5 indicates that

Two main reasons motivating organisations to manage records, i.e. financial and legal value. An organisation needs long-term documentary evidence of the way in which funds were obtained, allocated, controlled and expended (budget). This includes budget records, which provide evidence of how income and expenditure were planned, and various accounting records documenting financial transactions. Legal records provide evidence of contractual obligations, duties and privileges agreed upon by governments, organisations or individuals. They provide a record of matters such as property titles, charitable status and other legal and civil rights.

4.4.2 Record keeping and information retrieval

Respondent 1 shows that:

Time spent on searching for missing or misfiled records is non-productive. It has been estimated that staff spend as much as 10% of their time at work searching for information, a figure which could be improved upon through the timely removal of duplicate and unnecessary records, the standardisation of a filing system and the application of meaningful descriptions of information resources often referred to as metadata.

Respondent 2 shows that:

A good RM programme can help any organisation upgrade its record keeping systems so that information retrieval is enhanced with correspondence improvements in office efficiency and

productivity. A well designed and operated filing system with an effective index can facilitate retrieval and deliver information to users as quickly as they need it.

Respondent 3 shows that:

Where the organisation is small and few records are produced, it goes without saying that it will be easy to trace a particular record. However, the larger the organisation and the more voluminous the records, the more difficult will be the process.

Respondent 4 shows that:

It is therefore necessary for the records to be stored according to a specific logical system so that they can be retrieved, not only by the person who filed them, but also by anybody else. In this regard staff members will spent more time working on information rather than looking for it.

4.4.3 The role of record keeping in demonstrating accountability and good governance

Respondent 1 indicates that:

“Accountability implies that organisations and individuals should be able to explain their actions to others in a transparent and justifiable manner”. To be accountable in the sense expected by modern governance is no easy matter. Accountability requires that the systems of reporting and controls in the organisation are appropriate and transparent.

Respondent 2 indicates that:

At the base of many of these systems lies the basic system of record keeping. The mechanisms for accountability within the government cannot work properly without proper records management practices. Records are the primary means by which governmental bodies explain their decisions and prove what they have done. A government department’s ability to function efficiently and give account of its actions could be negatively affected if proper records

management practices are not applied. To this end, it is imperative that a government department should take responsibility for ensuring that its records management practices are aligned with the broader principles of good governance.

Respondent 3 indicates that:

“how government undertakes functions and activities in an efficient, transparent and responsive manner in which citizens participate and engage with government in pursuit of their mutual social, political and economic objectives”. Good governance therefore refers to the norms and values that a government takes into account as it governs. This suggests that the government governs on behalf of the public that gave it the mandate and should be transparent to enable the public to know how it functions.

Respondent 4 indicates that:

To enable governmental bodies to function properly, government has a responsibility to ensure that they create and have access to complete and credible records to enable the decision-making process to be in the best interest of the public. The effective management of records ensures that sound decisions can be made based on full, accurate and up-to-date information, and ensures that the rationale for, and the impact of, those decisions can be traced, scrutinised and justified as necessary.

4.4.4 Managing records as a strategic resource

Respondent 1 reveals that:

Although records constitute a vital resource as indicated above, they continue to be neglected in many government departments. Maintaining and controlling records in a government department is itself a costly operation because of the large expenditure on personnel, equipment.

Respondent 2 reveals that:

The greatest need in government departments or any other organisation is to develop strategies for managing records as a strategic resource for competitive advantage. As with any other business activity, it is important to devise a strategy for the introduction of records management into a government department. It must be seen as a means of furthering the aims and objectives of the department and as making a direct contribution to the critical success of business.

Respondent 3 reveals that:

“It is important that records management should be seen as a dynamic activity which develops along with the business and changes”.

According to ISO 15489 (2001), for a RM programme to succeed, it must be closely aligned to the needs of the organisation and in particular to the organization’s strategic and policy objectives. ISO 15489 (2001) provides a practical design and implementation methodology which supports the introduction of a sustainable RM programme to meet organisational requirements. This ISO emphasises that this methodology is valid both for the establishment of a RM programme as a whole and for the development of particular systems within it.

Respondent 4 reveals that:

The effective RM programme must begin with a records survey, supported by well-defined policies and procedures, a team of well qualified and competent staff and support from top management.

It would seem from the discussion above that developing a RM programme to meet business needs is a difficult task, so much so that it is common for records management projects to exceed scheduled completion dates or to not be completed at all.

4.5 Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to document the research methodology selected for this study. The research made use of the quantitative research methodology, the survey to be particular, due to its suitability for the type of inquiry being conducted. The questionnaire, which contained mostly closed ended questions, was designed in a manner that compels the respondents to reveal the short-comings and inadequacies of Vhembe District Municipality current records management practices. The rationale for the data-gathering method was described and explained, as well as the problems that were encountered as a result of using self-administered questionnaires.

Finally, the survey results were presented and analysed, and findings were reported on. From the findings of this survey, it can be deduced that there are still avenues for improving Vhembe District Municipality records management practices, as survey results presented more weaknesses in the records management system than strengths. Commitment and effort should be exerted by all different role players, *inter alia*, top management, records users, Records Manager and records office staff. In the next and final chapter, a summary of the study will be presented and deductions and recommendations on the best practices of ensuring effective or sound records management at Vhembe District Municipality will be made.

- Vhembe District Municipality currently has a fully compliant Records Management Policy and Records Management Procedure Manual which was approved and adopted by Council in 2003. At the time of conducting this study, the reviewed policy and procedure manual had not been approved by the Provincial Archives and Records Services and were in the process of being sent to the Vhembe District Municipality structures for approval and adoption.
- All Vhembe District Municipality officials should be well-versed on the Records Management Policy and the Procedure Manual and the two documents should be posted onto Vhembe District Municipality intranet for easy access. During the review of the

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter (five), data collected through questionnaires, interviews and observation was analysed. The findings of the study were also discussed and summarised. This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study. Conclusions were drawn based on the content analysis, research questions and objectives of the study, as well as the findings of the study thereof. Recommendations were made based on content analysis and the findings of the study discussed in chapter five.

5.2 Major Findings

- As discussed in chapter 3, VDM consist of three registries, the main registry and two sub-registries at the Human Resources Division and the Budget and Treasury Office. Also, ADM established seven satellite offices in its area of jurisdiction. Officials in these offices deal with correspondence in the performance of their duties, but there is no formal arrangement pertaining to the management of records. This is one of the key findings of this research.
- Vhembe District Municipality currently has a fully compliant Records Management Policy and Records Management Procedure Manual which were approved and adopted by Council in 2003. At the time of conducting this study, the reviewed policy and procedure manual had just been approved by the Provincial Archives and Records Services and were in the process of being taken to the Vhembe District Municipality structures for approval and adoption.
- All Vhembe District Municipality officials should be work-shopped on the Records Management Policy and the Procedure Manual and the two documents should be posted onto Vhembe District Municipality intranet for easy access. During the reviewal of the

- two documents, comments should be invited from all Vhembe District Municipality officials to ensure their involvement in the process.
- Vhembe District Municipality is in compliance with the Act. A file plan approved in 2003 is in existence and the file plan is currently posted on Vhembe District Municipality intranet for easy access.
- No compliance. The Records Control Schedule was still at the drafting stage at the time of conducting this study. This implies that there is no record of what records, other than correspondence, exists at Vhembe District Municipality and where they are kept.
- No compliance. No existence of the register, implying that Vhembe District Municipality does not have a record of the number of files in its possession per subject, and how many volumes per file.
- The register of file movements is currently in existence. However, there is no proper control and monitoring; officials keep borrowed files in their offices for long periods.
- Training is identified by NARS as one of the crucial elements in ensuring sound records management but there is no adequate training for the Records Manager, records office staff and records users.
- There is no effective disposal programme at Vhembe District Municipality resulting in a challenge of space. Inactive records dating back to the 1930's, which are no longer required for administrative purposes are still retained and due to space challenges are kept at an off-site storage facility which does not fully conform to archival standards.
- Records management is not reflected in the Vhembe District Municipality Integrated Development Plan as one of the strategic objectives.

- Inadequate guidance or training of Vhembe District Municipality staff on the handling of emailed documents. Also, Vhembe District Municipality did not notify the National or Provincial Archivist of its intentions to introduce or revive the electronic document management system, as per the requirements of NARS.
- The majority of officials keep documents in their offices despite their indication that they are cognisant of the fact that they should be kept at the records office.
- The empirical survey results revealed that records management plays a significant role in the entire Integrated Development Plan process, decision making process, realisation of the Batho Pele Principles and towards effective administration and performance of Vhembe District Municipality. Nonetheless, the records management function is not receiving the attention it deserves. Further to that, there is lack of support from senior management.

5.3 Conclusions

This study was undertaken to investigate the state of records management practices in the South African public sector with specific reference to the District municipality. Even though the study has found that the District municipality has developed and implemented policies for records management, it is clear from the above discussions, content analysis and findings that the Department has a long way to travel as far as record keeping is concerned.

The challenges experienced of implementing a records management system in a government department are not unique to the Vhembe District Municipality. Records management infrastructures are in danger of collapse (through resource reductions, retirements, etc.) in various government departments and there are few people equipped with the knowledge, skills and abilities required to develop and rebuild infrastructures that are relevant to the business and accountability needs. This study has revealed that an enormous benefit for the implementation of a records management system is the commitment of top management. Indeed, without the

support of top management, the attempts to implement a records management system are doomed to failure.

The study has also established that even though the management echelon in the municipality has shown commitment and leadership to records management activities, its support is characterised by lack of understanding of records management function. Despite the support of the TMT, records management does not form part of the strategic objectives of the District Municipality. There is chronic lack of concrete evidence demonstrating that the entire leadership of the Vhembe district, from the Director-General to senior managers, shares a common vision on records management. Furthermore, insufficient resources are allocated to records management. The study also revealed that there is overt lack of requisite skills amongst records management professionals on policy formulation, analysis and advocacy. The placement of the records management unit within

5.4 Major Recommendations

Administrative Support Services is also a concern to the researcher as the function does not have anything in common with facilities management, building and maintenance which are housed within Administrative Support Services. Undoubtedly, it is also clear that information management stakeholders within the Vhembe District Municipality operate in silos resulting in duplication of services. In view of the above discussion, it can be argued that this study was able to answer the research questions as well as meet the objectives raised in chapter one. Despite the challenges cited above, a few lessons could be learnt from the study and are as follows:

- It is clear from the findings that collaboration between key business areas (ICT unit, RM unit, internal audit unit, legal service unit, etc.) can underpin an organisation's success on records management. Therefore it is important for the records management division to establish a good rapport with other information stakeholders.
- Manager of the whole organisation. The responsibility for the Records Manager is aware
- Undoubtedly, it was shown in the findings that the roll-out of EDRMS is not about information technology. It is also about people and processes. Any approach to the roll-out of EDRMS needs to consider information, records, people, processes and systems together as they rely heavily on each other. The EDRMS product suite is a tool and not

- the solution to solve the records management problems in government departments to enable them to deliver quality services.

The study has revealed that records management does play a significant role in various aspects including, inter alia, risk management process, strategic planning process, bettering performance and improving service delivery, promoting good governance, supporting democratic accountability, fulfilling legal requirements, combating corruption, promoting and protecting human rights and ensuring sound financial management. Nonetheless, based on the empirical survey findings, it can be concluded that records management is not receiving the attention it deserves at Vhembe District Municipality (VDM). In its endeavours to improve its records management practices, it is proposed that VDM consider the findings and recommendations of this study.

5.4 Major Recommendations

- It is recommended that the Records Manager be provided with adequate training to ensure that this official is able to undertake the full responsibilities of the post. The position of the Records Manager is crucial as this official is entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing the welfare of the organisation's records. Also, to ensure improvement of Vhembe District Municipality records management practices, the Records Manager should be dedicated only to the records management function.
- Vhembe District Municipality should appoint separate Records Managers for the Budget and Treasury Office, Human Resources and the seven satellite offices, and they should be charged with the responsibility of ensuring sound records management within their respective divisions. Such Records Managers should remain accountable to the Records Manager of the whole organisation. This will ensure that the Records Manager is aware of what is taking place in these registries and thereby ensure that Vhembe District Municipality complies with the NARS Act.

- In line with the above recommendations, Vhembe District Municipality officials should be continuously workshopped on how to use the file plan.
- Vhembe District Municipality to speed up the process of developing a Records Control Schedule so as to be able to control and manage all Vhembe District Municipality records and prevent unauthorised removal and destruction of records.
- A register of all files that were opened since the adoption of the current file plan needs to be developed. This will also make the work of records office staff easier when requested to retrieve a file, to check first whether that particular file exists or not.
- It should be stipulated that borrowed files should not be kept for more than three (3) days and this should be communicated to officials, particularly at the time when they borrow a file. Records office staff should closely monitor this register and make constant follow-ups with officials who do not return the files after the stipulated timeframe.
- It is recommended that training programmes on records management be intensified at Vhembe District Municipality. Training should be provided to the Records Manager, records office staff and users in general.
- Vhembe District Municipality needs to firstly apply for a disposal authority for the old file plan that was closed in 2003, so that records with an archival value can be transferred to the archival custody and the ones with no archival value can be destroyed. Once this process is completed, a disposal authority for the current file plan should be obtained and the disposal process be effected. Thereafter, it should be ensured that the transfer and destruction of records is carried out on a routine basis.
- Due to its vital contribution in enabling Vhembe District Municipality to carry out its mandate effectively, the records management function should be included in Vhembe District Municipality strategic plans. The development of a records management strategic plan should be identified as one of the key objectives in the Integrated Development Plan.

- 5.5 • As the Email Usage Policy was initiated by the Information Technology Division and only deals with the usage of the email facility, it is recommended that a separate Electronic Mail Policy be developed. Such a policy should encompass all the aspects pertaining to the handling of email documents. Further, Vhembe District Municipality should notify the Provincial Archivist in writing of its intention to revive the electronic document management system, to ensure that all the requirements regarding storage and the format for long term accessibility of archival records are built into the electronic system in the planning phase.
- Staff should be informed to refrain from keeping documents in their offices as this is in transgression of the NARS Act. As incompetency and lack of co-operation by records office staff was raised as a concern by certain respondents, management should train records office staff on customer care as they deal with people on a daily basis. Records office staff should also be equipped with knowledge and skills to enable them to carry out their duties effectively and efficiently. In addition to that, management should also inculcate a sense of ownership by staff generally to erase the perception that records management is the responsibility of records office staff only. The introduction of an electronic document management system could also serve as a control measure for ensuring care and safe custody of records. Also, documents could also be easily retrieved.
- As recommended above, the records management function should be incorporated into the organisation-wide strategic planning initiatives. Most importantly, senior management should embrace the records management function to ensure its effectiveness. In order to ensure the commitment of Heads of Departments to the records management function, record management should be incorporated into their performance management targets.

5.5 Recommendations for further research

The management of records must be recognized as being one of the key and vital functions that contribute towards the realization of the organisational goals. Local government in South Africa is faced with the challenge of lack of service delivery and this is manifested through violent protests that have broken out in communities across the country in recent months. Lack of service delivery can be attributed to various factors such as non-payment for basic services, mismanagement of public funds, corruption and many others. This study has revealed that better performance and enhancement of service delivery can be attained through the application of effective records management practices and systems, amongst other things. Future research could possibly cover the following areas:

- Role of records management in improving accountability;
- The contribution of records management in fighting corruption; and
- The importance of training in ensuring sound records management.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRES

Please make a tick in the appropriate block for each of the following statement

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Please complete all questions Mark with an "x"

Age distribution of the respondents

| | |
|-------|--|
| 20-29 | |
| 30-39 | |
| 40-49 | |
| 50-59 | |
| 60-69 | |
| >70 | |

Gender of the respondents

| | |
|--------|--|
| Male | |
| Female | |

Education and Qualifications of the respondents

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Certificate | |
| National Diploma | |
| Honours | |
| Masters | |
| Post Graduates | |

Marital Status of the respondents

| | |
|----------|--|
| Single | |
| Married | |
| Divorced | |

SECTION B: QUESTIONNAIRE

Please make a tick in the appropriate block for each of the following statement

| statement | Strongly disagree 1 | Disagree 2 | Neutral 3 | Agree 4 | Strongly agree 5 |
|--|------------------------|---------------|--------------|------------|---------------------|
| The impact of records management is vital in decision-making | | | | | |
| Role of records management in the implementation of the Batho Pele Principles | | | | | |
| Contribution of records management towards effective administration at VDM | | | | | |
| Current records management practices at VDM is essential | | | | | |
| Records management policy and procedures is well implemented | | | | | |
| Records management is the responsibilities of municipal managers | | | | | |
| There is lack of Records control | | | | | |
| Access and usage of records is good | | | | | |
| Electronic records management is well controllable | | | | | |
| Records management training is poor | | | | | |
| Retention and disposal of records is well identified | | | | | |
| Strength and weaknesses of the records management function in the Municipality | | | | | |

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTION

What is the need and value of records?

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.....
.....

What is record keeping and information retrieval?

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.....
.....
.....

What is the role of record keeping in demonstrating accountability and good governance?

.....
.....
.....
.....

What are the managing records as a strategic resource?

.....
.....
.....
.....

THANK YOU FOR CONTRIBUTION