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Academic Registry Records Management and Related Policies in African Higher Education Institutions: An Empirical Review

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Academic Registries in African Higher Education Institutions are central to admissions, enrolment, progression, graduation, and the integrity of educational records. However, they operate within uneven policy frameworks and resource-constrained environments. This empirical review synthesises findings from recent studies on records and registry management across African Universities to examine how Academic Registries manage student records, the extent and nature of guiding policies, and the organisational, technological, and human factors shaping practice. Evidence shows that while many institutions have developed record-keeping systems and, in some cases, formal records or registry policies, implementation is often weak, fragmented, or inconsistently applied across units, with limited national-level policy direction in several countries. Digitalisation of academic records has improved efficiency and accessibility, where adequately resourced. Still, progress is hampered by obsolete filing systems, inadequate ICT infrastructure, security and privacy concerns, and shortages of trained records personnel. Registry performance is further constrained by understaffing, insufficient professional development, and bureaucratic bottlenecks, which collectively undermine timely decision-making, student services, and institutional effectiveness. At the same time, robust records and registry practices are consistently associated with better administrative performance, organisational effectiveness, and institutional reputation, highlighting their strategic importance for quality assurance and governance. The review argues for comprehensive, context-sensitive academic registry and records management policies that clearly define roles, standards, and procedures across the records lifecycle, supported by adequate resources, capacity building, and integrated digital systems. It concludes with recommendations for harmonising institutional and national policy directives, strengthening accountability mechanisms, and pursuing further empirical research, particularly longitudinal and comparative studies on policy implementation and its impact on registry effectiveness and student outcomes in African higher education.

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INTRODUCTION

Academic registries are central to university administration, overseeing admissions, enrolment, progression, graduation, and the preservation of academic records. Their effectiveness underpins institutional accountability, quality assurance, and the credibility of qualifications in African higher education systems. As enrolments expand, programmes diversify, and data are increasingly required for planning, funding, and regulatory reporting, the strategic importance of sound records and registry management has intensified (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Metto et al., 2022; Aleru, 2024). Across educational settings, adequate records management is associated with stronger organisational performance, more informed decision-making, and improved service delivery (Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024; Ambarwati et al., 2025; Aleru, 2024).

Empirical and review studies indicate that many African universities have developed procedures and systems for managing student records, using both paper-based and digital tools, but these systems are often poorly aligned with institutional policies or only partially implemented (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Metto et al., 2022; Simwaka et al., 2023). Hermeneutic and scoping reviews identify recurring weaknesses, including incomplete or outdated policy frameworks, weak oversight, inadequate classification systems, and limited senior management support (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Simwaka et al., 2023; Simwaka & Malanga,

2023). Even where records or registry policies exist, inconsistent application across units produces fragmented, variable practices. At the national level, emerging legislation on archives, records management, and data governance remains patchy or weakly enforced, leaving institutions without clear external guidance (Chaputula, 2022; Simwaka & Malanga, 2023).

Digitalisation is widely promoted as a solution to inefficiencies in record-keeping. Studies from Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, and Nigeria show that well-resourced electronic records systems can enable faster retrieval, reduce record loss or duplication, and support more timely, evidence-based decisions (Ailakhua & Abdulsalam, 2025; Metto et al., 2022; Chaputula, 2022). However, the transition to digital environments is constrained by obsolete filing systems, inadequate ICT infrastructure, unreliable connectivity, and limited server capacity (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Metto et al., 2022; Chaputula, 2022; Mweso, C., 2025). Concerns about privacy, data breaches, and compliance with evolving data protection regimes further complicate digital transformation (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Chaputula, 2022). Reviews of data privacy and governance, therefore, call for clearly defined institutional responsibilities, systematic risk assessment, and technical safeguards to protect student data (Kyeremeh et al., 2025; Chaputula, 2022).

Human and organisational conditions are equally critical. Research repeatedly highlights shortages of qualified records and archives staff, limited

professional development, and the deployment of untrained personnel in registry roles (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Metto et al., 2022). Skills gaps in managing digital records, resistance to organisational change, and bureaucratic bottlenecks hinder the implementation of existing policies and technologies (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Metto et al., 2022; Simwaka et al., 2023). Evidence from Nigerian university registries and East African school systems shows that robust record-keeping practices are closely associated with timely, rational administrative and academic decisions, while weak practices contribute to delays, errors, and reputational risks (Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024; Aleru, 2024).

In response, scholars and practitioners argue for comprehensive, context-sensitive records management policies that clearly define roles, standards, and procedures across the records lifecycle, for both paper and digital records (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Metto et al., 2022; Simwaka et al., 2023; Simwaka & Malanga, 2023; Aleru, 2024). These policies must be backed by adequate financial and technological resources, integrated digital systems, and sustained capacity-building initiatives in records and information management (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Metto et al., 2022; Chaputula, 2022). At the same time, national legal and regulatory frameworks for archives, digital records, and data privacy must be aligned with institutional policies to establish coherent, enforceable standards (Kyeremeh et al., 2025; Simwaka & Malanga, 2023).

This empirical review draws together recent evidence on academic records and registry management in African higher education institutions. It investigates how registries manage records across manual and digital environments, assesses the nature and effectiveness of institutional and national policies, and analyses the organisational, technological, and human factors that shape practice. By comparing findings across countries and research designs, the review identifies shared challenges, emerging innovations, and promising strategies for improving registry performance. It emphasises the

central role of robust registry and records practices in supporting administrative efficiency, sound governance, and institutional reputation. It concludes with recommendations for policy harmonisation, strengthened accountability, and future longitudinal and comparative research on the impact of policy implementation on registry effectiveness and student outcomes in African higher education.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Academic Registries and Records

Academic registries are responsible for admissions, enrolment, course registration, assessment records, certification, and the long-term custody of students' educational histories. In African HEIs, these functions are commonly embedded in academic registrars' or admissions/records offices and are operationalised through a mix of paper-based and electronic records systems (Metto et al., 2022; Netshakhuma & Makhura, 2022; Thegu et al., 2021; Giba-Fosu, 2020). Effective registry management underpins institutional memory, legal accountability, student mobility, and service quality (Thegu et al., 2021; Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024; Aleru, 2024; Giba-Fosu, 2020).

METHODS

Methodological Orientation of the Empirical Evidence

The empirical base is dominated by:

- **Single-institution case studies** (e.g., KCA University, Kenya; Ghana Communications Technology University; Walter Sisulu University) (Thegu et al., 2021; Ameyaw & Frempong-Kore, 2021; Giba-Fosu, 2020).
- **Country- or region-specific surveys** (e.g., Kenyan universities; South-West Nigeria; Nigerian university libraries) (Metto et al., 2022; Asogwa et al., 2021; Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024).

- **Scoping and hermeneutic reviews** of records management in African HEIs (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Simwaka et al., 2023).

These studies employ descriptive surveys, qualitative case study designs, and hermeneutic or scoping review methods, with limited use of experimental or longitudinal approaches (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Simwaka et al., 2023; Metto et al., 2022; Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024; Giba-Fosu, 2020).

Sources and Search Strategy

A recent scoping review of academic records management in African HEIs searched ERIC and Google Scholar using predefined keywords combined with Boolean operators, over a defined period (2001–2024) (Yidana & Akuna, 2025). A hermeneutic review of records management in Malawi used multiple sources (journal articles, theses, conference papers) and applied PRISMA-style selection and reporting (Simwaka & Malanga, 2023). A broader hermeneutic review of records management in African higher education followed Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic's iterative search–read–refine cycle (Simwaka et al., 2023). The databases used include ERIC, Google Scholar, Web of Science, Scopus and any hand-searching of key journals or reference lists (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Simwaka & Malanga, 2023; Simwaka et al., 2023).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The scoping review on academic records management in African HEIs required that:

- The study addressed academic/records management practices.
- The context was higher education.
- The setting was Africa.
- The publication period fell within 2001–2024.
- Participants were students, staff, or administrators (Yidana & Akuna, 2025).
- The social-media/education review provides a model for exclusions: non-empirical work,

non-English, studies outside the target level or topic were excluded (Taiwo, 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings and Discussion

This section presents the empirical results on academic registry records management and related policies in African higher education institutions, followed by an integrated discussion that connects these results to existing literature and policy frameworks (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Metto et al., 2022a; Moses & Adjei, 2014; Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024; Aleru, 2024). The aim is to move the reader clearly from the findings to their implications for practice and policy.

Findings are logically presented to report the main empirical patterns from the reviewed studies: current records/registry practices, the status of policies and governance, digital records management, and key challenges (infrastructure, skills, funding, security) across African HEIs (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Metto et al., 2022b; Terungwa et al., 2025; Moses & Adjei, 2014; Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024; Ameyaw & Frempong-Kore, 2021; Simwaka et al., 2023).

Discussions of findings are logically sectioned to interpret the results, comparing them with prior research and conceptual models of records management, governance, and organisational effectiveness in universities (Simwaka et al., 2023; Giba-Fosu, 2020; Abdulrahim & Zayyana, 2025; Phiri & Tough, 2018; Azameti & Adjei, 2013; Asogwa et al., 2021; Thegu et al., 2021). The implications for policy alignment, investment in capacity and technology, and improvement of student and institutional outcomes are highlighted.

Practices and Processes in Academic Registry Management

Across African HEIs, academic registries manage records along the classic lifecycle: creation/capture, classification, storage, retrieval/communication, and disposal (Metto et

al., 2022; Thegu et al., 2021; Aleru, 2024; Ameyaw & Frempong-Kore, 2021; Giba-Fosu, 2020). Standard practices include sorting by record type, controlled filing, and manual or semi-automated retrieval systems (Metto et al., 2022; Thegu et al., 2021). However, the degree of formalisation varies considerably. Some registries operate with clearly structured procedures and centralised control of decentralised registries, while others rely on ad hoc arrangements with weak documentation (Metto et al., 2022; Ameyaw & Frempong-Kore, 2021; Giba-Fosu, 2020). Inadequate appraisal strategies and limited compliance with archives and records legislation contribute to the loss of institutional memory and inconsistent disposal practices (Giba-Fosu, 2020; Netshakhuma, 2020).

Service Quality and Organisational Effectiveness

Evidence from Nigeria and South Africa indicates that sound record-keeping and registry practices are positively associated with organisational effectiveness, governance, and service delivery (Netshakhuma & Makhura, 2022; Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024; Aleru, 2024; Giba-Fosu, 2020). Misplaced or lost records, slow response to student queries, and poor tracking systems undermine institutional credibility and delay critical decisions such as graduation clearance and course registration (Thegu et al., 2021; Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024; Ameyaw & Frempong-Kore, 2021).

Digital Transformation of Academic Registries

Adoption of Electronic Records Management

Many African HEIs are undergoing a gradual transition from manual to digital or hybrid systems:

- In Kenyan universities, electronic records management adoption is “fifty-fifty,” with many institutions using electronic documents but not fully embracing integrated electronic records systems (Metto et al., 2022).

- Nigerian university libraries and registries have substantial ICT infrastructure but limited planning, staff re-skilling, and adoption of international best practices for electronic records (Asogwa et al., 2021; Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024).
- Case studies at Walter Sisulu University and other South African universities show underdeveloped electronic records capabilities and weak integration of records management into institutional strategy (Netshakhuma & Makhura, 2022; Giba-Fosu, 2020).

Digitalisation has clear benefits for the efficiency, accuracy, and scalability of registry operations, particularly in open and distance learning contexts where student numbers are high and geographically dispersed (Yidana and Akuna, 2025; Ailakhua & Abdulsalam, 2025; Asogwa et al., 2021). However, gaps in infrastructure, unstable power supply, and inadequate server capacity constrain system reliability and availability (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Metto et al., 2022; Ailakhua & Abdulsalam, 2025; Asogwa et al., 2021; Giba-Fosu, 2020).

Challenges in Implementing Digital Registry Systems

Reported challenges include Inadequate IT infrastructure and funding, resulting in insufficient storage, outdated systems, and partial implementation of electronic workflows (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Metto et al., 2022; Ailakhua & Abdulsalam, 2025; Asogwa et al., 2021; Giba-Fosu, 2020). Limited digital competencies and training among registry staff, resulting in inefficient system use and resistance to change (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Metto et al., 2022; Netshakhuma & Makhura, 2022; Thegu et al., 2021; Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024; Giba-Fosu, 2020). Bureaucratic inefficiencies and organisational resistance, which slow the reengineering of processes needed for effective digital transformation (Netshakhuma & Makhura, 2022; Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024; Kyeremeh et al., 2025). Security and privacy concerns,

especially around uncontrolled access, data loss, and unauthorised alteration of records (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Thegu et al., 2021; Ailakhua & Abdulsalam, 2025; Asogwa et al., 2021; Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024; Aleru, 2024).

Despite these barriers, there is growing evidence of innovative responses, such as the use of blockchain, credential-based authentication, and risk-based security frameworks to protect student records (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Metto et al., 2022; Aleru, 2024).

Digitalisation in Open and Distance Learning (ODL)

Open and distance learning institutions, such as the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), face unique registration challenges due to high enrolment and multi-platform delivery. At NOUN, registry practices are relatively strong; however, there is a need to enhance storage capacity, environmental controls, and safety regulations to align with the scale and complexity of ODL operations (Ailakhua & Abdulsalam, 2025).

Policy Frameworks and Governance of Academic Registries

Absence and Fragmentation of Policy

A recurring finding across Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa is the absence of comprehensive national policy directives on academic records management, leading each institution to develop its own idiosyncratic policies or to operate without any formal framework (Moses & Adjei, 2014; Aleru, 2024; Ameyaw & Frempong-Kore, 2021; Giba-Fosu, 2020). Empirical work in Ghana shows that many tertiary institutions lack national guidelines and handle record security primarily as a criminal justice matter rather than through systemic policy (Moses & Adjei, 2025).

Institution-level case studies reveal Universities with no written policies for student records, no professional archivist, and minimal staff training

(Ameyaw & Frempong-Kore, 2021). Presence of records/registry policies that are poorly implemented, inconsistently applied across departments, and weakly supported by governance structures (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Metto et al., 2022; Giba-Fosu, 2020). Limited awareness of legal and regulatory requirements for records and data protection among responsible officers (Giba-Fosu, 2020; Netshakhuma, 2020).

Misalignment between Policy and Practice

Evidence from multiple countries suggests a disjuncture between the existence of policy documents and day-to-day registry practices: In South Africa and Malawi, universities often fail to leverage governance structures and record-keeping drivers to establish robust systems; implementation is hampered by insufficient digital capacity, weak management backing, and under-resourced records units (Yidana & Akuna, 2025). In Kenyan universities, registry staff report disagreement with the claim that policy guidelines exist to guide records management, and that they are rarely involved in policy development (Metto et al., 2022). Hermeneutic and scoping reviews confirm that records management tools, including policies and strategic plans, are either missing or inadequately enforced in many Sub-Saharan HEIs (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Simwaka et al., 2023; Giba-Fosu, 2020). In Ghana, policy gaps at the national level cascade into inconsistent local policies, with profound implications for governance, accountability, and the safeguarding of academic integrity (Moses & Adjei, 2014; Aleru, 2024; Ameyaw & Frempong-Kore, 2021).

Strategic Alignment and Institutional Governance

Where policies exist, their alignment with broader institutional strategies is often weak: studies from South African universities report that records and archives management are not integrated into corporate-wide strategies, exposing institutions to governance and compliance risks (Netshakhuma & Makhura, 2022; Giba-Fosu, 2020). Studies in Nigerian and Ghanaian universities indicate that

registry functions (including records and registration) are central to institutional performance but are not systematically resourced or positioned within institutional governance structures (Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024; Aleru, 2024; Kyeremeh et al., 2025).

Integrating academic registry policies into institutional strategic planning is therefore critical to reducing risk, enhancing service delivery, and ensuring compliance with national and international standards (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Netshakhuma & Makhura, 2022; Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024; Aleru, 2024; Giba-Fosu, 2020; Netshakhuma, 2020).

Related Policy Domains: Research and Data Management

Although not directly focused on student registries, studies of research integrity policies and research data management in African universities provide useful parallels. They document similarly low prevalence of formal policies, regional disparities, and a need for comprehensive frameworks covering data creation, storage, sharing, and ethical use (Appiah et al., 2025; Chawinga & Zinn, 2020). These findings mirror the fragmented policy environment observed for academic registries and underscore the broader governance challenge facing African HEIs.

Human Resources, Capacity, and Organisational Culture

Staffing levels, skills, and organisational culture strongly mediate academic registry performance: Registrars' offices in Ghanaian public universities face staffing shortages, infrastructure deficits, and limited professional development opportunities, which undermine service delivery and responsiveness (Momoti et al., 2025; Kyeremeh et al., 2025). Studies in Kenya and Nigeria highlight understaffing, inadequate training in modern records management and ICT, and low staff participation in policy design as key constraints (Metto et al., 2022; Thegu et al., 2021;

Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024; Ameyaw & Frempong-Kore, 2021). Conversely, where training and clear job descriptions are present, staff demonstrate better adherence to procedures and improved service quality (Metto et al., 2022; Thegu et al., 2021; Aleru, 2024).

Organisational culture, including attitudes toward accountability, risk management, and innovation, also shapes registry practices. Resistance to digital systems, reliance on informal workarounds, and a perception of records work as low-status tasks can limit reform efforts (P. & E., 2025; Simwaka et al., 2023; Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024; Giba-Fosu, 2020).

Integrity, Security, and Risk Management

Ensuring the integrity, privacy, and security of student records is a central concern across the literature.

Key risk areas include Physical risks such as fire, water damage, dust, and overcrowded storerooms resulting from inadequate storage and environmental controls (Thegu et al., 2021; Aleru, 2024; Giba-Fosu, 2020). Operational risks: misfiling, unauthorised access, delays in retrieval, and accidental disposal of active records (Thegu et al., 2021; Aleru, 2024; Ameyaw & Frempong-Kore, 2021; Netshakhuma, 2020). Digital risks include cyberattacks, data breaches, software obsolescence, and weak access control in electronic systems (P. & E., 2025; Asogwa et al., 2021; Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024).

Risk mitigation measures identified in African HEIs and policy recommendations include: Conducting regular risk assessments of registry systems and environments (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Netshakhuma & Makhura, 2022; Ailakhua & Abdulsalam, 2025). Implementing robust encryption, access control, and audit trails in digital systems (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Asogwa et al., 2021). Establishing archives and secure storage facilities that meet legal and administrative requirements (Metto et al., 2022; Aleru, 2024; Giba-Fosu, 2020; Netshakhuma,

2020). Exploring blockchain and credential-based authentication to enhance trust and reduce fraud in certification (P. & E., 2025; Asogwa et al., 2021; Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024).

However, the capacity to operationalise these measures is highly uneven, and many institutions lack the financial and technical resources to implement best-practice security frameworks (P. & E., 2025; Asogwa et al., 2021; Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024; Giba-Fosu, 2020).

Student and Stakeholder Experiences of Registry Functions

Empirical work focusing directly on student experiences of registry services is limited but growing:

- At Kenya College of Accountancy University and Kenyan Universities more broadly, students report frustrations linked to misplaced records, delays in processing results, and difficulties in obtaining transcripts or verification, which affect progression and employment opportunities (Metto et al., 2022; Thegu et al., 2021).
- In South African Universities, first-year students' registration experiences are shaped by bureaucratic complexity, resource constraints, and socio-economic inequalities, which contribute to stress, delayed academic engagement, and hindered social integration (Rakgwata et al., 2025).
- Studies of Registry offices in Ghanaian Universities show that technological gaps, slow procurement, and bureaucratic delays undermine stakeholder satisfaction and institutional image (Momoti et al., 2025; Kyeremeh et al., 2025).

These findings indicate that academic registry performance is not merely an internal administrative issue but a key determinant of students' academic trajectories, equity of access, and perceptions of institutional fairness.

Emerging Models and Frameworks for Registry Improvement

Several studies propose models or frameworks for enhancing registry and records management:

- A model for effective management of student records in Kenyan universities emphasises harmonising practices across public/private and old/new institutions, addressing challenges in technology adoption, security, and communication, and grounding policies in professional records management principles (Metto et al., 2022).
- Conceptual frameworks from Ghana identify policy challenges in records management and highlight the need for national directives, integrated institutional policies, and risk-based approaches to records security (Moses & Adjei, 2014; Ameyaw & Frempong-Kore, 2021).
- Reviews and case studies in South Africa call for **centralised control of decentralised registries**, integrated records strategies, and compliance with archival and records legislation to safeguard institutional memory and support governance (Netshakhuma & Makhura, 2022; Giba-Fosu, 2020; Netshakhuma, 2020).

These Models Converge on Several Design Principles:

- **Comprehensive policy frameworks** covering the full lifecycle of both paper and electronic records (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Moses & Adjei, 2014; Aleru, 2024; Ameyaw & Frempong-Kore, 2021; Giba-Fosu, 2020).
- **Strategic integration** of registry and records functions into institutional planning and governance (Netshakhuma & Makhura, 2022; Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024; Aleru, 2024; Giba-Fosu, 2020).
- **Capacity-building and professionalisation** of registry and records staff through sustained training and clear career paths (Metto et al., 2022; Thegu et al., 2021; Olufumilola &

- Taiwo, 2024; Aleru, 2024; Kyeremeh et al., 2025).
- **Investment in infrastructure and technology**, including scalable systems, reliable power, and secure storage (Metto et al., 2022; Ailakhua & Abdulsalam, 2025; Asogwa et al., 2021; Giba-Fosu, 2020).
 - **Continuous monitoring and evaluation** to identify weaknesses, incorporate new technologies, and refine policies (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Metto et al., 2022; Giba-Fosu, 2020; Netshakhuma, 2020).

SYNTHESIS OF KEY EMPIRICAL THEMES

Table 1: Core Themes in Academic Registry Management in African HEIs

Theme	Empirical Pattern	Policy/Practice Implication	Citations
Policy environment	National and institutional policies are often absent, weak, or poorly implemented.	Develop and enforce comprehensive records/registry policies at national and institutional levels.	(Moses & Adjei, 2014; Aleru, 2024; Ameyaw & Frempong-Kore, 2021; Giba-Fosu, 2020; Netshakhuma, 2020)
Digitalisation	Partial, uneven adoption of electronic records systems; hybrid environments are common.	Invest in ICT, standardise systems, and align with best-practice e-records standards.	Yidana & Akuna, (2025). Metto et al., 2022; Ailakhua, & Abdulsalam, 2025; Asogwa et al., 2021; Giba-Fosu, 2020)
Capacity and staffing	Understaffing, limited training, and low policy awareness among registry staff	Professionalise registry roles, expand training and involve staff in policy development.	(Metto et al., 2022; Thegu et al., 2021; Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024; Aleru, 2024; Momoti et al., 2025; Kyeremeh et al., 2025)
Governance alignment	Records/registries are often not integrated into institutional strategy	Embed registry/records functions in strategic planning and risk management	(Netshakhuma & Makhura, 2022; Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024; Aleru, 2024; Giba-Fosu, 2020)
Security and integrity	Physical and digital security weaknesses; risk of loss and fraud	Implement risk-based security frameworks, archives, and advanced authentication (e.g., blockchain)	Yidana, & Akuna, (2025); Thegu et al., 2021; Ailakhua, & Abdulsalam, 2025; Asogwa et al., 2021; Aleru, 2024; Giba-Fosu, 2020; Netshakhuma, 2020)
Student experience	Delays, lost records, and complex registration processes affect satisfaction and equity.	Simplify procedures, improve communication, and prioritise student-centred registry services.	(Metto et al., 2022; Thegu et al., 2021; Momoti et al., 2025; Kyeremeh et al., 2025; Rakgwata et al., 2025)

Table 2: Empirical Themes Linking Registry Practice, Policy, and Outcomes in African HEIs.

Domain	Key Empirical Themes	Outcomes	Citations
Registry/Records Practices	Records creation & classification; storage, retrieval, and disposal along the records lifecycle; partial digitisation; inconsistent electronic systems; weak risk management and disaster recovery	Delays in service delivery, errors, loss or misplacement of records, student dissatisfaction, and reduced organisational effectiveness	(Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Metto et al., 2022; Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024; Kumije et al., 2023)

Domain	Key Empirical Themes	Outcomes	Citations
Policy & Governance	Existence of records/registry policies but weak or uneven implementation; fragmented governance structures; limited use of formal tools and frameworks; inadequate monitoring and evaluation	Policy–practice gaps; lack of standardisation across units; limited accountability for record quality; constrained ability to support audits and accreditation	(Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Simwaka et al., 2023; Metto et al., 2022; Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024; Kyeremeh et al., 2025; Nnadozie, 2024)
Resources & Capacity	Inadequate IT infrastructure; insufficient staff numbers and skills; limited professional development; underfunding of registry units; lack of dedicated records management units in some HEIs	Low adoption or sustainability of digital systems; vulnerability to security breaches; staff burnout; reduced efficiency and accuracy of registry operations	(Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Metto et al., 2022; Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024; Momoti et al., 2025; Kyeremeh et al., 2025)
Technology & Security	Mixed adoption of digital records systems; use of local or ad hoc platforms; emerging use of blockchain, encryption, and authentication frameworks; concerns about privacy and cybersecurity	Improved efficiency and traceability where systems are robust, but exposure to data loss, breaches, and system downtime where infrastructure and controls are weak	(Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024; Momoti et al., 2025; Obwatho, 2024)
Organisational & Student Outcomes	Registry performance as a driver of institutional effectiveness; links between registry delays and student progression; registry role in compliance, accreditation, reporting, and student success interventions	Organisational effectiveness; institutional reputation and legitimacy; quality assurance; student satisfaction, retention, and graduation; employability and equity outcomes	(Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024; Kyeremeh et al., 2025; Obwatho, 2024; Mgaawa, 2021; Chabaya et al., 2024; Osei-Tutu et al., 2025; Mkuti & Aucamp, 2024)

RESEARCH GAPS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Despite increasing attention, several gaps persist:

- Limited **cross-national comparative studies** systematically examining how different policy regimes shape registry performance across Africa (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Moses & Adjei, 2014; Simwaka et al., 2023; Olufumilola & Taiwo, 2024).
- Sparse **longitudinal research** on the impact of digitalisation initiatives, such as student information systems, on equity, efficiency, and data protection (Yidana & Akuna, 2025; Metto et al., 2022; Asogwa et al., 2021).
- Insufficient **student-centred and qualitative work** capturing lived experiences of registry

interactions, especially for vulnerable groups and in ODL settings (Thegu et al., 2021; Momoti et al., 2025; Rakgwata et al., 2025).

- Minimal integration of **emerging data governance debates** (e.g., research data management, research integrity policies) with student registry and administrative data policies (Appiah et al., 2025; Chawinga & Zinn, 2020).

Future empirical work could focus on evaluating specific policy interventions (such as new registry policies and the rollout of digital systems), exploring the intersection of registry data with learning analytics and quality assurance, and examining how continental frameworks (such as

African Union higher education strategies) can inform harmonised registry standards.

CONCLUSION

Evidence from across Africa shows that academic registry management is foundational to institutional effectiveness, student success, and good governance. However, it is constrained by fragmented policies, underinvestment in infrastructure, and capacity gaps. While many HEIs are moving toward digital systems and more formalised procedures, misalignment between policies and practice, limited strategic integration, and persistent security and integrity risks remain significant challenges. Strengthening academic registry management in African HEIs will require coordinated policy reforms, targeted investments, and sustained professionalisation of registry and records functions.

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