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## **The role of effective internal stakeholders engagement in the management of international project: a case study of University of Limerick - Ghana co-operative placement programme**

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**UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK**  
O L L S C O I L L U I M N I G H

**The Role of Effective Internal Stakeholders Engagement  
in the Management of International project: A Case Study  
of University of Limerick - Ghana Cooperative Placement  
Programme**

By

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Centre for Project Management  
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for

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Supervised by Catriona Burke

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## **Abstract**

The UL's International Cooperative Placement, a student internship programme, with PPRC has been running for almost a decade. This study examines the nature of communication and engagement processes adopted by the internal stakeholders of UL and PPRC in the light of efficient management. It explores the nature of their relationship and assesses formal and informal communication processes. Key informant interviews supported by secondary data suggest that communication; engagement opportunities and dialogue are extensive. Evidence suggests that internal stakeholder interactions are far-reaching and that barriers to formal and informal communication have not endangered the engagement process. Accordingly, the study concludes that communication among the internal stakeholders is indeed facilitating an effective and efficient management of the programme commending its initiators for their foresight. Since the partnership is laudable, it needs support for its long-term sustainability.

## Executive Summary

Effective stakeholder engagement is essential to safeguard successful implementation of projects. This study looks at the importance of stakeholder engagement process using the UL's International Cooperative Placement, a student internship programme with PPRC which has run for almost a decade, as a case study. Fifteen stakeholders were consulted through the use of interviews and questionnaires to help measure the concerns and challenges faced in their engagement. The main objective is to establish a more favourable approach to enhance the engagement process involving all stakeholders in the project. The study recommends:

- A continuous and efficient stakeholder engagement.
- Clear and concise communication among stakeholders and,
- The use of effective information technology in the process of engagement.

In conclusion, the study underscores the viability of the UL Cooperative Placement with PPRC and recommends its long-term support and sustainability and, although the programme is specific, recommendations made can be used as general benchmarks for other placement programmes of UL for efficiency and effectiveness.

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I am indeed grateful to almighty God for the strength and support he has given me throughout these years. To my supervisor, Catriona Burke, I am very grateful for your patience and time, coupled with your excellent sense of direction.

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To my parents Dr Mark Mantey and Mrs Gladys Mantey, my siblings Joseph, Mark Jnr and Linda, and all my friends for their love, support and encouragement, may God abundantly bless you.

Equally, I thank all the lecturers of the MSc. Project Management of the Kemmy Business School for their guidance and great service.

**Declaration**

I hereby certify that this material is entirely my own work and has not been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of the University of Limerick or any other University or Institute of Learning.

Where use has been made of the work of other people, it has been acknowledged and is fully referenced.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature (Supervisor): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Contents

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>I</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>II</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>III</b>
<b>DECLARATION</b> .....	<b>IV</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES &amp; FIGURES</b> .....	<b>I</b>
<b>LIST OF APPENDICES</b> .....	<b>II</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b> .....	<b>III</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.0 INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK COOP EDUCATION: INTERNATIONAL PLACEMENT .....	1
1.2 TAKING STOCK OF THE COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PLACEMENT IN GHANA .....	2
1.3 SETTING THE CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY .....	3
1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES .....	4
1.5 RESEARCH PROBLEM .....	5
1.6 RESEARCH QUESTION .....	5
1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY .....	5
1.8 CHAPTER OUTLINE .....	6
1.9 SUMMARY .....	6
<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	<b>7</b>
2.0 INTRODUCTION .....	7
2.1 THEORISING COMMUNICATION .....	7
2.1.1 BARRIERS TO FORMAL AND INFORMAL COMMUNICATION .....	10
2.3 THEORISING AND CONCEPTUALISING STAKEHOLDERS COMMUNICATION .....	12
2.4 STAKEHOLDER'S MANAGEMENT .....	13
2.5 CONCEPTUALISING STAKEHOLDERS: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS ..	15
2.6 APPROACHES TO INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS' ENGAGEMENT, MANAGEMENT AND DIALOGUE .....	16
2.7 STAKEHOLDER CIRCLE METHODOLOGY IN ENGAGEMENT AND INFLUENCE OF POWER 17	
2.6 SUMMARY .....	21
<b>CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY CONSIDERATION</b> .....	<b>22</b>
3.0 INTRODUCTION .....	22
3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN .....	22
3.2 METHODOLOGY .....	23
3.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH .....	23
3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS .....	24
3.5 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT .....	24
3.6 SAMPLE OF POPULATION AND TECHNIQUE .....	25
3.7 DATA COLLECTION .....	25
3.8 KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS .....	26
3.9 DATA MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS .....	26
3.11 SUMMARY .....	27
<b>CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF DATA: VIEWS ABOUT ENGAGING, DIALOGUING, INTERACTING, MANAGING AND MAINTAINING INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS RELATIONSHIP</b> .....	<b>28</b>
4.0 INTRODUCTION .....	28
4.1 ENGAGING, DIALOGUING, INTERACTING AND MANAGING .....	28

4.1.1 ENGAGING, DIALOGUING, INTERACTING AND MANAGING AT THE UL COOP OFFICE	28
4.2 MAINTAINING INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS' RELATIONSHIP .....	29
4.3 RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTION OF COMMUNICATION AMONG INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS .....	32
4.4 VIEWS OF RESPONDENTS REGARDING BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION .....	33
4.5 SUMMARY .....	35
<b>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION– SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>37</b>
5.0 INTRODUCTION .....	37
5.1 DISCUSSION .....	37
5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS .....	39
5.3 SUMMARY .....	40
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>LIST OF INTERVIEWS .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: ETHICS FORM .....</b>	<b>47</b>
OLLSCOIL LUIMINIGH .....	47
<b>APPENDIX B: INFORMATION SHEET .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>APPENDIX C – CONSENT FORM .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>APPENDIX D – INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANTS UL–GHANA COOP .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COOP STUDENTS OF THE UL-GHANA COOP .....</b>	<b>55</b>

**Word Count 11,249**

## List of Tables & Figures

Table 1: Common Barriers to Communications.....	11
Table 2: Process Diagram: Key points from Authors in the Literature .....	21
Table 3: Five Stages of Data Analysis .....	27
Table 4: Key Informants and their Roles.....	35
Figure 1: Two-way communication channels .....	9
Figure 2: The Formal Structure and the Informal structure of an organisation .....	10
Figure 3: Stakeholder’s Management Process .....	13
Figure 4: The stakeholders’ management process .....	14
Figure 5: The Stakeholder Circle tool .....	18
Figure 6: Stakeholder engagement opportunities throughout the process of conducting a systematic review. ....	19
Figure 7: Potential stakeholders for real estate development project .....	19
Figure 8: The power-interest matrix (Johnson and Scholes, 1999) .....	20

List of Appendices

<b>APPENDIX A: ETHICS FORM .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: INFORMATION SHEET .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>APPENDIX C – CONSENT FORM.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>APPENDIX D – INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANTS UL-GHANA COOP .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COOP STUDENTS OF THE UL-GHANA COOP .....</b>	<b>55</b>

## **List of Abbreviations**

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UL – University of Limerick

PPRC – Padre Pio Rehabilitation Centre, Ghana

AHSS – Arts, Humanities and Social Science Department

CED – Cooperative Education Division

## Chapter 1: Background to the Study

### 1.0 Introduction

Academic commentators such as Caputo (2013), Walters and Chadwick (2009) and Turner (2009) encourage us to develop an effective communication process among stakeholders as a means to help manage complex international projects successfully. Communication as a concept becomes a key tool to engage dialogue and manage relationships. Since effective communication is essential to running a project successfully, this study looks at the role internal stakeholders play in engaging, dialoguing and managing their interests as regards a decade-long UL's International Cooperative Placement, a student internship programme, with PPRC.

The transfer of information in the past was always a challenge in managing international projects. In recent years, information and communication technology has helped the growth of communication management with significant impact on many organisations that work together across the globe. Consequently, the investigative approach of this study is formulated around the two related questions of **internal stakeholders' relationship** and **barriers to formal and informal ways of communication management** as established above.

### 1.1 University of Limerick Coop Education: International Placement

The UL's Cooperative Education Programme (Coop) is an integral part of undergraduate studies. The principal aim of the Coop is to help students develop a range of skills for future career (UL Prospects 2013-2014). It is one of the top reasons why students choose to study at UL. The placements are all organised and managed by the Cooperative Education and Careers Division. Over '1700 employers are involved in Coop programme' and currently 'with about 1800 placements every year' (UL Prospects 2013-2014). This is indeed a huge task, and they work in collaborations with different stakeholders to identify suitable Coop placements opportunities (UL Prospects 2013-2014). This requires effective and efficient collaboration among internal stakeholders to manage the implementation of international placement which spread across 'twenty-five different countries which

include France, Germany, Spain, UK, US, China, Japan Argentina, Mexico, South Africa, New Zealand and Ghana (UL Prospects 2013-2014, p. 31) which is the locus of the study.

## **1.2 Taking Stock of the Cooperative Education Placement in Ghana**

Dr Mark Mantey, who helped in setting up the student internship in his home district in Cape Coast, said that the programme began with two students on a pilot basis in 2004, offering the student unique opportunities in a challenging environment within which the student volunteer offers service to an unfortunate child who would normally lack basic education in subject areas like English, Maths and Information Communication Technology. The programme which enjoys popularity among students because of the African experience has had over 80 participants since its inception, 'with an average of 7 to 8 students being placed in Ghana twice a year, from January-June and June-December and when possible, the January-June students overlap with June-December volunteers as way of interacting and sharing ideas and experience' (Dr Mantey, Skype Interview: 24-08-2013). Recently, the programme has received national recognition as stated:

*The University of Limerick's unique international work placement programme, **Engage Africa**, has been awarded the **2012 All Ireland Employability Award**. Jerry Cronin, Cooperative Education Manager, UL, said: "Engage Africa was developed by UL in response to student demand for work experience in international development and education. The programme has seen great success to date with over 120 students placed in rural and urban settings across Ghana, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia. Collaboration with key academics has been a feature of the programme. In the case of Ghana, for example, Mark Mantey researcher at UL, was pivotal in establishing and developing the links.*

**Source: <http://www.ul.ie/news-centre/news/engage-africa>**

Students who take up placement in Ghana are considered volunteers because they are not remunerated. They are to serve as responsible figures for the children they interact with. Each volunteer is assigned to a location that responds to their skills and more crucially to the need at the time. Sr. Patricia Pearson explains that depending on the numbers, volunteers are placed as close as possible to the main project site and as much as possible link the placement to the programme of study.

Presently, volunteers are provided with a job description which states the purpose of their job, reporting lines, responsibilities and performance and success barometer. Most of the volunteers are always involved in extra-curricular activities. Most of the volunteers do fundraising to set up school libraries, playground, basketball court, and in some cases buy football jerseys for school teams, among others (Patricia Pearson, 24-08-2013).

The placement is usually in rural community schools. Other volunteers also work on health education initiative programmes and others in hospital administration. Volunteers on arrival mostly undertake a two-week orientation programme to facilitate their settlement into the cultural tradition of Ghana.

### **1.3 Setting the context for the Study**

This study is placed in the context of UL's student internship programme with PPRC, as it considers employees and students at the AHSS of UL as internal stakeholders regarding the role the University plays and, at the practical level, examines the opportunities in engaging one another to facilitate and manage effective communication process and help build a sustainable relationship with PPRC.

In managing stakeholders, effective communication (formal and informal) is very important and since communication is a two-way channel of interaction, it can uphold individual and group interest to enable them dialogue and engage for a successful implementation of a project like the one of our in this study.

There are a lot of complex issues when it comes to engaging stakeholders internally and externally for which communication can play a central role of constituting, managing and maintaining stakeholder relationships. Against this background, the study embraces communication as 'a social process that brings meaning to life through negotiation and consensus' in the words of Smircich and Stubbart (cited in Foster and Jonker 2005, p. 52).

The rationale therefore for the study is that stakeholders' engagement is seen as a form of communication and every organisation accordingly should learn to engage these stakeholders in some way.

## 1.4 Aim and Objectives

The background information so far highlights the importance of internal stakeholders' relationship. Thus, effective communication, which encourages dialogue, engagement, managing and maintaining relationship with all internal stakeholders, can help facilitate effective and efficient project management. **For this reason, the principal aim of this study is to examine whether the nature of communication and engagement process which involves internal stakeholders is facilitating an effective and efficient management of the student internship programme between the UL and the PPRC.** To achieve this, particular attention will be paid to project communication management, which encompasses planning, information distribution, performance reporting and administrative closure. Consequently, the study follows a four-facet approach:

- 1). To critically review the scholarly literature about the contending arguments with respect to communication involving stakeholders relationship, the theoretical and conceptual issues underpinning, management and engagement and different dialogue processes as well as identifying the challenges militating against internal stakeholder relationship as every organisation is required to discover how to involve either external or internal stakeholders in one way or the other.
- 2) To provide a theoretical and conceptual understanding to communication as a means of helping to get academic insights into the concept of internal stakeholders, and assess how they manage to deal with complex international projects. The aim is to conceptualise stakeholder engagement opportunities, integrated and systematic internal stakeholders approach in managing international project, and how organisation should learn to engage with all internal stakeholders in line with project management.
- 3) To collect empirical data with respect to conducting key informant interviews regarding how **the nature of communication and engagement process involving all internal stakeholders is facilitating an effective and efficient management** of the student internship programme between the UL and PPRC.
- 4) Present analysis of findings in line with theoretical framework and variables (dialogue, engagement, maintaining relationship management) as a form of communication process for this study. Then further discussion and recommendations presented.

### **1.5 Research Problem**

It is evident that dialogue of engagement and developing stakeholder engagement strategies to facilitate implementation of project are vital to project success. At the practical level the process of engagement entails briefing students, providing adequate information, organising interviews for potential students, placing students and monitoring and evaluating them. All these are done in collaboration with external partners in Ghana. The extent of the communication and engagement process involve all internal stakeholders to ensure that students get adequate information to facilitate pre-selection, interview and pre-departure process which requires an effective communication process among all participants. The process and the development of the on-going internal stakeholders' relationship and its impact on delivering effective and efficient management of student internship programme is the concern of this study.

### **1.6 Research Question**

Having highlighted the concern for the study, the focus of the research is designed around two questions, which form the central exploratory matters:

**RQ1:** How can dialogue and engagement opportunities among internal stakeholders help facilitate effective communication process for the implementation of a successful project?

**RQ2:** Are barriers to formal and informal communication processes a deterrent to internal stakeholders' management in an effort to achieve effective and efficient communication in the execution of a project?

These research questions will be examined using the empirical and secondary data generated from this study.

### **1.7 Limitations of the study**

This study encountered a number of challenges. First, as a result of the restricted period of eight weeks for data collection not all the internal stakeholders especially the students were interviewed. Secondly, lack of funds made a trip to Ghana impossible for experiential and practical information. However, contacts made through telephone and Skype conversations generated substantive empirical data for the study.

## **1.8 Chapter Outline**

This study has five Chapters. Chapter 1 presents the overall background to the study. Chapter 2 supplies the theoretical and conceptual groundwork to benchmark this study. This includes a brief overview of the historical evolution of the UL's international student placement programme with PPRC. Chapter 3 focuses on the methodological approach and the way in which the research is design in order to ascertain primary data that responds to research questions. Chapter 4 responds to the findings vis-à-vis the two research questions and hypotheses. Chapter 5 presents additional discussion, summary of the main findings and recommendations.

## **1.9 Summary**

This Chapter presents the background to the study. It seeks to highlight the importance of internal stakeholders' relationship and the various opportunities that are available for internal stakeholders' communication; for every organisation needs to engage its stakeholders both external and internal. Citing Foster and Jonker (2005) at the heart of this, the communication process that involves all internal stakeholders facilitating effective and efficient working relationship, is a matter of concern to this study.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

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### **2.0 Introduction**

Since organisations today must engage stakeholders, the study considers internal stakeholders' engagement as a form of communication process, for which reason, the current chapter reviews the existing empirical and theoretical literature to establish method of determining how internal stakeholders collaborate in the learning process, and dialogue and build stronger relationships in facilitating quality implementation. Within this context, it is necessary to consider the theoretical concept of communication and the management of stakeholders' relationships with the view of looking at engagement opportunities and strategies. Therefore, this chapter will first develop the theoretical and conceptual framework of relevant literature with respect to stakeholders' engagement opportunities and strategies, dialogue and management of relationships, beginning with Communication Theory and its Barriers and, Concepts related to Stakeholders.

### **2.1 Theorising Communication**

Communication research with regard to interactions among internal stakeholders and how they facilitate an effective and efficient dialogue is minimal. However, Craig (1999, p.125) points out that 'communication is a process of sending and receiving messages or transferring information from one mind to another'. Welch and Jackson (2007) maintain that 'despite its importance to practice, there are considerable gaps in internal communication theory and theorists have called for research on its mandates, scope and focus' (cited in Forman and Argenti, 2005, p. 257). It should be noted that 'communication theorists apparently neither agree nor disagree about much of anything' (Craig 1999, p.125). A lot of theories of communication exist in scholarly literature, but it is the kind of the communication process, which connects internal stakeholders in a working relationship within an organisation, that is alluded to in this study (Foster and Jonker 2005). This suggests communication as a process, which may promote effective dialogue, inspire engagement opportunities and build a strong and robust relationship for effective and efficient network system in achieving organisational goals and objectives.

The 'constructive model of communication as a *metamodel* opens up a conceptual space in which many different theoretical models of communication can interact (Craig 1999, p. 126) and as *metadiscourse* that engages the problems of communication as a social practice (Craig 1999, p. 129) and further points out that 'various traditions of communication theory offer distinct ways of conceptualising and discussing communication problems and practices' (Craig 1999: 20). This theoretical review reveals gaps within the existing literature regarding communication plan and communication among stakeholders.

However, Turner (2009, p.83) in describing the main objectives of communication lists the following:

- Raising awareness and gaining commitment from key stakeholders
- Informing other business areas and promoting key messages about a project,
- Ensuring a common understanding of a project and its objectives
- Maximizing the benefits of a project by having everybody working for its success.

Turner, Qvarford, Biehl, Golovchinsky and Back (2010, p.841) maintain that 'effective communication is a critical component of successful collaborations. It enables collaborators to foster ideas, to build common grounds and to develop complex interpersonal relationship'. For this reason, the process requires more than one person (Turner et al 2010). Foster and Jonker (2005, p. 52) see "feedback" as a tool the sender uses to improve and adjust their message. Communication practices and attitudes then depend on 'effective communication among co-workers' (Turner et al 2010, p.841). Communication is a two-way process, which requires some amount of persuasion and control by the sender (Foster and Jonker 2005).

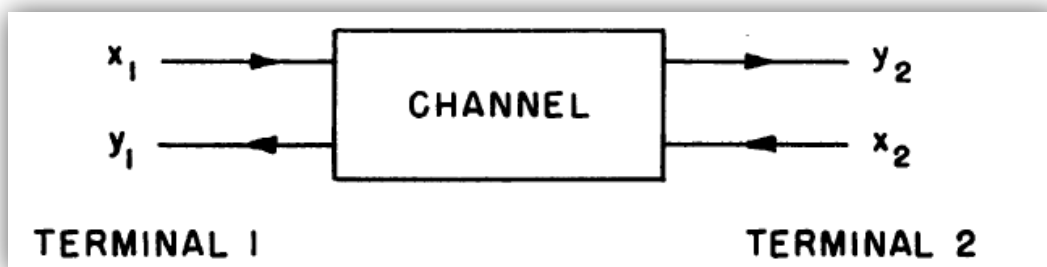
Managing and developing interpersonal relationship cannot be overlooked in the implementation of a project since it helps build common ground to nurture ideas and to make things happen. Thus, any form of communication arrangement must be an action-oriented, in achieving the overriding goals of the organisation (Foster and Jonker 2005), Welch and Jackson (2007, p.178) in their article *Rethinking internal communication* in **Quirke** (2000, p. 21), asserted that:

in the information age an organization's assets include the knowledge and interrelationships of its people. Its business is to take the input of information, using the creative and intellectual assets of its people to

process it in order to produce value. Internal communication is the core process by which business can create this value.

They further cite 'management scholars' such as Smidts et al (2001, p. 1051) stating that internal communication is a "rather neglected" management instrument while Yeomans (2006, p. 337) asserts that 'very little attention is paid to internal communication by public relations scholars yet it is viewed as part of an organisation's strategic communication function'. Consequently Kitchen and Daly (2002, p. 49), call for definition and discussion of internal communication.

Since review of communication practices and attitudes points to the importance of collaborative interpersonal relationships and how they lead to smooth implementation of complex projects, Lasswell (2007, p. 220) says that 'two-way communication occurs when the sending and receiving functions are performed with equal frequency by two or more persons' supported by Shannon who by the figure below, of the two-way process of communication, reiterates that 'the problem is to communicate in both directions through the channel as effectively as possible' (Shannon, 1961,p. 611).

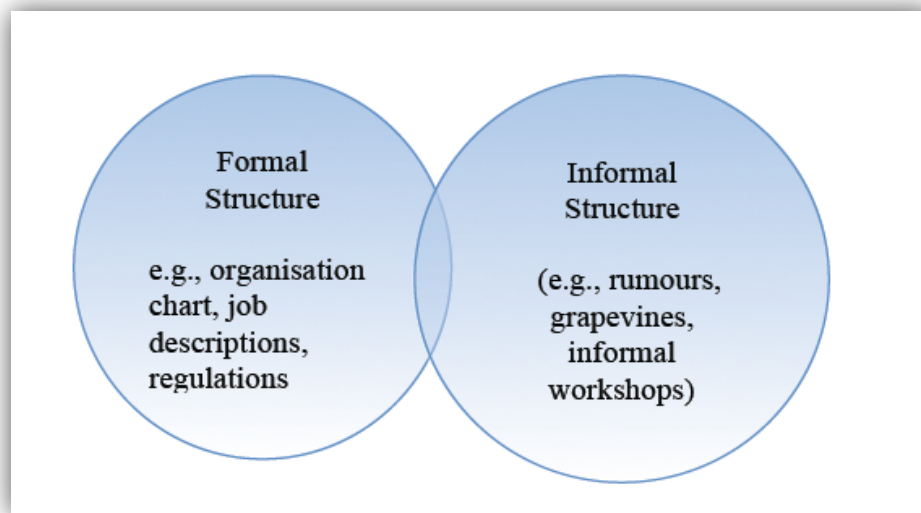


**Figure 1: Two-way communication channels**

Source: (Shannon 1961,p.611)

Moreover, Turner (2009, p. 84) argues that "communication should not be one way; you should talk with people, not at people. If you want people committed to your project and the change it will introduce, they must feel involved, and feel that they have some influence". Turner further states that communication is a social process, which makes collaborative interaction among internal stakeholders the best practice. Let us momentarily look at the requirement, which makes formal and informal channels of communication effective.

“Formal and informal communication channels in organisations are usually complementary and substitutable” according to Downs (cited in Rogers & Agarwala-Rogers 1976, p.81) and thus lead to the sometimes-overlapping occurrence between the formal organisational structure and the informal communication patterns as indicated in figure 2 below by Rogers and Agarwala-Rogers (1976).



**Figure 2: The Formal Structure and the Informal structure of an organisation**

Source: (Rogers & Agarwala-Rogers 1976, p.81).

### **2.1.1 Barriers to Formal and Informal Communication**

Barriers to communication according to Blundel (2004, p.2) is anything that alters /prevents a message from being properly sent or received. He further states that communication is about overcoming barriers, Blundel (2004, p.2). Hence in order to overcome barriers to communication, it is essential to understand the underlying causes. Table 1 provides a solid understanding of common barriers to communications from apparent to technological causes and would help with the analysis of empirical data in chapter 4.

Table 1: Common Barriers to Communications.

<b>Apparent cause</b>	<b>Practical example: a more complex explanation?</b>
<b>Physiological</b>	<b>Message in an internal report not received due to blindness; but why was the message not encoded in a suitable format?</b>
<b>Psychological</b>	<b>Message from external stakeholder ignored due to 'groupthink' (Janis 1982); but why has this been allowed to develop in the organisation?</b>
<b>Cultural</b>	<b>Message from organisation misinterpreted by members of a particular cultural group; but why was the organisation unaware of the cultural diversity?</b>
<b>Political</b>	<b>Message from internal stakeholder not sent because individual is marginalised; but why is organisation not encouraging a more open climate?</b>
<b>Economic</b>	<b>Message not available to public sector organisation due to lack of resources; but why is it unable to exert pressure for additional funding?</b>
<b>Technological</b>	<b>Message not delivered due to technical failure; but why was the failure allowed to develop and why are there no back-up systems?</b>

Source: (Blundel, 2004, p.26)

Some authors commenting on communication impact with regards to stakeholders state that 'communication breakdown reduces trust, which leads employees to rely more heavily on written communication to protect themselves and so on in a downward spiral' (Ascota, Leon, Conrad and Malave 2010, p.185). Effective internal communication is crucial for success as it affects the ability of strategic managers to engage employees and achieve objectives (Welch and Jackson 2007, p.177) for which Wilkinson (1989, p.4) affirms can contribute to more harmonious working relationships, understanding of commercial conditions, acceptance of change and improvement of productivity.

Blundel (2004, p.16) argues that 'practising effective communication in different organisational settings requires an open mind, which means a willingness to take new ideas and explore new perspectives', which will subsequently lead to internal communication to be observed as an important element in the communication management of projects as this research seeks to address.

The review so far has provided some conceptual debate and fundamental

ingredients with regard to on-going academic discussion about how effective communication practices can be achieved to ensure successful collaboration and development of interpersonal relationship in the workplace. The next section considers a comparative literature on stakeholders' communication.

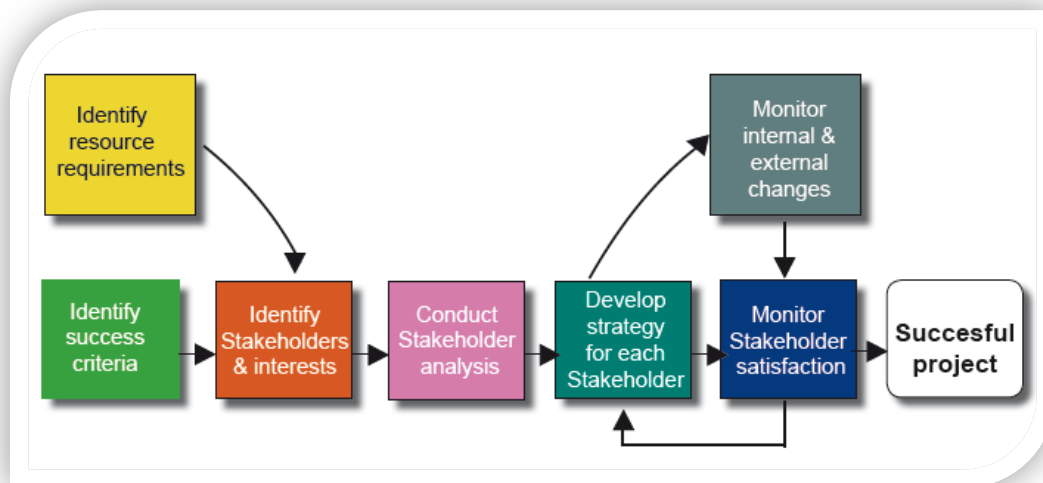
### **2.3 Theorising and Conceptualising Stakeholders Communication**

By definition 'stakeholders are those individuals or groups who depend on an organisation to fulfil their own goals and on whom, in turn, the organisation depends' (Johnson, Scholes Whittington 2005, p. 179) which makes it crucial to map out plans or strategies to identify stakeholder expectations and power in any organisation (Johnson, Scholes Whittington 2005). Stakeholder theorists, Tiernan, Morley and Foley (1996, p. 73) 'hold that objectives have to be related to all those with a stake in the organisation which include customers, suppliers, employers, the government and the public in general.' But Horine (2009, p.13) asserts that "stakeholder" is 'the term used to describe individuals and organisations who are actively involved in the project, or whose interests may be impacted by the execution or completion of the project' and the way and manner to involve, engage and manage the interest of external and internal stakeholders to develop effective and efficient interaction and interpersonal relationship in fulfilment of organisational goals can be challenging or problematic (Keown, Van Eerd and Irvin (2008).

In this regard, Subramaniam (2009) sees stakeholder communication as the process that enable continuous dialogue and improvement, since theorists argue that different stakeholders will have different ideas and strong feelings about what values an organisation should embrace (Johnson, Scholes Whittington 2005). Consequently, corporate communication is a management function that offers a framework for the effective coordination of all internal and external communication with the overall purpose of establishing and maintaining favourable reputations with stakeholder groups upon which organisations is dependent (Cornelissen 2008, p.5).

## 2.4 Stakeholder's Management

Systemic stakeholder's management process is central to the corporate strategies, operations and communication of many if not all, organisations (Cornelissen 2008). As noted by Turner (2009) anybody who has an interest in managing project, must understand how projects work especially the stakeholders' management process. Figures 3 and 4 below illustrate the process of identifying stakeholders' interests, conduct stakeholders' analysis; develop strategy for each stakeholder and monitor stakeholder satisfaction. This can help strengthen stakeholders' interpersonal relationship for successful execution of the goals and objectives, a useful tool for this study.



**Figure 3: Stakeholder's Management Process**

Source: (Turner 2009,p.77)

Andrea Caputo (2013,p.67) in contributing to the systemic stakeholders' management debate affirms that firms:

*Need an analysis of needs and interests of such entities in relation to the objective of the project they want to accomplish. This process should address such questions as: who are the internal and external stakeholders of the project? What are the needs and interests of various stakeholders? How can those needs and interests be met without compromising the objective of the project?*

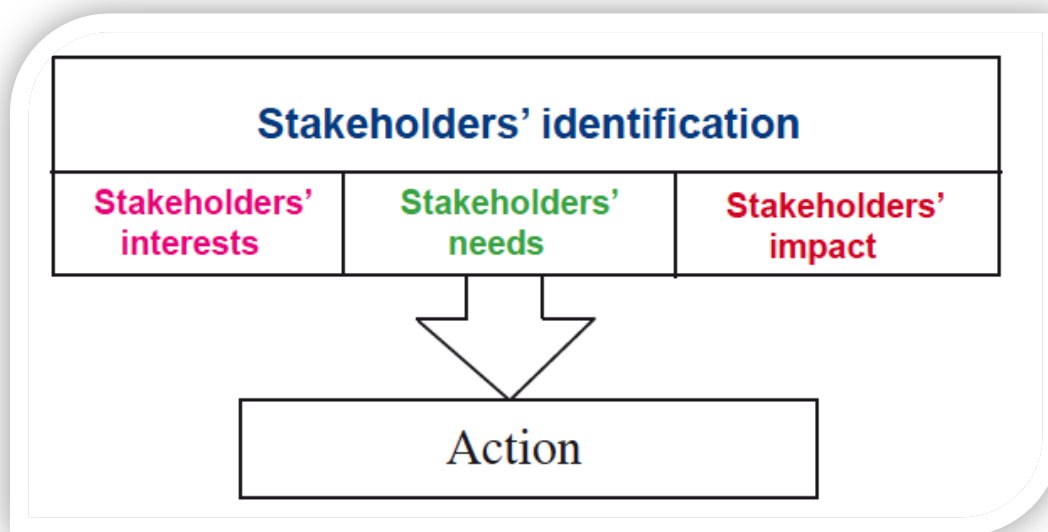
The quotation provides the basis to analyse the internal stakeholders in various dimensions whose components include:

- Identifying internal stakeholders;

- Assessing their needs and interests;
- Analysing the potential impact these can have on decisions regarding the project; and
- Evaluating solutions for the implementation of the project, all of which must respect the interests of stakeholders.

(Adapted from Caputo 2013, p.67).

In developing a systemic stakeholders' management practice, Caputo suggests that the importance of stakeholders' identification method becomes part of the process as depicted in Figure 4. He emphasizes that a good project manager should have a good knowledge about internal stakeholders and their demands, their influence on decisions concerning the project; and the effect of the implementation of the project and the influence on them (adapted from Caputo 2013, p.73). Stakeholders' identification process is therefore critical in the effective implementation of projects and must be observed in all projects to ensure success.



**Figure 4: The stakeholders' management process**

Source: (Caputo 2013,p.74)

The direct interaction between stakeholders can help to strengthen communication practices and produce efficient and systemic stakeholders' collaborations (Keown et al 2008). On account of this, stakeholder's management system serves as a communication process, which can provide effective channel sustainable in achieving 'different expectations amongst stakeholders' (Johnson, Scholes and Whittington 2005, p. 211).

## **2.5 Conceptualising Stakeholders: Internal and External stakeholders**

Freeman (1984) notes that 'a stakeholder is any individual or group of individuals who may have influence, or be influenced, on the realization of the purpose of an organisation (cited in Caputo 2013, p.74). While external stakeholders are defined as those who have a stake in a project (Gibson, 2000 cited in Caputo 2013 and Hart and Sharma 2004), internal stakeholders are defined as 'groups/ individuals who are closely connected to the organisation in what is described as "core" stakeholders (Freeman 1984, Hart and Sharma 2004, p.10). In addition, internal stakeholder communication is defined as the communication with employees within an organisation (Cornelissen 2008, p.195). The definitions are significant for this study, because, they help to highlight the significance of internal stakeholders, when it comes to engagement opportunities, collaboration, dialoguing and more importantly, building common grounds for effective interpersonal relationships. However, Cornelissen (2008, p.195) maintains that 'the advent of new technologies (e.g., internet, blogs and emails) has meant that messages to employees do not always remain 'inside' organisations thus making it hard to distinguish internal communication from external communications with stakeholders'.

Freeman (1984) connects stakeholder collaboration to the workings of different companies in relation to production of goods with reference to suppliers and customers (cited in Caputo 2013, p.74) and explains further that, 'the main concern is related to the transformation process of input versus output, which means that stakeholders considered by this theory are suppliers and customers' (cited in Caputo 2013, p.74). As Foster and Jonker (2005, p.56) put it, "they have the power (in its various forms) to influence the achievement of outcomes' which Zineldin (2002) contends can be done in the context 'of a battle plan or via some other confrontationist approach'. But Cheney and Christensen (2001) state that 'in Western democracies the on-going and genuine two-way dialogue between organisations and their stakeholders provides the best approach to the management of complex issues that characterise contemporary society' (cited in Foster and Jonker 2005, p.56). This implies that an effective and efficient communication practices can provide a platform, which has the potential for work colleagues to share ideas and build a common ground to develop interpersonal relations.

Greener (2000, p.31) presents some useful ideas regarding the specific benefits of practicing effective internal communications process as:

- Improving industrial relations climate.
- Increasing awareness among employees of company activity and plan.
- Providing opportunity for companies to use fully the accumulated experience of all employees.
- Having positive attitude to change within company and,
- Having the capacity to resolve problems before they become crises.

It is also significant to note that for effectiveness and efficiency to manifest in any organisation the procedures, methods, practices and attitudes require a 'genuine stakeholder communication' (Foster and Jonker 2005, P. 52) backed by the fact that 'the essential building-block of stakeholder relationship is communication' (Bendell 2000; Crane and Livesey 2003 cited in Foster and Jonker 2005, p.52). In developing robust internal stakeholder relationship strategies, a lot depend on the collaborative approach, interaction, method, communication process and attitude among co-workers. Nonetheless, the collaborative approach and how to develop good interpersonal relationships within an organisation is not widely developed in existing literature. In the light of collaborative approach, the next paragraphs would consider relevant issues of engagement, management and dialogue with respect to stakeholders.

## **2.6 Approaches to Internal Stakeholders' Engagement, Management and Dialogue**

The conceptual issues discussed earlier in this chapter 'refer to those with a direct interest in actions or decisions of an organisation or enterprise' (Kolsaker and Lee-Kelly 2009, p. 156). This suggests that collaboration is empowerment which can help build on the interpersonal and working relationships within an organisation (Turner et al 2010). Citing Foster and Jonker (2005, p. 51) on contemporary period, 'every organisation must learn to engage with stakeholders in some way' in what has been described as the "core" or "fringe" or peripheral stakeholders (Hart and Sharma 2004), and managing, engaging and dialoguing with all stakeholders 'are salient and important for generating the knowledge required for innovation' (Hart and Sharma 2004, p.8). However, Foster and Jonker (2005, p.56) reveal that numerous organisations interpret this engagement as a form of "management" ("read: control") where there is an attempt to organise, structure and thus "manipulate the relationship

in the belief that this will best serve their needs". Such organisations 'tend to make decisions on their own and then inform interested parties of stakeholders of that decision via a variety of monologues' (Foster and Jonker 2005, p. 51). This approach is strongly controlled or considered a one-sided form of stakeholder engagement strategy, which might not be the best.

Some organisations however look at managing, engaging and dialoguing with all stakeholders differently, underpinned by all-inclusive-process or 'the two-way relationship in which the interest and concerns of both parties are taken into consideration and decisions are made in the light of those – often conflicting interests and concerns' (Foster and Jonker 2005, p.51). Accordingly, managing, engaging and involving all internal stakeholders is indeed a good communication practice that can help strengthen, manage and build a solid stakeholder relationship on common grounds (Bourne and Walker 2008, Walters and Chadwick 2009, Turner et al., 2010).

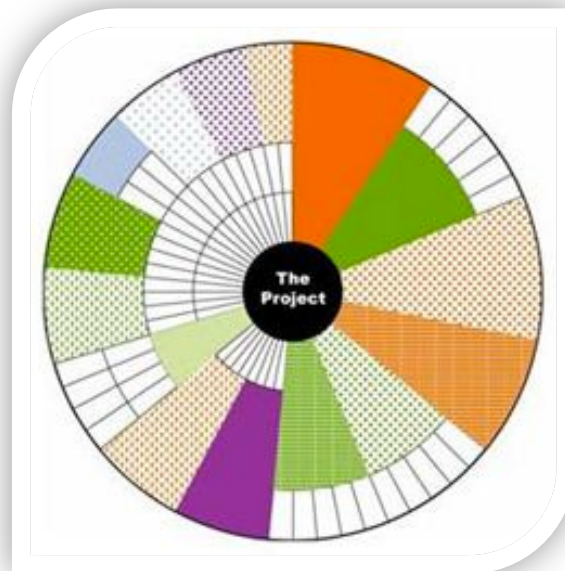
Importantly, globalisation requires organisations to manage its internal stakeholder's to deliver with efficiency for which reason Bourne and Walker (2008, p.125) assert that, 'project success or failure is directly related to its stakeholders' perceptions of the values created by the project and the nature of their relationship with the project team'. It is in the light of this that project relationship, management practice and the stakeholder circle methodology becomes a useful model to explain power, legitimacy of core stakeholder's engagement (Hart and Sharma 2004, Bourne and Walker 2008).

## **2.7 Stakeholder circle methodology in Engagement and influence of power**

The argument at the core of this methodology is that the 'the tool provides an effective mechanism for assessing the relative influence of a project's stakeholders, understanding their expectations and defining appropriate engagement procedures to influence the key stakeholders expectations and perceptions to the benefit of the project' (Bourne and Walker 2008, p.126).

At the core of this stakeholder circle methodology, Cleland re-echoes the point that: 'power, proximity and urgency which is a well-established method of gauging stakeholder influence' cannot be overlooked (cited in Bourne and Walker 2008, p.126) because 'managing powerful stakeholders' is important for any organisation (Hart and Sharma 2004, p.7), and that 'key elements of the stakeholder circle are: concentric circle lines that indicate distance of stakeholders from the project or

project delivery entity; the size the block, its relative area, indicates the scale and scope of influence; and the radial depth can indicate the degree of impact' (Bourne 2005; Bourne and Walker 2005 cited in Bourne and Walker 2008, p.126). It consists of five parts of five Steps: identifying; prioritising; visualising; engaging and monitoring as shown in figure 5 in assessing the management of projects (Bourne 2005: 56 cited in Bourne and Walker 2008, p. 126).



**Figure 5: The Stakeholder Circle tool**

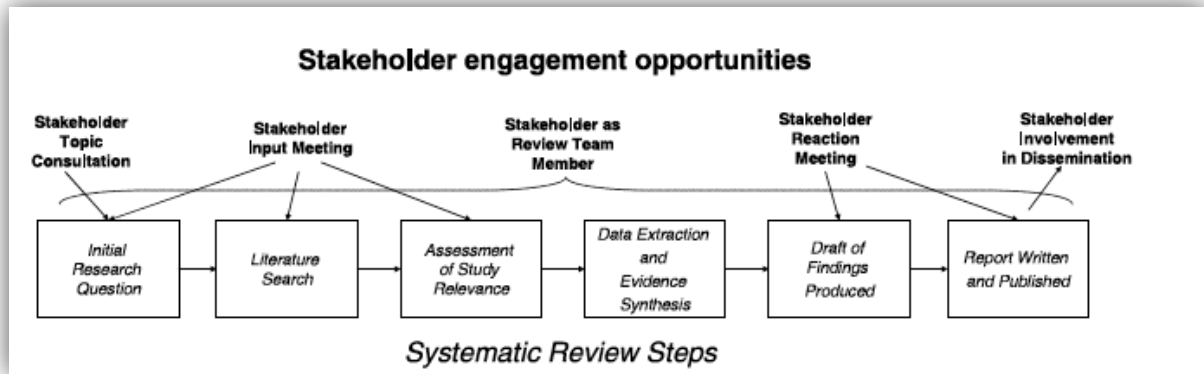
Source:(Bourne and Walker 2008, p.126)

The above circle recognises the importance of the patterns and colours of stakeholder's entities and establishes their influence on the project as follows:

- (i) Orange indicates an upward direction – these stakeholders are senior managers within the performing organisation that are necessary for on-going organisational commitment to the project;
- (ii) Green indicates a downwards direction – these stakeholders are members of the project team;
- (iii) Purple indicates sideward direction – peers of the project manager essential as collaborators or competitors; and blue indicates outwards- these stakeholders represent those outside the project such as end-user, government, “the public” shareholders, and
- (iv) Dark hues and patterns for stakeholders internal to the organisation and
- (v) Light hues and patterns for those external to the organisation.

As Walters and Chadwick have it (2009), delivering strategic benefits through stakeholder's engagement is paramount in managing a successful project for which Keown et al (2008, p.68) offer five opportunities for potential stakeholders' engagement: topic consultation, input meeting, review team membership, reaction

meeting and involvement in dissemination as shown in Figure 6. This form of engagement helps clarify everyone’s involvement, time, topic and resources and to develop the best communicative approach among internal stakeholders.



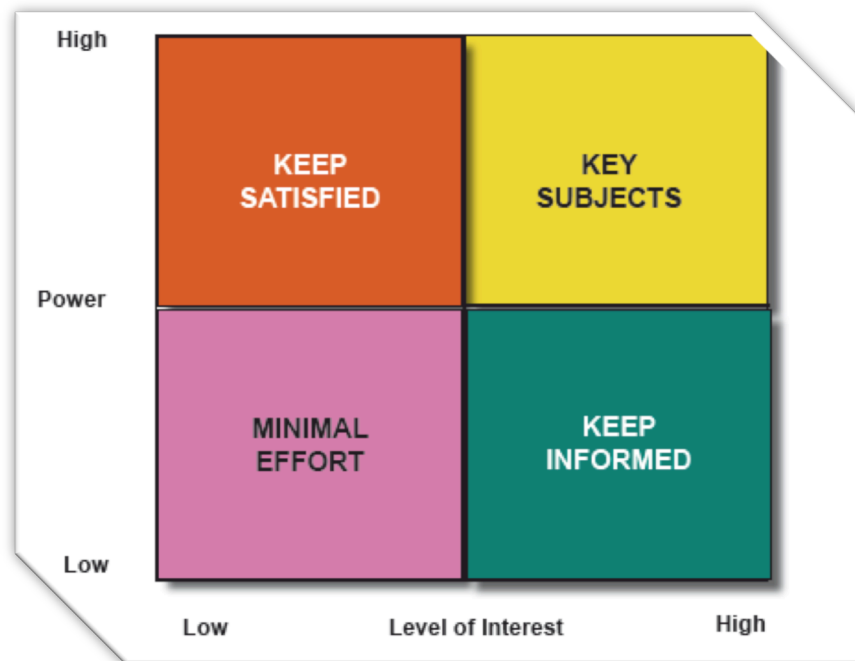
**Figure 6: Stakeholder engagement opportunities throughout the process of conducting a systematic review.** (Keown et al., 2008,p.68)

Figure 7 below depicts a model, which identifies and distinguishes internal stakeholders from the external ones which in this case are the Coop Department staff and students.



**Figure 7: Potential stakeholders for real estate development project (adapted, Cleland 1999)**  
Source: cited in (Caputo 2013,p.75)

Johnson and Scholes (2005, p.182) adapting Mendelow's process of stakeholder mapping out use the power/interest matrix. Accordingly, any attempt to identify stakeholders' expectations and power must be done with respect to power/interest matrix as presented in figure 8. It shows the kind of 'relationship, which organisations typically might establish with stakeholder groups in the different quadrants,' (Ibid, p. 181).



**Figure 8: The power-interest matrix (Johnson and Scholes, 1999)**  
Source: cited in (Caputo 2013, p.76)

Table 2 overleaf below gives a bird's eye view of authors concerning managing, engaging, dialoguing and building common ground to develop interpersonal relationship among internal stakeholders.

**Table 2: Process Diagram: Key points from Authors in the Literature**

Caputo 2013	Caputo's external stakeholders' model lends understanding in developing an integrated and systematic internal stakeholders' approach in managing project.
Walters and Chadwick 2009	Use corporate citizenship in football in explaining stakeholders' engagement, arguing that delivering strategic benefits through stakeholder's engagement is vital in managing project.
Keown, Van Eerd and Irvin 2008	Remind us to consider the number of opportunities to engage stakeholders.
Bourne and Walker 2008	State that project success and failure is linked to relationship, management and the stakeholder's circle. In their submission, patterns and colours of stakeholder dies influence project outcome.
Cleland in Bourne and Walker 2008: 126)	Argue that 'power, proximity and urgency which are a well-established method of gauging stakeholder's influence cannot be overlooked. This helps determine if power play is problematic in dealing with stakeholders' communication.
Foster and Jonker 2005	Help us conceptualise the different forms of organisational communication processes, which can facilitate dialogue and engagement with stakeholders within organisation through identifying, consultation, input and reaction meetings among others.
Johnson and Scholes 2005, p. 181	Argues that the power/ interest matrix indicates the type of relationship, which organisations establish with stakeholder groups in the different quadrants'.
Hart and Sharma 2004	States that organisations must learn to engage all stakeholders within the "core" or "fringe" or peripheral stakeholders boundaries.

## 2.6 Summary

In examining the management of stakeholders' relationships, engagement and dialogue, it becomes evident that it is a form of communication process which helps build-block for effective interpersonal relationships. The consideration of these essential concepts has indeed provided the theoretical basis in designing the research and its questions. The chapter underscores the fact that collaborative process, direct interactions among co-worker and communication as a social process are relevant variables to this study.

The review also points to how systematic stakeholders' management process can be used as a benchmark to analyse a project. It considers the influence of power at the centre of stakeholders' engagement and relationship. Additionally, the review discloses some potential issues that can militate against the efficient collaboration of internal stakeholders and affect benefits thereof.

Finally, the chapter gives in tabula format the concise views of relevant authors to the dominant theme of the study.

## Chapter 3: Methodology Consideration

### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a practical explanation of the methodology connected to the research design and collection of data. It focuses on the research design, defines the methodological approach and explains the concept of qualitative research method. It deals with processes and procedures used to obtain relevant information to reach significant outcome. The key investigative approach used is qualitative analysis.

### 3.1 Research Design

Domegan and Fleming (2003, 2003, p. 63):

A research design can only be chosen after the objectives have been finalised. It co-ordinates the methodology issues with the stated objectives and so acts as a guiding light for the researcher in deciding the when, where, how and why of information collection.

Since the aim and objective of research design is to provide order, logic and structure to facilitate data collection, it becomes the framework that 'guides the execution of a research method' (Bryman 2012, p. 46).

Going forward from this point, there are three types of research design classification: the exploratory, the descriptive and the causal. Domegan and Fleming (2003, p. 63) state that "exploratory research is about establishing trends, patterns and range of behaviour that are unknown... a study exploring an area to understand it better'. The researcher has the freedom to explore different avenues of interest and change the direction of enquiry'; for the investigation relies on *qualitative data* (Domegan and Fleming 2003). For this reason, the study adopts the exploratory research approach to help understand how communication, engagement, dialogue and management processes among internal stakeholders are helpful in facilitating an effective and efficient management of the student internship programme between UL and PPRC.

### 3.2 Methodology

Methodology according to the *Oxford Concise Dictionary* is 'the study of the methods to be used in any form of inquiry' (McLean 1996, p. 319) while Kaplan (1964, p.18) sees it as 'the study – the description, the explanation, and the justification of methods themselves'. Harding (1987, p.2) makes it 'a theory and analysis of how research should proceed' as in the 'analysis of the assumptions, principles, and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry' (Schwandt 2001, p.161). These definitions present methodology as a procedure or a system which requires justification and reasoning for the approaches of an investigative study; the activities engaged in attaining the aims and objectives of research work (Carter and Little 2007). The overriding aim is:

to describe and analyse...methods, throwing light on their limitations and resources, clarifying their presuppositions and consequences...to help us to understand, in the broadest possible terms, not the products of scientific inquiry but the process itself.

(Kaplan 1964, p.23)

This chapter therefore reviews the approach used in choosing and integrating the research methods and the mechanisms outlined in the investigation. In so doing, the study adopts a qualitative research approach and the use of secondary data to assemble literature to demonstrate awareness of internal stakeholders' engagement and dialogue for the successful implementation of UL-Ghana Coop Placement Programme. What therefore is qualitative research?

### 3.3 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is defined 'as the collection of data which is open to interpretation, for instance on attitudes and opinions, which might not be validated statistically' (Domegan and Fleming 2003, p 141), which to a large extent is a collection of a variety of empirical materials, case study, personal experience, life study, interviews, observational and interactional that transcend routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives (Domegan and Fleming 2003). According to Silverman (2011, p.11) 'in qualitative research, there is no such thing as a format for the standard scientific paper' due to the opening to interpretation of the data to which Ryan 'calls for moral responsibility in a field scattered with dilemmas, not quick answer' (cited in Silverman 2001, p.11). The researcher is thus cautioned to proceed with professionalism.

According to (Domegan and Fleming 2003) focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and field observations are some of the techniques used for data collection in qualitative research. To establish the trustworthiness of a qualitative research, (Shenton 2004,p.63) mentions that prerequisite ingredients of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformity of the people must be acknowledged. Therefore, this study employed an in-depth interview approach to obtain qualitative data of which ethical considerations are paramount.

### **3.4 Ethical Considerations**

Seeking ethical approval is a prerequisite for conducting a professional research. This is to safeguard research participants to conduct effective research with integrity. To this end, Diener and Crandall (1978) have four areas to watch: harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and involvement of deception (cited in Bryman 2012, p. 135). Silverman (1998, p.153-154) also emphasises voluntary participation and the right to withdraw, doing no harm, assessing potential benefits and risks to participants and protecting research participants.

Relating the above to this study, a comprehensive write-up explaining the purpose of the research, identifying key informants and gaining access to research participants was clearly demonstrated and a comprehensive information sheet which was to inform and ask participants their willingness to be part of the data collection process was done (see appendix A). A consent form (see Appendix B) seeking the participant's agreement was provided before interviews, guaranteeing total discretion regarding information provided. In our case, all the participants gave full permission to be identified in the findings as printed copies of all data derived from the study are preserved in protected cabinets to be kept by the researcher for seven years.

The next sections look at the critical issues regarding research instrument, sampling techniques and collection of data as related to this work.

### **3.5 Research Instrument**

This research used structured interview questions to generate empirical data from key informants. For consistency while "internal" participants were asked the same

questions in the same order, semi-structured interview guide was used for “external” participants being the UL and PPRC respectively. Interview questions were developed to respond to the aims and objectives undergirded by research questions and hypotheses:

1. Managing / Engaging and dialoguing with internal stakeholders;
2. Barriers to formal and informal communication;
3. Improvement of stakeholder’s engagement.

(Appendix C shows the research instrument used for the data collection).

### **3.6 Sample of Population and Technique**

According to Marsh et al. (2000, p.143) ‘sampling is essentially the process of selecting people or information to represent a wider population’ of which Donohoe and Gaynor (2003, p.282) simply state: ‘is the number of people/groups about whom facts are gathered’. The research sample was restricted to 15 key informants and the criteria for selection were based on easy accessibility, experience and reliability in providing credible information and evidence for the study. The researcher recognises the flaws and limitations regarding the sampling size since random sampling was not used owing to the fact that large section of the “student” population was not available within the allotted time. The number allowed the researcher enough time to interview and transcribe the ‘soft data’ for analysis with the aid of a recorder.

### **3.7 Data Collection**

The research employed investigative conversation and interviews to get genuine information and facts related to internal stakeholders’ engagement process. Additionally, a desk research to generate secondary data through the use of academic books, academic journals and articles, were sought for the study in line with the view of Domegan and Fleming (2003,p.77) that “secondary data as we know are data collected by another person for reasons other than the problem in hand”. Accordingly, two-type data collection approach was used for this research work: secondary sources of data and primary research data. While the data collection responded to two sets of research questions in chapter one, the design influenced the choice of the qualitative approach. The body of literature review updated by

journal articles, books, conference papers and others was far-reaching and considered useful for the study. Key to the generation of primary data were the key informants.

### **3.8 Key informant interviews**

A key informant 'is someone who offers the researcher, usually in the context of conducting ethnography, perceptive information about the social setting, important events and individuals' (Bryman 2012, p. 712). The primary data was collected from the Manager of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Science; the placement office and other internal stakeholders who work in closer collaboration with Coop Office as well as UL past and present Coop students and other organisers involved in the internship programme in Ghana. As the criteria for selection were based on easy accessibility, experience and reliability in providing credible information, they answered questions regarding management, engagement and dialogue, interaction and collaborative processes as a form of communication and, barriers to communication in relation to the Coop placement in Ghana. The use of in-depth interview generated wealth of evidence. Personal conversations and Skype interviews were also used to gather data from those in Ghana. Indeed, information from key informants has been very helpful to the research.

### **3.9 Data Management and Analysis**

Following Bryman's advice that (2012, p.13): 'for a start, the raw data has to be managed ...the researcher has to check the data to establish whether there are any obvious flaws' and Carter and Little's (2007) reminder that data management includes recording, transcription, transcript checking and the use of computer-assisted analysis software to analyse data, the study took the considerations on board to manage and preserve the generated data and also in the analysis.

In the light of analysis, Domegan and Fleming (2003, p. 413) consider data analysis as 'a set of methods and techniques that can be used to obtain information and insights from the data' Table 3 which presents the stages of data analysis framework approach helped to handle data in a professional manner. Interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder and notes were simultaneously taken. They were played back repeatedly to clarify information and confirm data sources.

All interviews completely transcribed were used as findings. Consequently, key informant interviews fully transcribed into raw data were used as main findings. Raw data was colour coded and stored in a folder with a backup system and password as part of UL ethical principles.

**Table 3: Five Stages of Data Analysis**

<p><b>Five stages of data analysis in the framework approach</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Familiarisation</i>—immersion in the raw data (or typically a pragmatic selection from the data) by listening to tapes, reading transcripts, studying notes and so on, in order to list key ideas and recurrent themes</li><li>• <i>Identifying a thematic framework</i>—identifying all the key issues, concepts, and themes by which the data can be examined and referenced. This is carried out by drawing on a priori issues and questions derived from the aims and objectives of the study as well as issues raised by the respondents themselves and views or experiences that recur in the data. The end product of this stage is a detailed index of the data, which labels the data into manageable chunks for subsequent retrieval and exploration</li><li>• <i>Indexing</i>—applying the thematic framework or index systematically to all the data in textual form by annotating the transcripts with numerical codes from the index, usually supported by short text descriptors to elaborate the index heading. Single passages of text can often encompass a large number of different themes, each of which has to be recorded, usually in the margin of the transcript</li><li>• <i>Charting</i>—rearranging the data according to the appropriate part of the thematic framework to which they relate, and forming charts. For example, there is likely to be a chart for each key subject area or theme with entries for several respondents. Unlike simple cut and paste methods that group verbatim text, the charts contain distilled summaries of views and experiences. Thus the charting process involves a considerable amount of abstraction and synthesis</li><li>• <i>Mapping and interpretation</i>—using the charts to define concepts, map the range and nature of phenomena, create typologies and find associations between themes with a view to providing explanations for the findings. The process of mapping and interpretation is influenced by the original research objectives as well as by the themes that have emerged from the data themselves</li></ul>
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(Pope, Ziebland and Mays 2000, p.116)

### 3.11 Summary

The research design classification helped to use exploratory research to establish the trends, patterns and ranges of attitudes and behaviour concerning how internal stakeholders can manage, engage and dialogue, and interact among themselves. Critically, the use of qualitative research method generated rich empirical data, which may add new knowledge to existing literature. There is no question about the richness of the generated data from the qualitative study, which will be useful in strengthening the UL and PPRC Coop programme.

## **Chapter 4: Analysis of Data: Views about Engaging, Dialoguing, Interacting, Managing and Maintaining Internal Stakeholders relationship.**

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### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter analyses the generated primary data in a bid to understand communication as a process of managing and maintaining stakeholders' relationships and engaging internal stakeholders to realize successful projects. Data was collected using elite interviews. It also considers various views with regard to managing and engaging internal stakeholders and their relationships, common barriers to communication and insights participants share concerning the improvement of internal stakeholders' engagement process with the view of making UL-PPRC programme distinct and even more successful.

### **4.1 Engaging, Dialoguing, Interacting and Managing**

In Chapter two it was established that engaging and managing internal stakeholders is a form of communication collaboration process and, direct interactions and interpersonal relationships that form part of communication process, which is key to maintaining internal stakeholders' relationship with particular reference to Turner (2009) who argues that communication is a social process which makes collaborative interaction among internal stakeholders the best practice and Keown et al (2008) who hold that direct interaction between stakeholders can help to strengthen communication practices and produce efficient and systemic stakeholders' collaborations. Consequently, first and foremost, the study identified UL's students, staff in the Cooperative Education Division and the Faculty members of AHSS as internal stakeholders..

#### **4.1.1 Engaging, Dialoguing, Interacting and Managing at the UL Coop Office**

With reference to Turner (2009) and Keown et al (2008) above and in Chapter 2, in the interviews, the key informants were asked about how they manage, interact and maintain internal stakeholders' relationship as in the light of the UL-Ghana-Coop programme. Niamh Crowe, the placement officer responsible for cooperative education, stated that there is constant engagement between the cooperative division and students. The entire process starts with students 'developing their CVs

– writing up their expression of interest forms’. The frequent liaison between students and the placement officer ensures that CVs are of good quality and that student’s avail of the frequent “employability” sessions run by the Cooperative Education Division. Hence, there is direct interaction between the Coop office and students as noted.

Furthermore, considering Turner, Qvarford, Biehl, Golovchinsky and Back (2010, p.841) that ‘effective communication is a critical component of successful collaborations which enables collaborators to foster ideas, to build common grounds and to develop complex interpersonal relationship’, Jerry Cronin, the cooperative education manager for AHSS responsible for the placement programme for the Humanities students, in an interview explained that aside internal stakeholders, the cooperative division also rely heavily on people outside the division such as Dr. Wynette Redington, Fr. Pat Seaver, Dr. Mark Mantey together with past and present UL students who have gone through the programme. He mentioned further that ‘the organisers in Ghana get feedback from the division, outlining suggested changes that might be implemented; these are then reviewed based on how practical and realistic they may be to the progress of the project’ (Interview with Cronin). This re-emphasizes the collaborative process already established as an important communication process and further indicates that the Coop office apart from building the internal stakeholders’ relationship, respects external stakeholders in a bid to dialogue, engage, manage and maintain relationships to facilitate effective and efficient international placement programme.

#### **4.2 Maintaining Internal Stakeholders’ relationship**

Examining the opportunities and interaction open to stakeholders in relation to the theoretical view that internal stakeholders’ interaction is bedrock of communication, Mr. Cronin disclosed that the:

*focus is not really on the organisers in Ghana alone. Although they are part of the process they are a separate entity who provide the necessary interface and infrastructure on the ground to ensure that the programme works and are therefore regarded as external stakeholders hence the need to keep them informed. Interaction essentially is between the group/s of people who manage the programme in University of Limerick and the student. (Internal Stakeholders).*

(Interview with Cronin)

On the accessibility of Coop office Niamh Crowe points to the use of modern communication technology to engage, dialogue and manage effective relationship among stakeholders. She maintains that:

*Students as internal stakeholders have access to the Cooperative Education office open from Monday to Friday which allows students to make contact anytime through phone, email or drop by in person. The Cooperative Education website has also been designed in a way to respond to the needs of students. And there is a general co-op email address, which encourages any customer who wishes to make a general query as a form of accessibility.*

(Interview with Crowe)

On the assessment of arrangements, which facilitate effective communication and stakeholders' relationship process, Cronin commented, "it is assumed that people who turn up for the second meetings are interested in the placement in Ghana. On account of this, potential students are contacted thereafter through emails first and then given a reminder close to the next meeting time. They are reminded once again when closing date to register for the programme is approaching and in between that, interviews would have been conducted and suitable candidates selected to start with briefing sections" (Interview with Cronin). This validates the communication process with the students, right from the outset. Niamh Crowe, whose office is responsible for communicating with students from the pre-departure meetings till they go on placement in Ghana, indicated that they discuss matters relating to integrating, participating and socialising in the communities, issues of vaccinations, insurance, etc.

In making further contribution and linking that to the view in the literature that 'every organisation must learn to engage with stakeholders in some way' (Foster and Jonker 2005, p. 51), Cronin added that once interviews are over, students meet with specific groups to talk about placement options in Ghana. "Meetings normally include native Ghanaians living in Ireland, previous students, Irish religious who have been to Ghana e.g. Fr. Patrick Seaver to give first-hand account of their experience and context to the information that is provided" (Interview with J. Cronin). As "emails are the main contact point for all meetings, students are sent links and connections, through Facebook page and YouTube, of structures of the event after the meetings" (Interview with J. Cronin).

Moving on to the view that informal engagement 'is a process aimed at building relations and opening the lines of communication between' internal and external

stakeholders (Keown, Van Eerd and Irvin 2008, p 67), Dr W. Redington, a research fellow at UL's Materials & Surface Science Institute, who works on volunteering basis to support the Coop placement officer, coordinates the UL links, much familiar with the Coop arrangements in Ghana, closely involved with the interview-selection process, is able to coordinate with former Coop students and other volunteers to travel to encounter fresh volunteers in Ghana. "The coordination of past and potential students, although an informal process, helps build strong stakeholders' relationship and creates a good platform for dialogue among internal stakeholders" (Interview with Redington).

Fr. Seaver, a Catholic Priest in Limerick, an internal stakeholder, who plays a major role in the interview-selection process, notes that:

*Past students are normally very enthusiastic and are able to give information such as the ups and downs, the various joys and sorrows of being away from home, the new environment they find themselves in for six months that the more senior people (placement officers) wouldn't have. This is a very powerful form of communication.*

(Interview with Fr. Seaver)

Wynette adds further that:

*the main issues that are addressed are that students realise the Ghana placement is a very different placement to a normal industrial placement and that it is self-funded, and while out there students don't get paid but on the plus side they get really good experience and have a life changing time and top of it all will be very well minded and as much information needed will be provided.*

(Interview with Wynette)

She continues in order to avoid any form of misconception with regard to placement funding and payment issues, information is clearly laid out largely because placement of students may have different approaches and may exist in different forms from one place to another. This presentation shows the context within which Coop students are engaged as internal stakeholders, the communication process and the existing working relationship noted above in Chapter by Foster and Jonker (2008). Fr. Seaver adds that effective internal stakeholder interaction, dialogue and engagement opportunities have made the international placement is successful.

This demonstrates the context of engaging Coop students regarding internal stakeholders, the communication process and, the working relationship as noted in Chapter Two by (Foster and Jonker, 2008).

The information provided lays bare a collaborative process, which involves the International Placement Office, students on placement and PPRC. The evidence

supports the first hypothesis that a responsive formal and informal communication accelerated by internal stakeholders indeed facilitates a robust communication process in the management of the international work placement of UL students as noted in Chapters 1 and 2.

In fact, the Coop office has an effective communication process that fosters engagement and dialogue among internal and external stakeholders with respect to placement. The process involves meetings between the Ghanaian representatives and students together with Cooperative Education staff members; meetings between students previously placed in Ghana and the yet to be placed. There are also cultural meetings or evening sessions with the yet to be placed students, the Ghanaian representatives, past students and members of the CED (Interview with Crowe).

So far, the established evidence supports theoretical consideration in Chapter 2, which suggests engagement as the best approach and has proven the first hypothesis of the study (A responsive formal and informal communication accelerated by internal stakeholders can facilitate a robust communication process in management of a project) with particular regard to the uniqueness of the international placement programme and its popularity.

#### **4.3 Respondents' perception of communication among internal stakeholders**

The central issues examined here are the views of key informants concerning approaches, methods and responsibilities of internal stakeholders as a form of effective communication in the Coop office. Crowe notes that within the Faculty of AHSS, a systematic stakeholders' management process is in place to oversee communication among internal stakeholders (the staff members). She said the Cooperative Education Division notifies all the Departments within the Faculty of placement locations and provides contact details of students to facilitate academic visits. Additionally, the Coop officer helps with the interaction among students and staff to assess performance. She observed: "if we do not manage the communication process involving all the internal stakeholders well; there will be no continuity with the programme" (Interview with Crowe). This indeed confirms Foster and Jonker (2005, p. 53): 'Within the context of stakeholder relationships, any communication must be action-oriented'.

According to Crowe, a Coop report by placement students, detailing their experiences and learning outcomes, is an integral part of the degree programme at the Faculty. Such reports, she noted, serve as information or guidelines for future volunteers. As indicated in the theoretical and conceptual Chapter, this type of internal stakeholders' engagement is the only method of communication that would help the Coop office achieve satisfactory results.

W. Redington makes the following assessment:

*Even though all effort is made to contact student through formal and informal lines of communication (people, departments-internal and external stakeholders) such as emails, memos, telephone conversations and presentations, it is often not enough as the information is frequently misinterpreted. Oftentimes the medium influences the impact of the communication and that an email or web link might not necessarily have the same outcome as group meetings with past students will. The insight and sharing of experience in a face-to-face manner is highly beneficial and essential to providing relevant and concrete information that prospective students can relate to as they hear from students who have done it before and gives them a sense of confidence to embark on placement themselves.*

(Interview with Redington)

#### **4.4 Views of respondents regarding barriers to communication**

Commencing on the note that different stakeholders will have different ideas and strong feelings about what values an organisation should embrace (Johnson, Scholes Whittington 2005) and applying this to the UL Cooperative Education Division, it is evident that students are reckoned as key internal stakeholders in service provision. Hence, key informants were asked to reflect on the internship programme in Ghana and what they would consider as common barriers to informal and formal communication. To Mr Cronin, the main barriers are with students; because groups change every six months, the office is not able to deal effectively with returnees from placement and 'it will be good to have a system whereby the learning associated with the placement is continued more actively once returned' (Interview with Cronin). Challenges with information technology in Ghana also affect the communication process to some extent.

Fr. Seaver observes that there must be a ready list of people to contact by interested students in the near future. He suggests a web link for the UL-Ghana placement experience to bridge the existing gap (Interview with Fr. Seaver). The findings so far recognize **challenges** and **not barriers** to formal and informal communication of

achieving effective and efficient communication process with stakeholders in the management of UL's international placement.

Flowing from the above consideration and connecting it to Wilkinson (1989, p.4) in Chapter 2 who maintains that communication 'contributes to more harmonious working relationships, understanding of commercial conditions, acceptance of change and improvement of productivity', Mr Cronin notes that: 'there is a Facebook page set up for the Ghana placement for students' reflections but it is not as effective as it was envisaged to be and the Coop office itself does not have such a system for the other 2000 placements they are running. It will be great to have a system apart from the coop website that will make it easier for students to have access to other students' experience and be able to relate to it more' (Interview with Cronin). There is an ample demonstration of the existence of internal stakeholders' engagement and dialoguing of engagement with students.

**Table 4: Key Informants and their Roles**

Jerry Cronin	Cooperative Education Manger, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences – University of Limerick	Internal Stakeholder
Niamh Crowe	International Placement Officer -Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences – University of Limerick	Internal Stakeholder
Fr. Pat Seaver	Panel Member for Interview / Selection Panel for University of Limerick- Ghana Cooperative Placement Programme	Internal Stakeholder
Dr. Wynette Redington	Panel Member for Interview / Selection Panel for University of Limerick- Ghana Cooperative Placement Programme	Internal Stakeholder
Dr. Mark Mantey	Coordinator, Padre Pio Rehabilitation Centre, Ghana	External Stakeholder
Sr. Pat Person	Manager, Padre Pio Rehabilitation Centre, Ghana	External Stakeholder
Participant 1	Past volunteer	Internal Stakeholder
Participant 2	Past volunteer	Internal Stakeholder
Participant 3	Past volunteer	Internal Stakeholder
Participant 4	Past volunteer	Internal Stakeholder
Participant 5	Past volunteer	Internal Stakeholder
Participant 6	Past volunteer	Internal Stakeholder
Participant 7	Past volunteer	Internal Stakeholder
Participant 8	Past volunteer	Internal Stakeholder
Participant 9	Past volunteer	Internal Stakeholder

#### 4.5 Summary

Empirical data offers useful insight on the internal working relationship at UL international cooperative education placement in Ghana. Evidence generated suggests interactions, engagement and dialogue among internal stakeholders. Indeed effective and efficient communication has made the UL's international work placement a distinctive one.

Although the inability to organise returned students to share their experiences more coherently is a challenge, the current findings indicate that the programme is a successful project. Findings do not establish barriers to formal and informal communication process as risk to internal stakeholders' relationships management process. The current situation suggests strong and robust engagement and dialogue and as a result, the Coop office is able to fulfil the international work placement goals and objectives effectively.

It is also clear that a lot of efforts have been put in place to ensure effective channel of communication and encourage internal stakeholders to engage, manage and build a relationship that is able to achieve 'different expectations'. The evidence also establishes stakeholder's networks through the on-going internal stakeholder's set-up and other external arrangements. The efficient and effective way to ensure continuous improvement of the international placement programme is the constant update of regular information to students and internal stakeholders.

As indicated by Burke (2003, p.271) 'information cost money, but conversely lack of information could even be more expensive' and that contemporary projects are particularly prone to communication difficulties due to their unique nature and the matrix organisation through which they are generally managed. There are areas in the Coop placement that can be elaborated for even greater success.

There is the need to have communication plan and lines clearly outlined to foster successful achievements. While email remains probably the most effective way of reaching a large group of people, phone messaging via texts and calls would be highly beneficial. Since the Ghana groups are not so large, communication does not need to be a great challenge.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion– Summary of the Main Findings and Recommendations**

### **5.0 Introduction**

The concluding Chapter begins with general discussion arising from the literature review and findings with respect to direct interactions, collaborative process, and communication process among stakeholders engaging and dialoguing with one another.

### **5.1 Discussion**

Following the theoretical and conceptual considerations elaborated in Chapter 2, the study considers effective stakeholders' engagement opportunity as that which encourages direct interactions, the collaborative process and good communication practice among all internal stakeholders as stated by Walters and Chadwick (2009). While the number of 80 students who have participated in the project to date is a remarkable achievement, the findings in Chapter 4 about processes and procedures reinforce conceptual explanations and affirm Chapters 1 and 2 that UL Cooperative Education Division (CED), over the years, has developed direct interactions and built strong interpersonal relationships to facilitate effective communication process among co-workers making their achievement recognisable.

Applying Caputo's (2013) external stakeholders as an ideal model of understanding and developing an integrated and systematic internal stakeholders' approach in managing projects, the empirical findings of Chapter 4 reinforce the model in as much as the CED is fully aware of who the internal stakeholders are, manages to assess their needs and interests, organizes interactions among co-workers, and uses collaborative process to engage students and staff who participate in the placement programme. The CED is well aware of the potential impact students and other internal stakeholders make in building effective interpersonal relationships, and therefore, appears to implement policies, which have the interests of both internal and external stakeholders because informants in Chapter 4 suggest that internal stakeholder engagement opportunities are efficient and effective. This evidence supports the first hypothesis that a responsive formal and informal communication

accelerated by internal stakeholders can facilitate a robust communication process in managing projects.

Accordingly, in relating this to the discovery of Chapter 4 where Cronin reveals that emails are the main contact point for all meetings and that students are sent links and connections, through Facebook page and YouTube, of the structures of events after meetings (Interview with J. Cronin), there is a further demonstration that the Coop office manages and maintains collaborative stakeholders' relationship as a form of communication to promote the placement programme and uses modern communication technology to engage, dialogue and manage effective relationship among stakeholders.

As Keown, Van Eerd and Irvin (2008) highlight the significance of opportunities to engage stakeholders as critical, findings from key informants indicate a strong support for the on-going practice of engagement, dialogue, direct interactions, interpersonal relationships and communication process among UL internal stakeholders and their Ghanaian counterparts which reach out to all interested parties. Findings further reveal numerous internal stakeholders' engagement opportunities, direct interactions and collaborative process, which have made the UL - Ghana placement programme, a great success.

Research question one sought to know how engagement opportunities with internal stakeholders help facilitate effective communication process for the implementation and management of a successful project. As CED-Ghana Programme celebrates 10 years of *Engaging Africa*, a student remarks, 'the experience available here is in my opinion, worth far more than one would gain within 4 office walls' (**Participant 4**).

Though there are challenges, the achievements made to date seem to overcome them. Evidently, UL was awarded the *2012 All Ireland Employability Award* for 'engaging Africa'. Indeed, the testimony reported in Chapter 4 indicates that since its inception, the Coop office has worked hard to engage and dialogue all stakeholders, paying particular attention to the communication process as a social one. Consequently, it can be admitted that effective communication process, and direct interactions among co-workers and students have all contributed to this recent achievement.

## 5.2 Recommendations

This study recommends the strengthening of the Coop placement programme between UL and PPRC because of the impact it has in Ghana and on the young Irish generation. It upholds Mr. Cronin's admission that more work needs to be done to ensure the long term sustainability of the placement programme which comes to providing attractive information on what students do on placement and subsequent activity back on campus (UL). Accordingly, "the CED should endeavour to set up a special forum of international placement students and potential and non-potential students to share experience and information". **(Participant 6)**

Stakeholders' engagement with its flaws and benefits play a significant role in the success of projects. As PMBOK (2008, pp.243) has it: 'effective communication creates a bridge between diverse stakeholders involved in projects connecting various cultural and organisational backgrounds, different levels of expertise, and various perspectives and interest in the project execution or outcome'. Accordingly, though there exist many challenges to effective communication on any project, by identifying stakeholders, planning communication, distributing appropriate information, managing expectations, meeting needs and addressing issues as they occur, they are surmounted.

The study also **recommends** a transition period of at least 10 days, which allows a moment of encounter between the two groups on placement every year to be able to share experiences as they go through the programme. Continuous improvement also requires a feedback system from all stakeholders. Wynette mentions that lack of proper feedback decelerates the project in many ways. Consequently an exit survey established in Ghana would help students reflect to improve the project and give relevant information to prospective students. Accordingly, **feedback could be used to strengthen this unique project. (Participant 9)**

As much as possible, "placement should match the skills of students to facilitate the role they play on placement to foster effectiveness and success". **(Participant 7)** It is therefore recommended that students' programme of study be matched with work placement where possible for efficiency. **(Participant 3)**

**(Participant 8)** insists on "clear, open and transparent communication among stakeholders, which he cites as fundamental to the success of the project". On

placement, he asked for improved communication with respect to the financial side of the project so that potential students understand that it is a voluntary, self-paid placement work. It is therefore recommended that **financial information be effectively given at the initial presentation, at the interview stage and on the information sheet.** It further recommends **the offering of grant or financial support package for interested yet financially incapable students to encourage many more to participate** or alternative fundraising channels given to help fund the foreign trip. **(Participant 1)**

Living in a foreign environment presents its own challenges. As a result, there is a need for extensive communication and information prior to departure like place of stay, custodian and vital needs. **(Participant 2)** **Accordingly, the Coop office should make frequent contact with students on placement and where possible advice and help students adapt to their new environments. (Participant 5)**

### 5.3 Summary

This study indeed responds to the genuine interest in the communication process, direct interactions and engagement process involving all internal stakeholders in facilitating an effective and efficient management of student internship programme between the University of Limerick and Padre Pio Rehabilitation Centre in Ghana. Indeed, the research questions that have driven the entire work have been:

- I. How can dialogue and engagement opportunities among internal stakeholders help facilitate effective communication process for the implementation of a successful project? And
- II. Are barriers to formal and informal communication processes a deterrent to internal stakeholders' management in an effort to achieve effective and efficient communication in the execution of a project?

The UL-PPRC student internship programme has run for about a decade now with over 80 student participants since 2004 and the winning of the *2012 All Ireland Employability Award* conveys the viability, quality and the popularity of programme. Notwithstanding the challenges, cultural differences and financial difficulties, the project is laudable together with its proponents. It might be good for UL to look into the possibility of supporting interested volunteers.

In a very challenging traditional environment where there exist little resources, work can be frustrating. As remarked by Most Rev. Mathias K. Nketsiah, Archbishop of Cape Coast, when some of the UL volunteers paid a courtesy call on him: “let me know if there is anything you need, and I will teach you how to do without them’ (Conversation with M. Mantey). This is an indication that students have to manage with little resources. However, the fact that some students return to Ghana for a visit after completing their studies reinforces the **value of the programme**. All these achievements can be attributed to the operative role; direct interactions of internal stakeholders learning to engage, communicate and dialogue with one another.

Accordingly, the study ends conclusively that communication among the internal stakeholders is indeed facilitating an effective and efficient management of student internship programme between UL and PPRC. The evidence suggests that the benefits of the internship programme to Irish students and the beneficiary population in Ghana are enormous. The people who initiated this project must be commended for their ingenuity. Genuine partnership between PPRC and UL is best way forward to harnessing and strengthening this initiative for its sustainability.

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## List of Interviews

Cronin Jerry (2013) Faculty of Arts, Humanities and the Social Sciences, Manager for Humanities Cooperative Education Division, Interviewed by author, 8th July, University of Limerick, Ireland. Tape in possession of the author

Crowe Niamh (2013) Faculty of Arts, Humanities and the Social Sciences, International Placement officer Cooperative Education Division, Interviewed by author, 15<sup>th</sup> July, University of Limerick, Ireland. Tape in possession of the author.

Mantey, Mark (2013) Coordinator, Padre Pio Rehabilitation Centre, Ghana. Personal Conversation on the telephone; with the author, 24 July. Notes in possession of the author

Pearson, Patricia (2013) Manager, Padre Pio Rehabilitation Centre, responsible for student placement in Ghana, Personal Conversation on the telephone; with the author, 24 July. Notes in possession of the author

Seaver Patrick (2013) Catholic Priest, Panel Member for Interview / Selection Panel for University of Limerick- Ghana Cooperative Placement Programme, Interviewed by author, 12th July, Limerick, Ireland. Tape in possession of the author

Wynette Redington (2013) A research fellow at the Materials & Surface Science Institute and works in close collaboration with Cooperative Education Division Interview / Selection Panel for University of Limerick- Ghana Cooperative Placement Programme, Interviewed by author, 10th July, Limerick, Ireland . Tape in possession of the author

Participant 1(2013) studied Arts at University of Limerick. Past Volunteer. Interviewed by author, 10th July, Limerick, Ireland . Tape in possession of the author

Participant 2 (2013) student of University of Limerick, Past Volunteer. Interviewed by author, 12th July, Limerick, Ireland. Tape in possession of the author

Participant 3 (2013) studies Law at University of Limerick. Past Volunteer, Interviewed by author, 15th July, Limerick, Ireland. Tape in possession of the author

Participant 4 (2013) studied Law and European Studies at University of Limerick, Past Volunteer. Interview by author, 15th July, Limerick, Ireland. Tape in possession of the author

Participant 5 (2013) studied Psychology and Sociology at University of Limerick, Past Volunteer. Interviewed by author, 11th July, Limerick, Ireland. Tape in possession of the author

Participant 6 (2013) student of University of Limerick, Past Volunteer, Interviewed by author, 15th July, Limerick, Ireland. Tape in possession of the author

Participant 7 (2013) studied Law at University of Limerick, Past Volunteer. Interviewed by author, 12th July, Limerick, Ireland. Tape in possession of the author

Participant 8 (2013) Studied English/History at University of Limerick, Past Volunteer. Interviewed by author, 10th July, Limerick, Ireland. Tape in possession of the author

Participant 9 (2013) student of University of Limerick, Past Volunteer. Interviewed by author, 11th July, Limerick, Ireland. Tape in possession of the author

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Ethics Form



UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK

O L L S C O I L L U I M I N I G H

### **Kemmy Business School Research Ethics Committee Application Form**

Final Year Projects, Taught Masters Dissertations and other Projects involving  
Research with Human Subjects (please note that your answers must be typed)

Name of Student: Rita Mantey  
ID Number: 11084162  
E-mail Address: ritamantey@gmail.com  
Date: 10-03-2013  
Programme of Study: MSc. Project Management  
Project (e.g. FYP, Masters Dissertation): Masters Dissertation

Working Title of Project (please do not use acronyms): The Role of Effective Internal Stakeholders Communication in the management of projects (*Case study: The effective use and challenges of Formal and Informal ways of Communication with Students, Facilitators and the Hosts of the UL-Ghana Cooperative placement programme*)

Supervisor: Catriona Burke

Does the proposed research involve working with human subjects<sup>1</sup>? Yes  No

If not, please proceed to sign and date the form and attach it to your project.

### PART A

Research Purpose: **(50-100 words)** Providing a framework which can help the processes of communication between the different stakeholders on projects and

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of research involving human subjects include (but are not limited to): carrying out interviews; conducting a survey; distributing a questionnaire; using focus groups; and the observation of individuals or groups.

assess how communication with internal stakeholders help to facilitate an effective and efficient communication in the management of project success when it comes to the cooperative education placement of University of Limerick and facilitators in Ghana.

Research Methodology: **(100-150 words)** Investigative and analytical methods will be utilised, this study will draw on secondary data and primary data and will use a qualitative method. Desk research will be undertaken to review the literature on communicating with stakeholders and mapping out strategies in keeping stakeholders interest high. The secondary data will consist reviewing current academic writing related to the research questions and hypothesis. The primary data collection will involve generating new data relating to the subject matter. The main body of data collection intends to use elite interviews through the use of semi-structured research instruments.

## 1. Human Subjects

Does the research proposal involve:

- |     |  |     |   |
|-----|--|-----|---|
| (a) | Any person under the age of 18?  | Yes | <u>No</u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| (b) | Adult patients?  | Yes | <u>No</u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| (c) | Adults with psychological impairments?   | Yes | <u>No</u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| (d) | Adults with learning difficulties?   | Yes | <u>No</u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| (e) | Adults under the protection/<br>control/influence of others (e.g., in care/in prison)? | Yes | <u>No</u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| (f) | Relatives of ill people<br>(e.g., parents of sick children)?                           | Yes | <u>No</u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| (g) | People who may only have a basic knowledge<br>of English?                              | Yes | <u>No</u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

## 2. Subject Matter

Does the research proposal involve:

- |     |   |     |   |
|-----|---|-----|---|
| (a) | Sensitive personal issues? (e.g., suicide, bereavement,<br>gender identity, sexuality, fertility, abortion,<br>gambling)? | Yes | <u>No</u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| (b) | Illegal activities, illicit drug taking, substance abuse<br>or the self reporting of criminal behaviour?                  | Yes | <u>No</u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| (c) | Any act that might diminish self-respect or cause<br>shame, embarrassment or regret?                                      | Yes | <u>No</u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| (d) | Research into politically and/or racially/ethically<br>sensitive areas?   | Yes | <u>No</u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

### 3. Procedures

Does the proposal involve:

- |     |   |     |           |                                     |
|-----|---|-----|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| (a) | Use of personal or company records without consent?               | Yes | <u>No</u> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| (b) | Deception of participants?  | Yes | <u>No</u> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| (c) | The offer of disproportionately large inducements to participate? | Yes | <u>No</u> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| (d) | Audio or visual recording without consent?                        | Yes | <u>No</u> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| (e) | Invasive physical interventions or treatments?                    | Yes | <u>No</u> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| (f) | Research which might put researchers or participants at risk?     | Yes | <u>No</u> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

4. (a) Who will your informants be?  
All informants will be professional adults.

- (b) Do you have a **pre-existing relationship** with the informants and, if so, what is the nature of that relationship?

I have known and worked with the Coop students who have been to Ghana, and have made these students aware of the research and the purpose of it.

- (c) How do you plan to gain **access to /contact/approach** potential informants?

Emails and formal meetings will be scheduled to gain access to potential informants.

- (d) What arrangements have you made for **anonymity and confidentiality**?

Informants names will be withheld and a document to that effect will be signed by the researcher. If necessary a thesis embargo form will be completed and submitted

- (e) What, if any, is the **particular vulnerability of your informants**?

There is no vulnerability apparent. However, should any arise, I will immediately revert to my supervisor and to the KBS Ethics Committee.

- (f) What arrangements are in place to ensure that informants know the **purpose of the research** and what they are going to inform about?

Informants will be presented with an information sheet outlining the purpose of the research, the parameters within which it will be conducted and clearly stating the informants right to withdraw at any time.

- (g) How will you ensure that informants are aware of their **right to refuse** to participate or **withdraw** at any time?

It will be restated at the start of any interviews/engagement with informants of their rights to refuse to participate or withdraw at any stage before interviews are conducted.

- (h) How would you handle any unforeseen **safety issues** should they arise?

Research supervisor will immediately be contacted should any unforeseen safety issues arise.

- (i) How do you propose to **store the information**?

All information pertaining to this research will be stored on a password protected laptop in a locker. Also hard copies will be stored in locked filing cabinets for a number of years.

If you have answered **YES** to any of the questions in **PART A, sections 1-3**, you will also need to **comply with** the requirements of **PART B** of this form.

If you have answered **NO** to all of the questions in **PART A, sections 1-3** above, please **ignore PART B** of the form.

You should return **8 hard copies** of this form to Michelle Cunningham, Administrator, S2-07, Schuman Building, University of Limerick. This form must be submitted before the research begins.

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **PART B**

This part of the application form is only relevant where researchers have answered ‘**YES**’ to any of the questions in **sections 1-3 of PART A**.

Please attach a report to this application addressing the following questions with a maximum of 300 words per question.

You **must** answer the following questions:

1. What are the ethical issues involved in your research?
2. Explain why the use of human participants is essential to your research project.
3. How will you ensure that informed consent is freely given by human participants?

Answer the following questions **where relevant** to your research project and after consultation with your supervisor **and** a member of the KBS Research Ethics Committee:

4. How will you protect human participants if your research deals with sensitive issues?
5. How will you ensure that vulnerable research participants are protected? (Please state clearly if you abide by the Child Protection Guidelines and/or have Garda Clearance where necessary)
6. How will you protect human participants if your research deals with sensitive research procedures?
7. Outline how you intend to comply with any established procedures which have been approved by ULREG for your research.
8. How will you manage data protection issues?

## Appendix B: Information Sheet



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### KEMMY BUSINESS SCHOOL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

This research looks at The Role of Effective Internal Stakeholders Communication in the management of projects. The study is being carried out under the supervision of Catriona Burke at University of Limerick in Republic of Ireland. Researcher contact Details: Rita Mantey, Kemmy Business School, University of Limerick, Limerick, Email: [Rita.Mantey@ul.ie](mailto:Rita.Mantey@ul.ie) or phone at + 353 87 7638102

- The time required including explanation would be 40 minutes.
- The research will take place in a venue nominated by participants.

#### **Participants will be asked/informed of the following:**

- Are you willing to participate in this research?
- There will be no risks to you and there are no enticements or rewards.
- Your personal details will be held securely and will not be given in any form to any person or institution without your permission.
- You have the right to withdraw from this research at any time.
- You will be identified by name in this research project. Any information given in the course of interviews may be used in the study, but your privacy will be respected in all other matters.
- You will be offered an opportunity to review a transcript of the interview.
- If you have any concerns whatsoever about this Research and you wish to contact an independent person, you may contact Research Supervisor, Catriona Burke, [catriona.burke@ul.ie](mailto:catriona.burke@ul.ie) or phone at + +353-61-202985

## Appendix C – Consent Form



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### KEMMY BUSINESS SCHOOL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

#### **Consent Section:**

I, the undersigned, declare that I am willing to take part in research for the project entitled “The Role of Effective Internal Stakeholders Communication in the management of projects (Case study: The effective use and challenges of Formal and Informal ways of engaging with Students, Facilitators and the Hosts of the UL-Ghana Cooperative placement programme)”.

- I declare that I have been fully briefed on the nature of this study and my role in it and have been given the opportunity to ask questions before agreeing to participate.
- The nature of my participation has been explained to me and I have full knowledge of how the information collected will be used.
- I am also aware that my participation in this study may be recorded (audio) and I agree to this. However, should I feel uncomfortable at any time I can request that the recording equipment be switched off. I am entitled to copies of all recordings made and am fully informed as to what will happen to these recordings once the study is completed
- I fully understand that there is no obligation on me to participate in this study
- I fully understand that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without having to explain or give a reason
- I am willing / not willing to be identified as a participant in this study.

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Signature of participant

---

Date

## Appendix D – Interview guide for key Informants UL–Ghana Coop



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RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

The topic for the interview includes the following:

Issues relating to:

- I. Managing / Engaging Internal stakeholders**
- II. Communication with Internal stakeholders**
- III. Barriers to formal and informal communication**
- IV. Improvement of stakeholders engagement**

**A. About Managing / Engaging Internal stakeholders**

Reflecting on your experience, can you elaborate on some of the process being used to build on relationship and dialogue between the groups / individual at UL who are connected to the Ghana cooperative placement programme?

**B. About Communication with Internal stakeholders**

Could you elaborate on how groups / individual who are closely connected with the placement programme engage each other as a form of communication to facilitate the Ghana cooperative placement within your division?

**C. About Barriers to Formal and Informal Communication**

Reflecting on your experience of the 9 years of implementing the internship programme with Ghana, what would you consider as common barriers to communication among the groups / individuals who are closely connected within UL [name at least 3]

**D. About Improvement**

What improvements could the groups / individuals who are closely connected with the placement programme make in facilitating a better communication process?

## Appendix E: Interview guide for Coop students of the UL-Ghana Coop



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The topic for the interview includes the following:

Issues relating to:

- I. Effectiveness of communication process/technology**
  - II. Barriers to formal and informal communication**
  - III. Improvement of communication process/engagement**
- A. Please state the form of technology that was used in communicating with you and how you think this can be improved.
  - B. Could you please highlight the process used in enabling cordial relationship and dialogue between the groups / individual who are connected with the placement programme (internal stakeholders) within UL?
  - C. Please highlight any improvement UL cooperative office and Ghana should be making towards the sustainability of the UL-Ghana placement programme.