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Review

Management System Standards in Records and Archives Management: Addressing Proliferation and Integration Challenges

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Abstract

Support professionals in organizational domains—encompassing information technology, administrative services, human resources, and records and archives management (RAM)—confront enduring obstacles, including peripheral status, interdisciplinary coordination imperatives, and standards proliferation. This conceptual synthesis investigates how congruence with Management System Standards (MSSs) can alleviate these predicaments by advancing system-level integration across support areas. Rooted in General Systems Theory, the inquiry scrutinizes ISO standards from pivotal technical committees and 2024 ISO Survey adoption metrics. It accentuates the voluminous standards burdening support functions and the attendant systemic complexity. The communal Plan–Do–Check–Act (PDCA) cycle and High-Level Structure (HLS) of MSSs are framed as unifying instruments that diminish fragmentation and augment coherence. Employing RAM as the principal exemplar, the examination discloses constrained alignment with overarching MSSs despite vigorous global embrace of standards like ISO 9001, ISO 14001, and ISO/IEC 27001. A succinct conceptual model is advanced to depict how PDCA and HLS can interlink support subsystems with organizational objectives. The study underscores strategic harmonization to amplify the prominence of underappreciated support roles, with ramifications for information technology (IT), human resources (HR), and administrative services. Recommendations are proffered for standards developers, practitioners, and professional associations, as well as educators, complemented by avenues for future empirical scholarship.

Keywords: general systems theory; high-level structure; ISO standards; management system standards; organizational alignment; Plan–Do–Check–Act cycle; records and archives management; standards proliferation; support functions; system integration

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1. Introduction

Professionals in organizational support roles—such as information technology (IT), administrative services, human resources (HR), and records and archives management (RAM)—confront enduring challenges that erode their strategic significance. These obstacles encompass peripheral placement within organizational structures, demands for proficient cross-disciplinary collaboration, and the exponential expansion of specialized standards. Such constraints frequently relegate support functions to reactive, ancillary positions, thereby restricting their contributions to primary organizational aims and amplifying the threat of redundancy. Support functions generally comprise critical operational activities, such as:

- Administrative services (facilities management, procurement, and office support).
- Human resources (employee lifecycle management).
- Information technology (infrastructure, cybersecurity, and digital services)
- Records and archives management (the systematic control of organizational information assets).

Although distinctions between core and support functions differ across sectors, discordance between them can engender disjointed workflows, redundant operations, regulatory shortfalls, and impaired organizational efficacy. Within this landscape, support practitioners must contend with their own voluminous standards alongside those arising from interdependent domains, thereby imposing substantial integration demands.

Standardization has traditionally functioned to curtail variability and foster interoperability [1,2]. Formal standards, especially those promulgated by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), articulate consensual protocols that ensure uniformity across temporal, spatial, and institutional boundaries. Yet, the profusion of available standards has engendered novel impediments. Practitioners are compelled to assimilate myriad of, at times overlapping or contradictory, mandates into multifaceted, multi-domain operational contexts. This proliferation precipitates standards fatigue, intensifies administrative loads, and deepens marginalization of support functions that already contend for institutional prominence and resources [3,4].

This article examines these dynamics through the lens of records and archives management (RAM) as a representative case study, while drawing implications for other support areas such as IT, HR, and administrative services. It demonstrates the extensive array of standards confronting support professionals, highlights cross-domain complexities, and explores how alignment with Management System Standards (MSSs)—particularly through the shared Plan–Do–Check–Act (PDCA) cycle and High-Level Structure (HLS)—can facilitate more effective system-level integration. Rather than proposing a new standalone model, this conceptual paper argues that leveraging the common architecture of MSSs offers a practical pathway toward harmonizing practices across support functions, reducing silos, and elevating their strategic relevance within organizations as called upon by RAM scholars [5,6]. The remainder of the article is structured as follows: Section 2 outlines the materials and methods; Section 3 presents key findings on standards proliferation and MSSs characteristics; Section 4 discusses the implications for integration; and Section 5 offers conclusions and directions for future research.

2. Materials and Methods

This investigation employs a conceptual synthesis methodology to analyze the challenges posed by standards proliferation within organizational support functions and to investigate the potential of alignment with Management System Standards (MSSs) for achieving system-wide integration. Records and archives management (RAM) serves as the principal case study, with implications extended to analogous support areas, including information technology (IT), human resources (HR), and administrative services.

2.1. Theoretical Positioning

This study is grounded in General Systems Theory (GST) framework, originally developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy [7]. GST portrays organizations as open systems comprising interconnected subsystems that engage dynamically with one another and their external milieu. Departing from a view of support functions—such as RAM, IT, HR, and administrative services—as discrete entities, GST underscores principles of holism, interdependence, feedback mechanisms, and complexity management to attain organizational objectives. Pertinent GST tenets informing this analysis encompass [8]:

- Open systems perspective: support functions continuously exchange information, resources, and feedback with the broader organizational environment and with one another.
- Subsystem interdependence: changes or misalignments in one support domain (e.g., RAM standards proliferation) inevitably affect others (e.g., IT governance or HR compliance).
- Equifinality: organizations can achieve desired outcomes (such as effective information governance or regulatory compliance) through multiple pathways, making flexible, harmonized approaches like Management System Standards (MSSs) particularly valuable.
- Hierarchy and emergence: higher-level system performance and organizational effectiveness emerge from the quality of integration among lower-level subsystems.

Through a systems-oriented perspective, this article scrutinizes standards proliferation as a generator of systemic complexity, exacerbating fragmentation and marginalization hazards for support functions [9]. It subsequently frames the common architecture of MSSs—most notably the Plan–Do–Check–Act (PDCA) cycle and High-Level Structure (HLS)—as instruments fostering synergy, mitigating silos, and bolstering systemic coherence across support domains. This theoretical foundation buttresses the contention that enhanced MSSs alignment constitutes a viable strategy for system-level integration.

2.2. Materials

Materials for this study consist of two main sources:

- ISO Standards Documentation: Standards and committee information were retrieved from the official ISO website for the two technical committees most relevant to records and archives management—TC 46/SC 11 (Archives/Records Management) and TC 171 (Document Management Applications) [10,11]. Additional data on standards volumes in comparator domains (e.g., IT via Joint Technical Committee 1 and HR via TC 260) were drawn from corresponding ISO committee pages to enable cross-domain comparison.
- MSSs Adoption Statistics: Global certification data were obtained from the 2024 ISO Survey of Certifications, accessed via the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) CertSearch database [12]. This survey provides validated figures for major MSSs, including ISO 9001 [13], ISO 14001 [14], ISO 45001 [15] and ISO/IEC 27001 [16], allowing the assessment of adoption trends and revealing the comparatively low uptake of the ISO 30300 [17] series (i.e., ISO 30300 [18], ISO 30301 [19], and ISO 30302 [20]) for RAM [9].

Secondary literature on integrated management systems, standardization processes, systems theory, and support functions was drawn from peer-reviewed journals and authoritative sources on PDCA, HLS, and organizational alignment.

2.3. Methods

A thematic synthesis was conducted following established approaches for conceptual papers in management and information science. The process involved three iterative stages:

- Cataloging and Quantification of Standards Proliferation: Standards were systematically cataloged by technical committee. Published standards and those under development were counted for TC 46/SC 11, TC 171, and selected comparator committees [10,11]. This step quantified the scale of standards across domains.
- Structural Analysis of MSSs: The Plan–Do–Check–Act (PDCA) cycle and High-Level Structure (HLS) were examined across key MSSs (ISO 9001 [13], ISO 14001 [14], ISO 45001 [15], ISO/IEC 27001 [16] and ISO 30301 [19]). Common clauses and integration potential were mapped to identify how these shared elements could support cross-functional alignment within a systems perspective.

- Trend Analysis and Gap Identification: Adoption data from the 2023–2024 ISO surveys were reviewed to assess relative uptake and impact. Thematic analysis focused on patterns of proliferation, integration opportunities and barriers in support functions, and implications for organizational system performance.

No primary empirical data were gathered. The synthesis drew exclusively on publicly accessible standards documents, official statistics, and existing literature. Themes emerged iteratively via comparative evaluation, critical deliberation, and GST application, illuminating deficiencies in contemporary RAM standardization alongside prospects for MSSs-facilitated system-level integration. This methodology's constraints encompass dependence on secondary materials and the inherently interpretive character of the synthesis. Thus, the study delivers conceptual insights and a platform for prospective empirical corroboration, eschewing conclusive causal assertions.

3. Results

The thematic synthesis discloses pronounced systemic complexity resulting from the proliferation of standards within organizational support functions. Informed by General Systems Theory, this proliferation engenders intensified interdependence and feedback complications among subsystems, thereby elevating risks of fragmentation and diminished organizational efficacy. RAM exemplifies these patterns, concurrently demonstrating the integrative capacity of MSSs.

3.1. Standards Proliferation Across Domains

Organizational support functions function amid intricate webs of standards. For RAM, two primary ISO technical committees are responsible: TC 46/SC 11 (Archives/Records Management) and TC 171 (Document Management Applications) [10,11]. Together, these committees have generated a substantial body of standards—approximately 250 published documents with dozens more under development as of early 2026. This volume reflects both the maturity and the inherent complexity of the domain [21]. Table 1 presents a comparative overview of standards volumes across selected domains. The data underscore a broader pattern: support and operational functions must navigate hundreds (and in the case of information technology, thousands) of standards. This creates systemic overload, where practitioners expend significant resources on compliance while struggling to achieve coherence across interdependent subsystems.

Table 1. Selected ISO standards in a variety of domains (as of early 2026).

Subject Domain	ISO Technical Committee	Standards Published	Standards in Development
Aircraft	TC 20 [22]	691	100
Biotechnology	TC 276 [23]	44	48
Buildings and civil engineering works	TC 59 [24]	144	31
Cosmetics	TC 217 [25]	51	8
Dentistry	TC 106 [26]	198	66
Education and learning services	TC 232 [27]	9	4
Environmental management	TC 207 [28]	73	22

Table 1. *Cont.*

Subject Domain	ISO Technical Committee	Standards Published	Standards in Development
Ergonomics	TC 159 [29]	166	33
Financial services	TC 68 [30]	80	15
Fire safety	TC 92 [31]	159	36
Fisheries and aquaculture	TC 234 [32]	13	4
Health informatics	TC 215 [33]	244	61
Human resource management	TC 260 [34]	32	8
Information technology	JTC 1 [26]	3677	563
Mining	TC 82 [35]	69	17
Nanotechnologies	TC 229 [36]	116	35
Aircraft	TC 85 [37]	254	56
Nuclear energy, nuclear technologies, and radiological protection	TC 67 [38]	230	74
Oil and gas	TC 299 [39]	33	22
Robotics	TC 171 [40]	328	50
Steel	TC 72 [41]	135	0
Textile machinery	TC 38 [42]	448	40
Textiles	TC 20 [22]	691	100

Note: Figures are approximate and fluctuate with revisions and new publications. Sources: official ISO committee pages.

From a systems perspective, such proliferation disrupts equifinality—the ability to achieve consistent outcomes through coordinated pathways—because support professionals must constantly reconcile overlapping or conflicting requirements. This contributes to subsystem isolation rather than synergy, reinforcing the marginal positioning of functions like RAM, IT, and HR.

3.2. Management System Standards: PDCA and High-Level Structure as Integrative Mechanisms

Management System Standards (MSSs) are distinguished from domain-specific technical standards by their provision of comprehensive frameworks for organizational governance [43,44]. Their efficacy stems from common structural components that foster coherence at the system level. These standards aim to bolster organizational performance across diverse sectors, including public administration, medical device manufacturing, nuclear safety, and the oil, gas, and petrochemical industries [45,46]. MSSs trace their origins to quality management efforts in the 1970s and 1980s, culminating in the landmark publication of ISO 9001 in 1987 [13]. Initially focused on quality assurance, ISO 9001 evolved to encompass additional areas, such as environmental management and occupational health and safety. This is reflected in dedicated standards such as ISO 14001 (environmental management), ISO 27001 (information security), and ISO 45001 (occupational health and safety) [14–16,43]. Although individual standards may display minor variations or limited interoperability, their shared foundations—the PDCA cycle and High-Level Structure—provide a platform for consistency, integration, and ongoing enhancement [47].

3.2.1. The Plan–Do–Check–Act (PDCA) Cycle

The PDCA cycle, grounded in quality management principles, delivers an iterative methodology for continuous improvement that resonates with GST's focus on feedback mechanisms. This structured process for addressing issues is prominently linked to the pioneering work of Walter Shewhart and William E. Deming, whose explorations began in the 1930s [48,49]. Its definitive formulation appeared in the 1950s via Deming's presentations in Japan, establishing it as the renowned "Deming model." [50]. The PDCA cycle approach comprises four iterative phases:

- Plan: identify improvement opportunities, set priorities, map the current process using robust data, determine root causes, and devise potential solutions.
- Do: implement the action plan, record essential information, and note unexpected events, lessons learned, and new insights.
- Check: assess results from previous actions through comparisons to verify improvements and goal achievement.
- Act: embed effective changes via standardized processes; subsequently, restart the cycle for further optimization or initiate a new effort.

The PDCA cycle was initially integrated into ISO 9001, with varying emphases across its editions, and later adopted in other MSSs. Table 2 summarizes its integration across major MSSs.

Table 2. PDCA cycle approach across four subject domains.

	Quality Management	Environment Management	Information Security	Occupational Health Safety
Initial incorporation of the PDCA cycle	• 1987 edition: no explicit reference • 1994 edition: brief note as simple implementation model [51].	• 1996 edition: incorporated to manage environmental impacts [43].	• 2005 edition: adopted to enhance ISMS continuously [43].	• 2018 edition: incorporate for continuous OHS performance improvement [43].
Evolution of the PDCA integration	• 2000 edition: strengthened via process approach, reflected in structure [52]. • 2015 edition: less prescriptive; encouraged organization-wide utilization [53].	• 2004 edition: reinforced in framework [43]. • 2015 edition: integrated throughout [43].	• 2013 revision: retained as core framework element [43].	

PDCA enables subsystems (e.g., RAM processes) to interact dynamically with organizational goals, facilitating adaptation and emergence of higher-level performance.

3.2.2. The High-Level Structure (HLS)

The High-Level Structure, formerly known as the harmonized structure, was introduced in MSSs following the adoption of the PDCA cycle. It first appeared in the ISO/IEC 27001 standard for information security management systems in 2013 [16]. Thereafter, the HLS was integrated into other principal standards, such as ISO 9001, ISO 14001, and ISO 45001, to foster consistency in management system frameworks through uniform

terminology and to facilitate the integration of multiple systems [13–15,54]. As outlined in Table 3, HLS standardizes MSSs architecture through 10 common clauses. This alignment minimizes structural obstacles to integration, enabling organizations to coordinate multiple MSSs more effectively [55].

Table 3. ISO standards in a variety of domains.

Clause	Title of Clause	Content Includes
1	Scope	• Describes the intended outcomes of the management system (e.g., quality or information security).
2	Normative references	• Lists relevant industry standards and guidelines for the management system.
3	Terms of definitions	• Provides self-contained definitions of key terms and concepts used in the standard.
4	Context of the organization	• Covers the organization's internal and external context. • Addresses stakeholder needs/expectations (inputs for scope, risks, opportunities, and reviews). • Defines the management system's scope.
5	Leadership	• Requires top management commitment and actions. • Mandates an MSSs policy aligned with organizational purpose. • Assigns roles, responsibilities, and authorities.
6	Planning	• Addresses risks/opportunities for MSSs effectiveness, prevention, and continual improvement. • Sets measurable objectives deployed organization-wide with action plans. • Manages changes to ensure intended outcomes.
7	Support	• Specifies resources for MSSs establishment, implementation, maintenance, and improvement. • Ensures personnel competence. • Promotes awareness or policies, requirements, and impacts. • Requires effective internal/external communication. • Controls documented information.
8	Operation	• Implements Clause 6 planning via operational controls and procedures.
9	Performance evaluation	• Monitors, measures, analyzes and evaluates the MSSs and processes. • Requires an internal audit program. • Mandates top management reviews for performance assessment and improvements.
10	Improvement	• Drives continual improvement. • Addresses nonconformities with corrective action.

The HLS has gained widespread acceptance across diverse disciplines. Table 4 depicts its implementation in four key areas: quality management, environmental management, information security, and occupational health and safety [54].

The HLS functions as a shared "language" among subsystems, aligning with GST principles of hierarchy and interdependence. It allows requirements from RAM, such as those in the ISO 30300 series, to align more effectively with quality, security, or environmental management systems.

Table 4. HLS framework across four subject domains.

	Quality Management	Environment Management	Information Security	Occupational Health Safety
Initial introduction of HLS	ISO 9001 adopted it in 2015 [13].	ISO 14001 introduced it in 2015 [14].	ISO/IEC 27001 incorporated it in 2013 [16].	ISO 45001 adopted in 2018 [15].
Development of HLS over time	New edition is expected in 2026.	Most recent edition was published in 2026.	Most recent iteration was published in 2022.	New edition is expected in 2027.

3.3. Adoption Trends and Implications for Support Functions

The MSSs framework encompasses more than 80 standards spanning diverse domains, including asset management (ISO 55000 series [56]), energy management (ISO 50001 series [57]), and innovation (ISO 56000 series [58]). These are categorized as general MSSs (e.g., ISO 9001 [59], ISO 14001 [60]), sector-specific standards (e.g., ISO 29001 [61], ISO 22163 [62]), and guidance standards (e.g., ISO 14004 [63]). MSSs have achieved substantial global adoption, becoming deeply embedded in numerous organizations over time. This widespread integration establishes a strong basis for consistency across organizational functions. Table 5 displays 2024 certification data for selected major standards [12].

Table 5. Selected MSSs certification (2024 ISO Survey).

	Subject Domain	Total Valid Certificates
ISO 9001:2015 [59]	Quality management	1,474,118
ISO 14001:2015 [60]	Environmental management	676,232
ISO 45001:2018 [64]	Occupational health and safety	542,527
ISO/IEC 27001:2013 [65] and 2022 [66]	Information security management	96,709
ISO 22000:2018 [67]	Food safety management	59,521
ISO 13485:2016 [68]	Quality management for medical devices	31,215
ISO 50001:2018 [57]	Energy management	38,482
ISO 20000-1:2018 [69]	IT service management	27,332
ISO 37001:2016 [70]	Anti-bribery management	9952
ISO 22301:2019 [71]	Business continuity management	4595
ISO 39001:2012 [72]	Road traffic safety management	1880
ISO 55001:2014 [73]	Asset management	687
ISO 28000:2022 [74]	Security and resilience in the supply chain	322
ISO 20121:2012 [75]	Sustainability management for events	154
ISO 44001:2017 [76]	Collaborative business relationship management	110
ISO 29001:2020 [61]	Quality management for the petroleum, petrochemical, and natural gas industries	26

An analysis of adoption patterns from 2023 to 2024, shown in Table 6, indicates annual increases in certifications for several prominent MSSs [12].

Table 6. Growth in major MSSs certifications (2023–2024).

	Subject Domain	No. of Certificates in 2023	No. of Certificates in 2024
ISO 9001:2015 [59]	Quality management	837,978	1,474,118
ISO 14001:2015 [60]	Environmental management	300,410	676,232
ISO 45001:2018 [64]	Occupational health and safety	185,166	542,527
ISO/IEC 27001:2013 [65] and 2022 [66]	Information security management	47,291	96,709

In comparison, the ISO 30300 series for records management exhibits minimal certified adoption. This contrast reveals a structural deficiency: although MSSs are broadly adopted for essential integrative roles, specialized support standards like those for RAM are insufficiently harmonized, thereby constraining their role in enhancing the overall organizational integration.

4. Discussion

The results underscore systemic difficulties stemming from the proliferation of standards in organizational support functions. Viewed through the lens of GST, the abundance of domain-specific standards engenders excessive complexity, undermines subsystem interdependence, and hinders the attainment of unified organizational performance. Records and archives management (RAM) exemplifies this issue, though similar challenges permeate IT, HR, and administrative services.

4.1. Standards Proliferation as a Source of Systematic Complexity

Approximately 255 published standards from TC 46/SC 11 and TC 171, alongside hundreds or thousands in related domains, for instance Joint Technical Committee (JTC) 1 for IT, suggest a pattern of institutional overload [77,78]. Although this proliferation embodies specialized expertise, it fosters fragmentation, compelling support professionals to navigate a myriad of occasionally redundant requirements [79]. Consequently, this results in redundant efforts, compliance exhaustion, and perpetuated marginalization. In GST terminology, such expansion impairs feedback mechanisms and equifinality—the capacity to realize consistent outcomes via harmonized pathways—among interconnected subsystems. Analogous strains beset other support domains. For instance, IT professionals navigate 3677 published standards and 563 under development in JTC 1 standards, while HR practitioners manage with 32 published standards and eight in development from TC 260 [26,34]. In the absence of unifying frameworks, these areas are prone to siloed operations, curtailing their strategic value to the overarching organizational system.

4.2. MSSs as Enablers of System-Level Integration

Management System Standards offer a promising pathway to address this complexity through shared architecture. The PDCA cycle provides iterative feedback loops that align with GST principles of adaptation and continual improvement. The High-Level Structure (HLS) further acts as a harmonizing "backbone," enabling different MSSs to speak a common language via standardized clauses (context, leadership, planning, etc.). This structural compatibility facilitates mapping RAM requirements (ISO 30300 series) [17] onto broader systems such as quality (ISO 9001) [13], information security (ISO/IEC 27001) [16], or environmental management (ISO 14001) [14].

Practical illustrations include, within a healthcare organization, the integration of ISO 30301 [17] (records management) with ISO 27001 [16], (information security) and ISO 9001 [13] (quality) to establish unified processes for patient record creation, retention, access control, and audit trails. Such integration can reduce duplication, strengthen compliance, and improve information flow across subsystems. Additionally, in a government agency, aligning RAM with HR standards could facilitate seamless management of employee records lifecycle management, enhancing data accuracy and risk mitigation while elevating support functions from administrative to strategic roles. These examples illustrate how MSSs alignment promotes synergy rather than competition among support domains.

4.3. Adoption Disparities and Barries to Integration

The robust global uptake of major MSSs—exemplified by over 1.47 million ISO 9001 [13] certifications in 2024, with significant year-on-year growth—contrasts sharply with the limited adoption of the ISO 30300 [17] series. This disparity exposes an architectural deficit: despite growing organizational affinity for holistic management approaches, RAM standards demonstrate insufficient compatibility with the MSSs framework [51,52]. Factors include limited awareness, implementation complexity, and insufficient demonstrated benefits in support contexts [9]. Integrating GST with institutional theory, could bolster MSSs' congruence imparting legitimacy and counteract the peripheral status of support functions. However, standards harmonization primarily serves as an enabler; holistic system integration necessitates additional organizational measures, such as gap evaluations, cross-departmental governance, and phased deployment.

Figure 1 delineates a straightforward conceptual model rooted in GST. It depicts the PDCA cycle and HLS as bridging mechanisms that link support subsystems to the wider organizational system, thereby helping alleviate fragmentation and bolster systemic coherence.

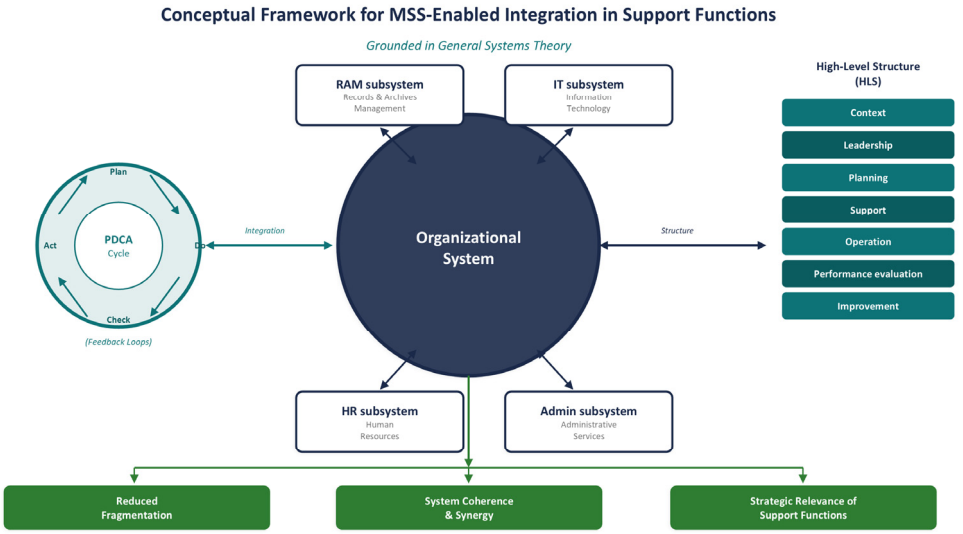


Figure 1. Conceptual framework for MSSs-enabled integration in support functions. Source: author.

This model eschews novel operational paradigms. Rather, it proffers a high-level analytical perspective that amalgamates the communal architecture of extant MSSs, elucidating their capacity to foster system-wide integration [80,81]. It draws on established integrated management systems scholarship while remaining practicable for scholars and practitioners alike [82,83].

4.4. Implications and Limitations

Enhanced congruence between RAM and other support standards with the MSSs framework can reposition these functions as integral, value-generating elements of the organizational system. Standards bodies ought to emphasize complete HLS adherence in forthcoming updates. Organizations and practitioners may commence with HLS-oriented gap analyses and modest pilot initiatives. This analysis is constrained by its conceptual orientation and dependence on secondary sources. Although the framework yields a valuable overview, empirical validations via case studies across varied organizational settings are requisite. In summation, deliberate harmonization via MSSs constitutes a compelling antidote to standards proliferation. By promoting coherence among support subsystems, organizations can amplify the strategic import of RAM and analogous functions, concomitantly elevating systemic efficacy.

5. Conclusions

Support functions—including RAM, IT, HR, and administrative services—function as interlinked subsystems within encompassing organizational systems. Standards proliferation induces systemic intricacy that fragments initiatives, induces compliance weariness, and entrenches marginalization [84,85]. This conceptual synthesis, grounded in GST, demonstrates that although domain-specific standards provide vital guidance, their proliferation—exemplified by over 250 standards in RAM-related technical committees and thousands in the information technology—undermines equifinality and systemic performance.

MSSs delineate an established route to augmented coherence. The PDCA cycle and HLS supply communal apparatuses that facilitate proficient alignment across support realms. Notwithstanding the progressive nature of the ISO 30300 series for RAM, its subdued adoption and partial assimilation with predominant MSSs signify a pivotal enhancement prospect [9,86]. Figure 1 furnishes a concise conceptual model visualizing how PDCA and HLS interconnect support subsystems with organizational aims, engendering synergy and strategic pertinence.

This study proffers several key recommendations. For standards developers, such as ISO TC 46/SC 11 and TC 171 [10,11], ensuring comprehensive High-Level Structure compatibility and explicit Plan–Do–Check–Act integration in future Records and Archives Management standards revisions is imperative. Organizations and practitioners should conduct HLS-oriented gap analyses and initiate pilot integrations linking RAM with ISO 9001 [13], ISO/IEC 27001 [16], or analogous standards. Professional bodies and educators in the field ought to promote awareness and training on the advantages of Management System Standards for support functions.

This article advances no innovative operational schema but supplies a conceptual prism to steer integration endeavors. Prospective inquiries should encompass empirical case investigations, cross-domain comparisons, and assessments of deployment results. Ultimately, amplified alignment with MSSs yields a pragmatic, extensible countermeasure to standards proliferation. Through fortifying system-level integration, organizations can propel support functions from ancillary positions to pivotal contributors of organizational efficacy and resilience.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

GST	General Systems Theory
HLS	High-Level Structure
HR	human resources
IAF	International Accreditation Forum
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
IT	information technology
JTC	Joint Technical Committee
MSSs	Management System Standards
PDCA	Plan–Do–Check–Act
RAM	records and archives management
TC	technical committee

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