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Internal Communication within a multi-campus University: Creating a sense of Community in the Faculty of Management Sciences

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Master's thesis

Haaga Helia Masters Programme for TUT Managers

2021

Haaga-Helia
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Abstract
2 June 2021

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Specialisation
Haaga Helia Masters Programme for TUT Managers

Thesis title	**Number of pages + number of appendices**
Internal Communication within a multi-campus University: Creating a sense of Community in the Faculty of Management Sciences.	4 + 1

Reform of the higher education landscape in South Africa, resulted in institutions fused into multi-campus universities. Some of these were dispersed campuses that often are considerably detached by geography but at the same time combined into a single management system (Nicolson 2004, 351). Subject leaders or subject heads are responsible for subject content that should be standardised on all campuses; it is a big source of unhappiness if there is a lack of, or a breakdown in communication. This problem led to the following research question: How can communication, between staff members on different campuses, be improved to enhance the co-operation and output of quality teaching and learning? Part of the objectives was to develop a new communication model and to make suggestions to the faculty on the way forward.

A cross-sectional, quantitative, descriptive research study was utilised. The questionnaire was based on an internal communication model developed for Telkom (the South African Telecommunication Company) by van der Merwe (1998).

In general, the results of the survey indicated that there are only a few areas where improvement is needed. The most important areas relate to the value that a team member brings to the group, feedback on the performance of the team leader, the discussion of teams goals and objectives and linking the team performance and goals with that of the department

A model, based on the Telkom model, was developed. This model describes the internal communication process within a team, as well as all the environmental factors that have an impact on the communication and effective operation of the team.

It is suggested that a training programme should be developed that can sensitise the leaders as well as team members on effective internal communication that can lead to better team performance.

Keywords
Multi-campus University; Internal Communication; self-managed teams

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Abbreviations

HE	Higher Education
HOD	Head of the Department
NIHE	National Institute for Higher Education
CUT	Central University of Technology
TUT	Tshwane University of Technology
IC	Internal Communication
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training

PS. The terms Subject Co-ordinator, Subject Head and Subject leader will be used interchangeable.

1. Conceptual Framework

1.1 Introduction

Effective internal communication is important in any organisation and can have a huge influence on the success of the organisation. Internal communication is not only vital in a corporate environment, but would also be applicable in an institution of higher learning.

According to Anyangwe (2012, 1-4), the importance and function of internal communication is often overlooked and not developed to its fullest capacity at most places of higher learning. Primarily, this can be attributed to the complex bureaucratic nature of institutions of higher learning (Venter 2006, 18; Gizir & Simsek 2005, 197). Furthermore, Miller (in Holtzhausen 2002, 324) alluded to the fact that communication in bureaucracies tends to levitate towards specific characteristics. Communication is normally task-related and therefore shows itself as instructions, procedures and commands, with subsequently very limited constructive feedback and can often lead to animosity. A formal communication style would often be followed and the inputs and opinions of employees are often not sought or are disregarded even if they are forthcoming.

Tomaselli (in Tsiu 2003, 10) states that commercial enterprises often knock higher education institutions for their lack of resource management and label them as spendthrift and not in tune with business principles. Simpson accuses universities for their absence of frequently assessing their internal communication strategies (Anyangwe 2012, 1-4). It therefore seems as if universities are lacking in implementation of efficient and effective in-house communication structures.

A far-reaching reform of the higher education landscape in South Africa, took place during the early 2000's. The aim of the restructuring was to ensure a leaner, more focused and effective system (Leslie 2003, 841). The 36 public institutions of higher learning were concentrated into twelve universities; this comprised of six universities of technology, six comprehensive institutions, and government created two National Institutes for Higher Education (NIHE) (CHE 2004, 49). These NIHE institutions also resulted in two new Universities: Sol Plaaitjies University in the Northern Cape and University of Mpumalanga in Mpumalanga. This restructuring resulted in institutions fused into multi-campus universities. Some of these were dispersed campuses that are often considerably detached by geography but at the same time combined into a single management system (Nicolson 2004, 351).

Tshwane University of Technology emerged out of three previous Technikons. The Pretoria Technikon, Technikon North West and Technikon Northern Gauteng. The newly formed TUT consists of six main campuses: Pretoria, Ga-Rankuwa, Shosanguwe, eMalahleni, Polokwane and Mbombela. Three of these campuses are in close proximity to each other and are called the Tshwane campuses. The three distant campuses are eMalahleni, Polokwane and Mbombela. These campuses are respectively, 127km, 289km and 344km away from the Tshwane campuses.

These campuses share some of the programmes presented in the Faculty of Management Sciences. These programmes have to be presented in the same manner and during exams and tests, the same papers must be written. Because of these quality measures, regular communication between the lecturers and administrators of the shared programmes is vital.

The complexity of the system that the higher education institutions find themselves in, as well as the various challenges this creates for effective and efficient communication is a constant source of concern. A need, particularly in the South African multi-campus university environment, to find actual communication models that can enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of quality internal communication, has been recognised.

1.2 Research question, objectives and setting

For a very long time, staff had been complaining about the lack of timeous and correct communication between subject teams on the different campuses. As all subject content should be standardised on all campuses, it is a big source of unhappiness if there is a lack of, or a breakdown in communication. Lecturers need to be kept updated by the subject co-ordinators on a weekly, if not more often, basis. This problem led to the formulation of the research question.

As will be seen in the theoretical section, there were two internal communication models that made sense in the light of the environment and the nature of the subject teams and objectives of these teams. Both these models were developed in South Africa, the first for a university environment where there are multiple campuses and the second for Telkom, (a South African telecommunication company). Based on the analysis of these two models, the researcher found a few vital elements that they had in common.

These models helped in formulating the research objectives and setting.

Research Question: How can communication, between staff members on different campuses, be improved to enhance the co-operation and output of quality teaching and learning?

This research question, as well as the theoretical readings, led to the following objectives:
To determine the problems and challenges experienced by lecturers in self-managed teams concerning effective communication.
To examine the identified communication models that might be of value to use as a guide for developing a new communication model.
To advise the faculty on a way forward that can lead to more effective and efficient communication.

Only staff members from Faculty of Management Sciences, that work across distant campuses, were requested to complete the questionnaire.

1.3 Concepts defined

The following concepts are explored in this study:

Self-managed teams: a self-managed team is a self-organised, semi-autonomous group of employees at the university; this is usually a cross-campus subject team or a qualification team. They are collectively responsible and accountable for decisions regarding a subject or qualification, the study material, assessment and scope of work. Leadership within the teams can be formal or informal (Reseachers own interpretation based on Yang & Guy 2011, 531).

Internal communication: Internal communication (also known as IC) refers to a group of processes or tools that are responsible for effective information flow and co-operation among participants within an organization (Jouany 2019, 1).

Multi-campus Universities: Some universities have multiple dispersed campuses that are often considerably detached by geography but at the same time combined into a single management system (Nicolson 2004, 351).

Emergent leadership: "…emergent leadership as the degree to which an individual with no formal status or authority is perceived by one or more team members as exhibiting leader like influence. Our definition clearly highlights that emergent leadership is an informal, lateral form of leadership within a collective" (Hanna, Smith, Kirkman & Griffin 2021, 82).

2 Theoretical overview

The following section formed the theoretical framework for the study and for the developmental work that will follow the study. Various secondary sources were consulted and a structure was created to understand internal communication, between members of self-managed subject teams, which are situated across multi-campuses. Lastly, a section about the changes that Covid -19 brought to our places of work and how we communicate was introduced.

2.1 The Tertiary education system and Multi-campus Universities

In order to track the stability and progress in any country across the world, one can evaluate its education system, one of the most important aspects in any society *(*Mahomedy 2016).

All South-Africans have the fundamental right to basic education, which includes adult basic education and further education. With reference to the Bill of Rights of South Africa's Constitution, a function of government is to provide education that is accessible to all citizens.

South Africa is a unique country, which boasts 11 official languages. However, most schools and universities mainly use English and to a lesser degree, Afrikaans, as their language of instruction.

Post 2009, education was co-ordinated into two national departments, namely the Department of Basic Education (DBE), which is responsible for primary and secondary education and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), which is responsible for tertiary education and vocational training (Tewari & Ilesanmi 2020, 2). Higher Education and Training, in South Africa, is also denoted as tertiary education. It includes the education for undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, certificates and diplomas, up to the doctoral degree.

The vibrancy of the South-African education section is evident in the number of students registered in different universities, colleges and universities of technology. The sector comprises of 26 public universities, 50 public technical and vocational education and training colleges (TVET), 96 registered and 29 provisionally registered private Higher Education institutions. The latest additions to the public university landscape were the introduction of Sol Plaatje University, in the Northern Cape, the University of Mpumalanga

in 2014, and Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, located north of Pretoria, in April 2015. South Africa's universities accommodate in excess of 1 million students, with plans by government to add 500,000 to that total by 2030 (Business Tech 2015).

According to Kavanagh and Taysom (1999) multi-campus universities are a commonly used structured way to reach students and increase access, in many countries, like the USA, Australia and South Africa. Nicolson (2004, 349)) refers to Jansen (2002, 9) in citing the following reasons for the establishment of multi-campus universities: equity and access to both staff and students, economies of scale, institutional viability, and furthermore, the establishment of merged institutions with a new identity and culture that go beyond racial and ethnic institutional histories and provide wider geographical access.

According to Nicolson (2004, 346) multi-campus universities have campuses that are geographically separated from each other but still combined in a single university system. Furthermore, Lee and Bowen (1971) as well as Creswell, Roskens and Henry (1985, 31) argue that multi-campus universities are categorised by the cohabitation of 'differing communities' operating under a shared management framework. They follow this statement with the notion that the main concept within multi-campus universities or systems, is that a 'campus' involves major coordination at the organisational level in terms of specific tasks, activities and strategic integration. This could assist in positioning the role-players in the system, in addition to improving the administration of resources and the delivery of services. This aids university administrators in creating a more appropriate working climate facilitative of efficiency and greater staff and student satisfaction. Through the identification of the concerns of staff and students, who are involved in multi-campus operations, a more streamlined and better workplace environment can be developed. This can be done by developing policies and systems, which integrate the concerns elevated by staff and students; and secondly, through increasing stakeholders' (in particularly staffs') awareness of the situations causing concern and taking action to develop new plans or surviving systems to reduce the problems or concerns (Kavanagh & Taysom 1999; Pinheiro & Berg 2016, 7).

In light of the above discussion, it is clear that there are excellent reasons for the establishment of multi-campus universities. At TUT there are six campuses: Pretoria, Ga-Rankuwa, Shosanguwe, eMalahleni, Polokwane and Mbombela. These campuses often share programmes. The three Tshwane campuses, Pretoria, Ga-Rankuwa, Shosanguwe, are the seats of the Deans of the faculties and many of the programmes are also offered at the three distant sites, namely eMalahleni, Polokwane and Mbombela. The leadership at these distant sites consists of the Campus Rector and Academic Managers for the

different faculties at the different sites. The faculty of Management Sciences is the only faculty that offers programmes at all three different sites. Because of the distance between these sites and Pretoria (the site of the faculty and the dean), these campuses are respectively, 127km, 289km and 344km away from the Tshwane campuses, communication between lecturers and the different faculty committees becomes a challenge.

Recently, Covid -19 forced people to become more reliant on online communication. Previously staff at the Pretoria campus held a meeting where the staff members from the different sites had to travel to attend. The planning for the year was done at this meeting; the rest of the communication was done through emails or a telephone call if there were important issues to discuss. This form of communication often led to stress and animosity between lecturers, especially if decisions were made on one campus and the rest of the staff were not informed or consulted.

It is often suggested, (Winchester & Sterk 2006, 64), that staff work in silo's, that can result from physical distance (sometimes within a single campus) or structures or practices that create a real or perceived sense of isolation. The task falls on leadership to effectively and efficiently manage these challenges. Success, in managing these challenges, depends largely on the reaction to 'the challenges of working across multiple locations' or on 'minimising the negative effects that this environment can bring'. It will rely on the stoutness and efficiency of crucial functions of leadership, development and quality systems, communications and the delivery of support services and infrastructure throughout the complete university, at all levels and in every campus (Winchester & Sterk 2006, 164).

This study will focus on the communication within self-managed teams that exist across all campuses.

2.2 Self-managed teams

In the university, people work together in teams. Teams are usually structured to consist of staff members that are brought together to work towards a common goal and to perform specific tasks. These tasks might involve problem identification, establishing consent for tasks to be performed and the implementation of plans for problem solving.

Teams can consist of groups that are fashioned for specific tasks. The members can be individuals with cross expertise that they bring to the group. When a specific task needs to

be achieved, a temporary team might be formed. This provisional team would be responsible for the full spectrum of the project, from commencement to end, while permanent teams have continuing tasks and responsibilities in an agreed upon area. In some cases teams might have open membership, which would allow individuals to join the group when their expertise is required and leave the group again when their effort is not required anymore (Bartol & Martin 1998, 492).

In most cases, these teams have no formal structure and therefore no formal chain of command. However, an informal leader often takes charge because it helps to focus the actions and coordinate the work and timelines (Gerpott, Lehmann-Willenbrock, Voelpel & van Vugt 2019, 717). Carte, Chidambaram and Becker (2006) further suggest that where this "emergent leadership" is visible, these teams seems to outperform teams that are not as resourceful in leadership. They further suggest that there is a link between communication behaviours of leaders and the performance outcomes of teams. When there is participative leadership within teams, encouraging facilitation and mentoring, it encourages open dialogue and follows comments and contribution (Carte *et al.* 2006).

Most of the teams that we focus on for this thesis, within a multi-campus University, are related to subject groups or course groups within a faculty. When these teams are authorised to make pronouncements on their own without seeking the sanction of management, they are regarded as self-managed teams. According to Bartol and Martin (1998, 496), a self-managed team can be described as a work group that takes responsibility and accountability for an assignment or task without regular supervision. This group also has the authority to impact and regulate both group membership and group behaviour. This would be the case in subject teams where the team would decide on certain content and other issues relating to the subject, within the rules and policies of the university but without seeking consent or permission from an HOD.

Bartol and Martin (1998, 496) recognised four vital stages that are crucial to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of self-managed teams. The first step would be to determine the need for the formation of a team, added to that, a decision would have to be made on the tasks that will be the responsibility of the team and also the degree of power that will be given to them. Secondly, the group composition needs to be specified and it is imperative that caution is given to decisions about group alignment and composition and to distribute the required means to complete the task effectively. Thirdly, as the group is attempting to move through the steps of group growth, training becomes important to engage the team effectively regarding teamwork and guidance in refining suitable standards and behaviours. Finally, ongoing assistance is needed from managers to

remove performance hurdles and to facilitate the group in continuous learning. This development process may lead to an initial decline in production, as the teams work through the development process.

2.2.1 Self-managed teams within the Faculty of Management sciences

As explained previously, the Faculty of Management Sciences has a presence on all the distant campuses in the two provinces of Limpopo and Mpumalanga.

All the subjects presented within the courses that are duplicated on the distant campuses need to be presented in exactly the same manner. This implies that the subject head or subject co-ordinator and the lecturers on other campuses need to work together to ensure consistency and quality standards.

Below, in table 1, is a list of activities that are the responsibility of a subject –coordinator and a lecturer. Under the heading, general administration, is listed meetings and communication.

This list was compiled by die HOD's within the Faculty of Management Sciences together with the HR department and in consultation with the section heads, subject head and lecturers in the different departments.

Table 1: Responsibilities of a subject coordinator **(**SC) (Faculty of Management Sciences, 2019)

Activity	**Role of subject coordinator**	**Role of lecturer**
Phase 1: Subject preparation		
1) Compiling study guide 2) Determination of weights 3) Development and update of subject file 4) Scheme of work	Study guide needs to be re-visited each year by the SC to ensure relevance and up to date info. Determine Weights. Development and update of subject file. Draw up the snap guide-work schedule. (all this should be done by consultation with subject lecturers)	Inputs given on time to the SC on all matters pertaining to planning.
Phase 2: Classroom management		
1) Creation of class groups 2) ITS class grouping? 3) Liaison with timetable coordinator		Subjects lecturers can do this in consultation with SC.
Phase 3: Assessment		
1) Setting of test papers 2) Setting of exam papers 3) Moderation a. Logistical arrangements b. Actual moderation 4) Assistant markers?	The responsibility lies with the SC - however the SC should distribute the work of setting papers among the subject lecturers and oversee the completion of this. Moderation if SC is the moderator.	Inputs submitted on time regarding paper compilation. Subject lecturers need to arrange that their papers are moderated. (tests) Identify need for assistant markers, *needs to be organised by the Section Head.
General administration		
1) Meetings 2) Quality control	Organised by section head but Subject C needs to chair the subject meeting and communicate the decisions. Make sure that QC measures are in place.	
Other	Most importantly is that Subject Head needs to communicate in time with all subject lecturers regarding changes or arrangements. Tests and exams need to be distributed on time to all subject lecturers.	Lecturers needs to consult with subject heads regarding any changes or suggestions that they have. They cannot make decisions on their own

2.3 Internal communication

The academic nature of Higher Education institutions, often results in them being managed by academics that might not always be conversant with the optimal means of communicating on a proficient supervision level.

In any organisation, internal communication occurs regularly; this can include some informal banter on the “grapevine” as well as managed communication (Welch & Jackson 2007, 178). Strategic internal communications often focus on campaigning support for the organisations goals and strategies. In his role, a CEO, the top manager, often sets a standard for internal communication (Schein 2000; Tourish & Robson 2003). A CEO is automatically nominated as a chief communication officer and is responsible for effective internal communication. Jo and Shim (2005) found that a strong link exists between management’s interpersonal communication skills and the level of trust that an employee will form. Personal relationships can result in strong bonds within an organisation, and can motivate employees to stay in the organisation (Gallicano 2008). According to Cameron and McCollum (1993) employees would prefer interpersonal communication with management over arbitrated communication.

Managers can personally influence their relationships with employees. A number of previous studies have alluded to job satisfaction and performance, that are linked to the degree to which employees are informed through effective internal communication (Gray & Laidlaw 2002; Bartoo & Sia, 2004; Rosenfeld, Richman, & May 2004; Zucker 2002).

The benefits of employee satisfaction resulting in higher productivity is not the only competitive advantage of strategic internal communication. Well – informed employees also make valuable contributions to a company’s public image and aid in external public relations and goodwill both inside and outside the organisation.

Communication “provides the means for problem solving, resolving conflicts, accomplishing change, and future planning”. Managers in an organisation have the power to apply solid personal influence in their connections with other employees and can affect attitudes, job satisfaction, and consequently also control the word-of-mouth advertising that an employee conveys about the organisation to both internal and external stakeholders.

The complex bureaucratic nature of institutions of higher learning (Venter 2006, 18; Gizir & Simsek 2005, 197) is the reason that internal communication often take the form of being task-related and it does not encourage social communication and innovation. The

progression of communication will normally be seen as travelling vertically, in both directions, on the organisation chart, and horizontal communication will only be encouraged among employees of the same level. The nature of the communication will usually be in the form of orders, rules and directives, and little or no feedback will be encouraged. The written mode of communication will be dominant and will mainly focus on the communication of policies, procedures and directions to enable efficient organisational functioning. Managers would seldom ask for employees' input or opinion and a formal style of communication will probably be used, even when managers ask for employee input, it is highly unlikely that these managers will act on the employee's opinion or suggestions. A bureaucratic structure is often not beneficial for creating job satisfaction. However, job satisfaction can be reasoned as one of the important outcomes of good employee communication (Holtzhausen 2002, 324).

The argument is not that structure is not important, but rather that the focus should be to encourage free communication to enable people, who can make a valuable contribution, to be encouraged to do so without needing the approval of a central power. Traditional boundaries that include rank, role, organisational level, functional membership, and geographic location, are less significant than getting the best people assigned to work together effectively on various tasks (Bossidy, in Ashkenas *et al.* 1995).

According to Barge and Hirokawa (1989) having "communication competency" is another aspect of leadership that is vitally important. They further argue that having the skills to formulate and send an arrangement of messages in order to assist the group to deal with barriers and difficulties allows one to exercise leadership in a group. This idea is supported by the contributors to the theories around emergent leadership within groups (Carte *et al.* 2006; Hedman & Valo 2015; Gerpott *et al.* 2019). Emergent leaders offer substantial contributions to the communication that takes place in their groups – introducing more ideas, voicing opinions, and asking more questions (Bass 1990, 25).

A communication manager ensures that line managers are made to understand and accept their own responsibility as far as more effective line communication is concerned, since it impacts directly on their leadership effectiveness. Effective line communication links to effective leadership. The way in which a line manager communicates with his employees is not only a reflection of his leadership style, it is how he leads and manages.

2.4 Critical evaluation of relevant internal communication models

A model usually refers to a simple diagram that sets out a process that can be followed. It can also show flow and relationships. According to The Business Communication, the elementary intentions of a communication model should be the following:

- To simplify the process of communication and make it flow logically
- To indicate the flow of information from one person to the next within the organisation
- To familiarise the various parts of the communication process to its users
- To make the intricacy of the process more presentable
- To understand the complexities that communication presents and to use the model to measure the severity of the problems within a given communication situation

After a study conducted in 2004 by Groenewald (2004, 4), where he surveyed seven of the biggest companies in South Africa, at that time, about their internal communication practices, he reported that the value of internal communication was regarded as an unstructured, biased and largely qualitative process. He further posits that companies saw the measuring of the internal communication as a process and did not even consider measuring the impact on employees. Many scholars, who have tried to develop models, which address these problems, do not agree with this statement.

2.4.1 A model for a multi-campus university – the case of CUT

There has been significant work done over many years in the field of designing communication models. In a study by Delport, Hay-Swemmer and Wilkenson (2014, 23-28), where they studied several communication models, they designed a communication model that could be used in their University. The model that they constructed, specifically for use in a multi-campus university, has some very good qualities. They designed their model with a strong reference to the TOCOM model and the Integrated Communication Management Model, which followed an open systems theory (Delport, *et al.* 2014, 41). They further state that they tried to incorporate the relevant and desirable features from each of the ten models they studied, whilst also guarding against the shortcomings of these models. They furthermore incorporated the six fundamental values that they describe as “statements of good practice” (Delport, *et al.* 2014, 40).

These six statements commit the communication model to

- Being a strategic management tool

- Committing to decentralisation
- Guided by policy
- A core business value
- Integrated with other business functions
- Appointing a communications manager on managerial level

They see the process of communication as being pivotal in the model and communication as a reciprocal balanced process. The model indicates that both formal and informal channels are used, however, these channels are strictly controlled and clear guidelines are set for communication of a private nature. The mediums of communication depicted in the model include a creative use of technology; however they mention only emails and SMS.

The authors (Delport, *et al.* 2014, 40), see training in interpersonal communication as a management KPA and as such regard the training in, and capability of, this area as a non-negotiable. Feedback channels are an important part of the communication process and are built into the model, to encourage staff members to become involved in decision-making. They further postulate that timely delivery of messages, that are pertinent, simple to understand and reliable, are vital to the success of the model. Although the authors suggest that messages should be disseminated in more than one language, English, as the official language of most institutions in South Africa, is mostly used (Delport, *et al.* 2014, 40).

As quality assurance is a necessity in all HE institutions in South Africa, the model was developed with a monitoring feature, a reward and recognition system for management. As mentioned earlier, the authors saw this communication model's implementation and monitoring as a KPA of any manager. In addition, it is therefore recommended that a communication manager be appointed to ensure this model becomes part of the strategic management toolbox.

Figure 1 is a representation of the model suggested by Delport, *et al.* (2014), for the Central University of Technology (CUT) in South Africa.

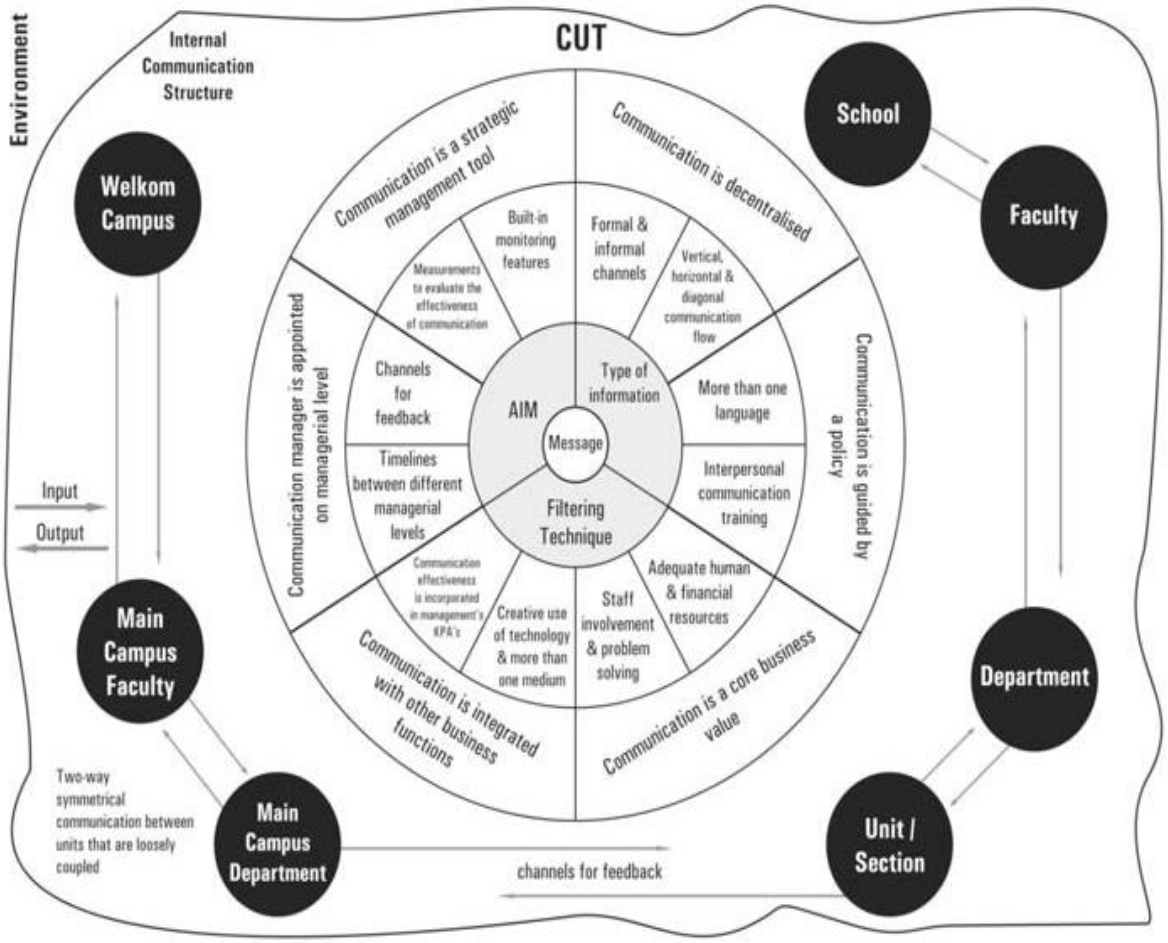

Figure 1: Internal Communication Model for Multi-campus Universities (CUT)
Delport, Hay-Swemmer and Wilkenson (2014)

Although the researcher found this model and research inspiring and very useful, she found that the model had too many layers and is difficult to understand and implement. The reference to informal and formal communication and the link to corporate objectives is useful. Training in the use of the model can also be an advantage.

The model, however, does not address the grass root level of teamwork within subject teams specifically and rather speaks to corporate communication. However, some of the elements of this model can be useful and could be implemented into a simpler and user-friendly model.

2.4.2 The Telkom model

The next model was a model developed for Telkom, by van der Merwe (1996).

This is a straightforward model that asks the following questions:

What is my job?

How am I doing?

Does anybody care?

How are we doing?

Where do we fit in?

How can I help?

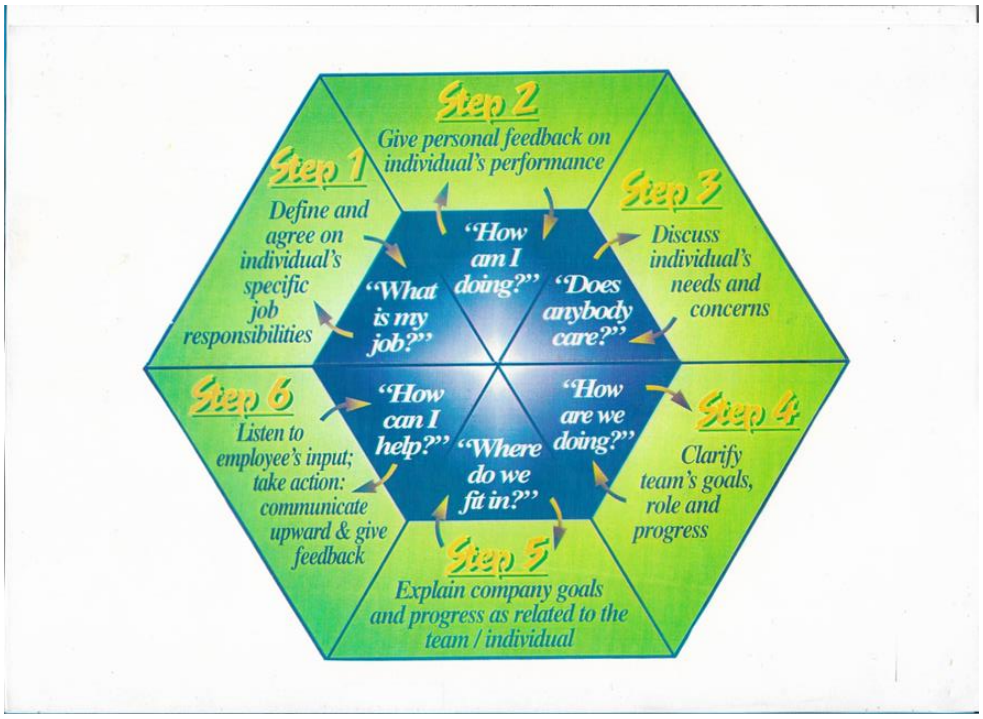

Figure 2: Internal Communication Model for Telkom (van der Merwe, 1998)

Van der Merwe (1998) suggests that this model provides 6 easy steps that any-one in a leadership position can follow to become a successful communication leader. This proposed leadership model suggests six easy steps that any line manager or supervisor can follow to become a communicating leader. She further explains that these six steps are based on an employee's most important communication desires and requirements. It provides, focus, direction and tools to empower a leader to manage the communication effectively with his team.

The model aims to start with providing individual focus (steps 1-3); thereafter, steps 4 &5, focus on a collective emphasis and ends with focus on interactive action. The author warns that this model should not be regarded as linear, for the different steps often intermingle and need to be deliberated in the progress to every other step in the communication process. She also reiterates the importance of understanding that an individual employee's needs should be fulfilled before he can buy into the bigger picture of the own team (van der Merwe, 1998).

The direction that a team leader can follow is built onto the focus of satisfying the individual's needs, even when he relates the communication to the bigger picture (corporate objectives). This also provides direction with regard to nature of the communication activities: face-to-face communication (ranging from individual to small group sessions) is preferred to impersonal mass media.

Lastly, the model suggest a plan/do/review approach. Performance planning and review sessions should be combined into an all-inclusive approach in the communication opportunities. It is ultimately a performance driven tool, aimed at assisting line management in their task (van der Merwe, 1998).

This model is easy to understand and implement. The researcher was specifically partial to the ease of use and implementation. It seemed to be a model that could be tested effortlessly, and if deemed necessary, improvements made to the specific needs for the self-managed subject teams. Training on implementation of the model seems possible. Furthermore, the six steps (questions) speak to the problems facing lecturers within the teams. The researcher was swayed towards believing that with this easy approach, a picture could form of how identified problems could easily be addressed.

2.5 Covid changes team communication

The COVID 19 pandemic increased the need to identify management challenges related to virtual team performance. Many organisations, including tertiary education, across the world now allow their employees to work remotely. Employees do not have a choice but to participate in full-time virtual teamwork (Mysirlaki & Paraskeva 2020*).* Covid and its legacy has made it vital to face the challenges that come with being a part of a virtual team.

Given the dispersed nature of the virtual team environment, during, and possibly post Covid -19, as well as the partial influence that an externally imposed leader might have, some researchers (Carte *et al.* 2006; Hedman & Valo 2015; Gerpott *et al.* 2019) further propose that there will be a higher reliance higher performing teams on their internal

communication competency,resulting in communication that will include a higher occurrence of emergent leadership conduct.

Members of teams often represent multi-cultures as well as diverse age groups. This necessitates that communication needs to flow on many levels and in different forums to be effective (Hedman & Valo 2015). In light of the recent pandemic, communication takes place largely on ICT platforms. Telephone and e-mail were mainly used for one-to-one communication between team members. Video conferencing, like Teams, Zoom, WeChat and even WhatsApp video calling can be utilised for team meetings. The added benefit of these meetings is that a recording can be made from the meeting, which can be used as the minutes of the meeting. This makes communication even more challenging as videos are often not utilised and therefore team members cannot see the other person's face. According to Newman and Ford (2021, 2) it is quite a different situation to manage a virtual team than meeting a team face to face. They state that lower levels of trust and support from managers are experienced; working from home further reduces an employee's affiliation towards the corporate culture and values Newman and Ford (2021, 2). Further to this, team members are technology dependant. The communication is completely based on communication technologies. Eisenberg and Krishnan (2018, 90) identified problems with technology such as computer errors, lacking technology infrastructure and inaccessible files. This, can lead to deadlines that need to be postponed. Further to this, relationship-oriented problems demand that leaders have to pay attention to each team member's situation and form individually to reduce social loitering and increase the level of commitment and trust within the virtual team.

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Newman and Ford (2021, 5) suggest that due to the lack of frequent informal communication in the workplace, a need arises for leaders to engage with new communication tools and practises for their virtual employees.

3 Justification of the research and development project

As was discussed in the previous section on the structure and dynamics of self-managed teams, it is evident that Covid -19 brought changes to how we communicate and meet. Communication has changed and evolved to meet the needs of companies in 2021.

This led to the research question:
How can communication, between staff members on different campuses, be improved to enhance the co-operation and output of quality teaching and learning?

The research question pointed to the following objectives:
To determine the problems and challenges experienced by lecturers in self-managed teams concerning effective communication.
To examine various communication models that might be of value to use as a guide for developing a new communication model.

3.1 Methodology

This section relates to and describes the research methodology utilised by the researcher to collect and analyse data.

3.1.1 Research design

The overall plan for the development project is detailed in the research design; this provides a framework and a guide for the gathering of data and the exploration of the data. Several basic steps should be included in articulating a research design (Wiid and Diggines 2013, 56).

The starting point should be the identification of sources for collecting the data; this is usually followed by the selection of the primary research methods. A data collection tool or research instrument is developed based on the project objectives and research design. The selection of the population and relevant respondents is explained in the sample plan. After data is collected, it will be analysed and reported on. A development plan for the implementation of the findings will then be developed and explained.

3.1.2 The data sources

Both secondary data as well as primary data was utilised. The secondary data that the researcher used in the supporting of arguments and to explain various thoughts and ideologies was contained in the literature review. The relevant sources for secondary information consisted of accredited journals, electronic records, academic books as well as former research readings. Empirical research was engaged to obtain relevant primary (new) data.

3.1.3 The primary-research methods

A cross-sectional, quantitative, descriptive research study was utilised.

A questionnaire was compiled and distributed to lecturers in the Faculty of Management Sciences that work within self-managed subject teams on various campuses.

3.1.4 Questionnaire design

The questionnaire has a structured layout; this format of survey was developed to obtain evidence from the respondents. The main purpose of this study/project was to enhance the communication skills and outcomes between lecturers on the different campuses. To determine the problems and frustrations as well as the good practices that exist within these communication channels, various perceptions and attitudes were observed.

The questionnaire was developed by taking into account all rules and guidelines of questionnaire development. No questions of a personal nature or questions that might identify a respondent were asked. The questionnaire followed a logical sequence and was kept as simple as possible. The researcher provided clear instructions on the completion of the questionnaire. A pre-test, surveying respondents that fit the population profile, was conducted by sending the survey to five people within the population. Those five questionnaires were disregarded for the final data collection. Convenience sampling was utilised to select these individuals (Tustin, Ligthelm, Martins & van Wyk 2005, 240).

The questionnaire (See Appendix A & B) was based on an internal communication model developed for Telkom (the South African Telecommunication Company) by van der Merwe (1998). The questionnaire was adapted, by the researcher, to test the communication model within the dynamics of a multi campus university.

At the start of this project, the following process was envisioned. The questionnaire will be distributed to all lecturers within the self-managed subject teams on the various campuses. Thereafter an analysis of the results will be done and the subject heads will

be consulted and trained on using a communication model. After two months, the questionnaires will be distributed again to determine if the model is effective in aiding healthy communication (See comments on this process in the self-reflection section on pp. 40).

3.1.5 Target population

Cooper and Schindler (2003, 179) define a population as an all-inclusive collection of elements from whom data will be collected and conclusions will be drawn. The populace of the study comprised of all the lecturers within the Faculty of Management Sciences that have a working relationship, within subject self-management teams, with lecturers/administrators on other campuses.

3.1.6 Sampling

A sample will only be used if the target population is too big to investigate. Samples are small groups that represent the population. For this study, no sampling was used, as the population was manageable. The questionnaire was mailed to all possible participants.

3.1.7 Data collection and preparation

Ethical clearance was obtained before data collection took place. This is important because the study population consisted of staff members of Tshwane University of Technology; this group is seen as a vulnerable group.

Data collection took place through the distribution of the questionnaires via a survey monkey link to the relevant lecturers of the different departments. Lecturers completed the questionnaires anonymously in survey monkey. The survey was completely anonymous.

3.1.8 Data preparation

To assist in the data analysis, a statistician was consulted. A thorough search for uniformity and comprehensiveness was performed on the questionnaires before data processing started. Diamantopoulos and Schlegelmilch (2000, 40) suggest that data cleaning has to be completed for assurance completeness; no oversights, vagueness and errors should be noticed in the replies. Non-responses are termed as omitted answers or responses; questionnaires that have a large percentage of missing information will be omitted.

Wild-code checks and extreme-case checks were executed. This enables the researcher to identify codes that do not fall within, or do not comply with the range of standard responses; those responses should not be considered (Wiid & Diggines 2013, 229).

Subsequently, data was coded and captured. This entails a process of decryption of raw data into numbers or symbols (Wiid & Diggines 2013, 230).

3.1.9 Data analysis

The researcher engaged descriptive and inferential statistics, in order to scrutinise results, draw conclusions, and make recommendations.

Regularity of manifestation, central propensities, means, medians, modes and standard deviations are called descriptive statistics. The data from this study includes ordinal data, nominal data, as well as interval data.

3.2 Reliability

A study is deemed reliable if the results of the study show similarity when another researcher replicates the research design, or if the degree to which the research produces the same results and could unfailingly be duplicated. When the scores produced by a measurement is not consistently the same, a measurement error has occurred and is then deemed unreliable (Bless & Higson-Smith 2000, 126; Dillon *et al.* 1994, 323).

Cronbach's alpha is a commonly used measure of reliability. The reliability aspect is deliberated by considering all potential split-half panels of a measurement scale (Dillon *et al.*1 994, 323). A reliable and appropriate cut-off of 0.7 for a reliable Cronbach's alpha is reasoned appropriate (Pallant 2010, 97). Item analysis will assist in identifying items that do not produce valuable information by comparing items. More dependable items, according to Bless and Higson-Smith, (2000, 127), can replace any unsuited items.

3.3 Validity

If a measurement scale actions what it is intended to measure and produces results to the construct under study, the study can be referred to as having validity. If a non-random error exists, it would negatively affect validity, according to Dillon *et al.* (1994, 324).

Even if a measurement scale is seemed to be reliable, that is, if the results are consistently trustworthy, over time, it might still be unsound. Contradictory to this, however; a measurement scale that is untrustworthy cannot be valid. The questionnaire for this study was designed based on an investigation of secondary research. The questionnaire was pre-tested and the results from the pre-test were used to remove

immaterial questions and any difficulties that people might have with the completion and understanding of the questionnaire.

Content validity, criterion validity and construct validity are all various forms of validity that can be used to ensure that a researcher has measured the truth.

3.4 Designing, Implementation and monitoring

After all the data has been analysed, a communication model will be developed and implemented. As this is mainly a developmental project, staff will be trained on the model and the processes associated with this model. After the model has been implemented, a random sample of respondents from the first round will be contacted to determine their opinions and inputs into how functional the model is. The HOD's will also be involved to give feedback on the implementation as well as the efficiency of the model.

3.5 Developmental plan

The objective will be to implement a communication model that can be used by self-managed teams. A suitable communication model needs to be used in these teams to enable the optimal functioning of the teams.

The team leaders' communication style and strategies will be evaluated by using a questionnaire. Thereafter the model will be explained and implemented by conducting training workshops. After the implementation of the model the communication within the teams will be measured again to elevate any problems that might still exist.

4 Results, discussion and evaluations

In this next section the researcher provides the results from the survey, a critical discussion on the results as well as evaluation on the model that can have an influence on the internal communication. An adapted model will be suggested.

4.1 Results

Van der Merwe (1998) developed a questionnaire for Telkom; this questionnaire was adopted from that study, on the implementation of the Telkom model for internal communication. The results obtained from the survey will now be discussed and then the results will be linked to the importance of internal communication and its various components, to assist in the construction of a communication model and training.

The questionnaire consists of 16 questions in total, all of which are focused on the team leaders' communication behaviour.

Questions 1 and 2 deal with job responsibilities. This set of questions measures the team leaders' communication behaviour regarding how well, and how often, he discusses the job content and expectations of the individual employee's job responsibilities and suggestions with him.

Questions 3 - 6 evaluate the team leaders' and teams members' ability to consider a team members' inputs and to give effective positive (appreciation) and constructive (how to improve) feedback.

The next set of questions, (questions 7 - 9), consists of questions dealing with empathy and how much the team leader shows that he cares for the individual, as a person, and as an employee. It is linked to the team leader's communication behaviour that shows that he cares for his team members as individuals - about their concerns, problems and ideas, especially as it relates to the focus area of the team.

Questions 10 - 12 deal with the team leader's communication behaviour concerning the team, and measures how well (often) he discusses team goals, progress and their suggestions for improvement with them.

Question 13 evaluates the team leaders' ability to communicate effectively to the team on how they fit into the bigger picture, by regularly discussing how their goals/tasks affect the department and the faculty, and what their basic strategy is within the bigger strategy.

The last set of questions, questions 14 - 16, deal with the team leader's listening ability. How effectively does he listen to his team members; take action on their suggestions or concerns; communicate the individual/team's suggestions and concerns effectively, to a higher level of decision making management (HOD's and the Dean); and to give regular feedback to the team on the results of their input.

A total number of 50 emails, with the survey monkey link was sent to full time staff members on the various campuses. A response of 34 was obtained. This is a response rate of 68%. The researcher deemed this as sufficient because although all the recipients of the questionnaires are working in the Management Sciences Faculty on various campuses, the specific lecturer might not be involved with a subject linked to other campuses.

Just to reiterate the importance of internal communication within a team context, the following statements are worth reading: according to Vercic, Vercic, and Sriramesh (2012) an organisation uses the terminology, internal communication, to refer to a communication system that is managed within the organisation. Employees form an integral part of the stakeholder group. This type of communication is often also referred to as employee communication, or organisational communication and can be regarded as a form of internal marketing (Welch & Jackson 2007, 182). Furthermore, for decision-making purposes and organisational activities, communication competency becomes non-negotiable. It is vital for employees not only to understand each other but also to relate to the context in which people are communicating and to effectively respond given that context (Zerfass & Franke 2013, 119).

In the next table, Table 2, the frequencies as well as the weighted averages are presented. The weighted average is a measure that takes into consideration the different degrees of the numbers in a data set. Also, see Appendix C for the graphic depiction of the results.

Table 2: Results in frequencies as well as weighted averages

	NEVER(1)	RARELY(2)	SOMETIMES (3)	VERY OFTEN(4)	ALWAYS (5)	N/A	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
1.My team leader fully informs me of my responsibilities within the subject team.	0.00% 0	11.76% 4	14.71% 5	38.24% 13	32.35% 11	2.94% 1	34	3.94
2.I understand the procedures I need to follow in doing my job within the subject team.	0.00% 0	8.82% 3	0.00% 0	29.41% 10	61.76% 21	0.00% 0	34	4.44
3.My team members are willing to consider suggestions that I make.	2.94% 1	2.94% 1	17.65% 6	32.35% 11	41.18% 14	2.94% 1	34	4.09
4.My team members and team leader are appreciative if I do my job well and effectively.	2.94% 1	2.94% 1	17.65% 6	29.41% 10	44.12% 15	2.94% 1	34	4.12
5.I know exactly what I need to do to perform my job better.	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8.82% 3	35.29% 12	52.94% 18	2.94% 1	34	4.45
6.I am told by my team leader about the value that I bring to my group.	5.88% 2	20.59% 7	23.53% 8	17.65% 6	29.41% 10	2.94% 1	34	3.45
7.My group members are willing to listen to my concerns.	2.94% 1	2.94% 1	14.71% 5	29.41% 10	50.00% 17	0.00% 0	34	4.21
8.My team leader is willing to listen objectively to problems regarding relationships within the group.	2.94% 1	5.88% 2	20.59% 7	26.47% 9	41.18% 14	2.94% 1	34	4.00
9. My team leader asks me for feedback regarding his/her performance as team leader.	17.65% 6	14.71% 5	17.65% 6	29.41% 10	17.65% 6	2.94% 1	34	3.15
10.My team leader discusses the team's goals and targets with the team.	5.88% 2	20.59% 7	11.76% 4	29.41% 10	29.41% 10	2.94% 1	34	3.58

11.My team leader discusses the role that the team plays within the department with us.	11.76% 4	17.65% 6	23.53% 8	17.65% 6	26.47% 9	2.94% 1	34	3.30
12.My team leader listens to team members' questions and suggestions regarding the goals/progress of the team.	0.00% 0	5.88% 2	23.53% 8	32.35% 11	35.29% 12	2.94% 1	34	4.00
13.My team leader relates our work to the strategic plan of the department/faculty.	0.00% 0	8.82% 3	26.47% 9	20.59% 7	38.24% 13	5.88% 2	34	3.94
14.The team leader escalates problems within the team to the section head/HOD.	0.00% 0	5.88% 2	17.65% 6	11.76% 4	55.88% 19	8.82% 3	34	4.29
15. The team leader communicates our team's suggestions to improve our efficiency to the HOD and asks for support or assistance.	0.00% 0	8.82% 3	14.71% 5	17.65% 6	52.94% 18	5.88% 2	34	4.22
16.My team leader gives feedback to our team on the results of our input.	0.00% 0	11.76% 4	20.59% 7	26.47% 9	38.24% 13	2.94% 1	34	3.94

The first two questions answered the superseding question: what is my job/responsibilities or tasks within this self-managed team?

At the beginning of the year subject teams are established for the year, as we saw in the list of responsibilities for subject heads, Table 1 pp.9 by the subject head. The first item for discussion should be, to set goals and to divide the responsibilities for the year, in order for every team member to understand the tasks and the deadlines associated with the task. It is also important as TUT often employs part-time staff members that are new to the team and have to be orientated to understand the dynamics and work procedures within the team, the department and the faculty.

Q1: My team leader fully informs me of my responsibilities within the subject team.
70.5% of respondents indicated that they are, very often, or always informed. The weighted average of 3.94 also indicates that most team members have a clear idea of their roles and responsibilities within the team.

Q2: I understand the procedures I need to follow in doing my job within the subject team.
With a weighted average of 4.44 only 8.8% of the respondents felt, they were not informed. This is also one of the highest weighted averages and therefore indicates that there is good communication on the roles and responsibilities within the teams.

If the team -leader cannot ensure that his team members understand exactly what is expected of them, he cannot presume they will perform to the best of their ability. They will also not be able to follow his lead if they cannot understand and see where they need to go.

Questions 3-6 answered the superseding question: How am I doing? This relates to how well the team leader gives feedback on individual performance.

Q3: My team members are willing to consider suggestions that I make.
A number of 26,5% respondents indicated that they felt that their suggestions were not considered.

Q4: My team members and team leader are appreciative if I do my job well and effectively.
73.5% indicated that they feel appreciated by team members and team leaders. This is a good indication where it seems people are supportive.

Q5: I know exactly what I need to do to perform my job better.
This construct scored the highest in weighted average, 4.45 where 88% of respondents felt that they know what to do.

It seems from the above scores that most of the team members feel that they know what they are doing. It will be interesting to understand this question from a different perspective where the question, does your team members know what they are doing, is asked.

Q6: I am told by my team leader about the value that I bring to my group. The response to this statement is in contrast with the statement in Q4, where only 47% of the respondents feel that it happens often or always. A total of 50% of the respondents felt they sometimes, rarely or are never told about the value that they add to the team. This raises the suspicion, that the answers in Q4 had an indication that it is team members that are appreciative and not the team leader as such? It might be worth further investigation.

Questions 7-9, deal with the overriding question; does any-one care?

Q7: My group members are willing to listen to my concerns. 79,4% of the respondents indicated yes they are willing to listen to my concerns, always or very often. A high weighted average of 4.21 was recorded.

Q8: My team leader or and HOD/Section Head is willing to listen objectively to problems regarding relationships within the group. 40% indicated always and 26,4% indicated very often. This is a very good result that indicates concern about the performance of groups and relationships within groups/teams.

Q9: My team leader asks me for feedback regarding his/her performance as team leader. In essence this asks the question – does my team leader care about my opinion of his own performance within the team? The response shows a split in answers –with only 47% of the respondents indicating always or very often.

In all team-work, feedback is an integral part of internal communication. Questions 10-12, relate to the important issue of team performance.

Q10: My team leader discusses the team's goals and targets with the team.
The weighted average of 3.58 indicates that the average inclines towards sometimes; this is a very non-decisive answer. There is not much conviction that goals and targets are shared with the team.

Q11: My team leader discusses the role that the team plays, within the department with us. In general, the responses are very diverse: almost 30% were on the side of never or rarely and 44% on very often and always. The average lies on 3.3.

Q12: My team leader listens to team member's questions and suggestions regarding the goals/progress of the team. A total of 67,6% of the respondents indicated that they believe they are listened to when offering questions or suggestions.

What is measured in question 13, is the team leader's ability to communicate the 'bigger picture' to team members; and to ensure that they understand how their goals fit into and add value to the bigger organisation. Since this is where the team leader has the opportunity to communicate his vision of how the team can impact on the department and faculty.

Q13: My team leader relates our work to the strategic plan of the department/ faculty. Although two people refrained from answering the question, the total number of people, 87,8%, who indicated, sometimes, very often and always is a very positive indication that team leaders do know what the strategic objectives of the department, faculty and university is, and can relate it to the work that is done within the team.

The last three questions focus on how well the team leader listens to his team members; communicates upwards; takes action and gives feedback to them.

Q14: The team leader escalates problems within the team to the section head/ HOD. Here the indication is that more than 55% of the respondents feel that their problems and concerns are escalated. Three people refrained from answering. The problem here, however, would be, if the team leaders cannot solve the problems themselves because of lack of skills or because the problem needs intervention on a higher level.

Q15: The team leader communicates our team's suggestions, to improve our efficiency, to the HOD and ask for support or assistance. 70,5% of the respondents felt that the team leader takes important suggestions to a higher level.

Q16: My team leader gives feedback to our team on the results of our input. Giving feedback is an answer with a lower average score. This indicates that some staff members (respondents) are not convinced that they get appropriate feedback on results of their input.

In general, the results of the survey indicate that there are a few areas where improvement is needed. The most important areas are question 6: the value that a team member brings to the group; question 9, feedback on the performance of the team leader;

question 10, where teams' goals and objectives are discussed; and question 11 that links the team performance and goals with that of the department. Even though the responses to the other questions were more positive, it is important to note that all the aspects discussed with regards to the questionnaire are important.

4.2 Discussion of the results and measures

All the steps associated with the model that were tested, forms an important component in the chain of internal communication. As we know that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, it is important to discuss the critical factors associated with every step. The researcher has refined the steps to be targeted specifically for a subject team or any other informal work team within the university.

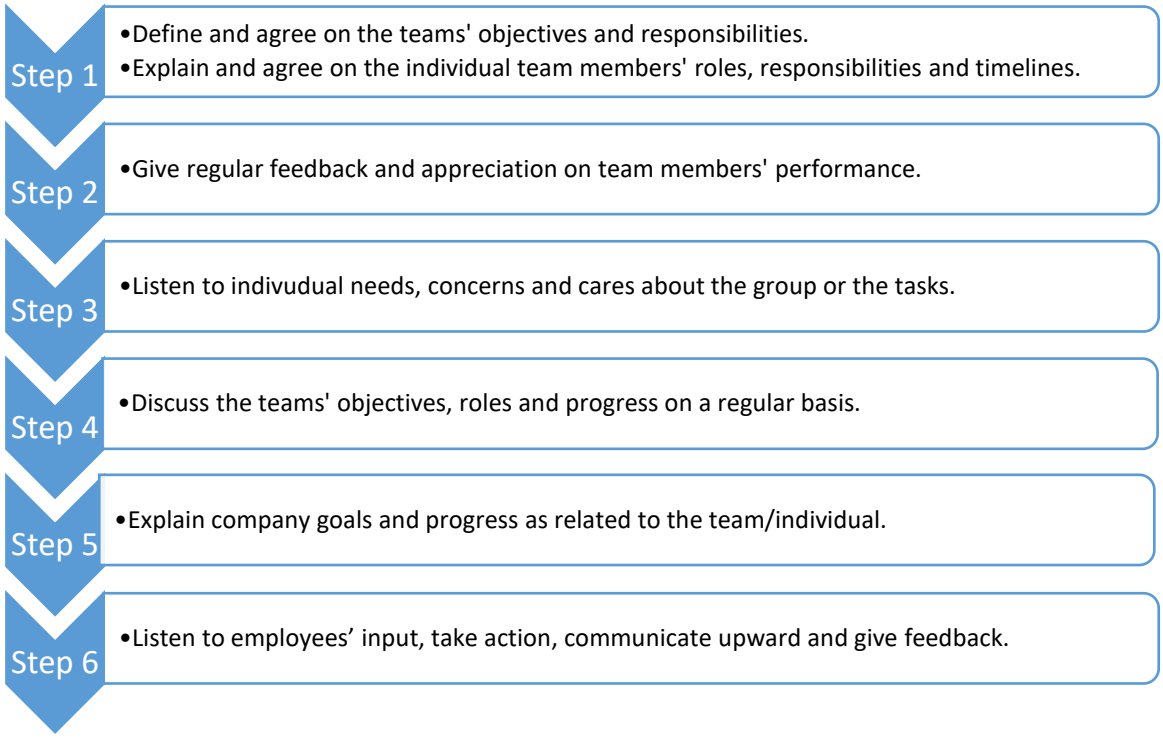

Figure 3: Communication steps for successful communication within a self-managed team. Adapted by the researcher, from van der Merwe (1998)

One of the biggest problems is that there is no training provided to subject heads. Subject heads are often a subject head for many different subjects, which increases responsibility and workload. Very often, a subject head does not understand the role that he must play and the responsibilities that are associated with the role. This is also true in the case where a project team is put together. Leadership is assumed, but often a person is not equipped or ready to deal with such a role. We can even take this a little bit higher to the

role of section head. Often a section head will be appointed for a specific programme to assist the HOD in the programme. No formal training is provided. Therefore, a clear understanding of step 1- the roles and responsibilities should be discussed and agreed upon. This will empower the section head or subject head, or team leader to understand the type of leadership role that he should play. If team leaders are coached and developed to have a better understanding of how they should do it, will they be able to really improve on their own job performances and assist their team members?

Once everybody understands their responsibilities and roles, feedback (step 2) becomes an important need on all levels. Team members and team leaders need to have regular conversations about performance. A leader who cannot give effective feedback to direct subordinates, (team members) will struggle to improve their performance; or to keep them motivated. It will not be enough just to increase feedback to team members in general, the team leader will also have to follow up and make sure that they understand what and how they should change and improve their performance. It is expected of a leader to coach, guide and grow team members to not only meet the performance required; but to even surpass it, beyond what the person thought he had been capable of.

Caring plays an important role in the lives of people. The corporate culture can seem cold and uncaring because they are often concerned only with the bottom line, survival and objectives and policies (Houghton, Pearce, Charles, Manz, Courtright & Stewart, 2015, 314). A leader that listens to his team members' concerns and problems, about the job and about relationships with their peers, shows he cares. This is a form of communication behaviour and involves questioning and listening skills.

Answers to the question if a team leader asks for feedback on his own performance, have very diverse scores and not all respondents agreed that their team leader cares enough to ask about his own performance. This seems to be a development area for team leaders.

Step 4 and 5 relates to information sharing. Lee, Gilespie, Mann and Wearing, (2010, 485) in their study on knowledge sharing and team performance, confirmed that team knowledge sharing was a major predictor of team performance. They proposed that a team will be better at meeting objectives, achieving outcomes and attaining efficiency if the team members share knowledge. This sharing of knowledge should start with objectives and roles. This also links to step 1 where a team member's responsibilities are agreed upon. Here the objectives and desired outcomes should already be discussed. It is important not only to discuss the team objectives but the department, faculty and

university's strategic goals and objectives. If a team member cannot understand where and how he fits into the bigger department, faculty or university, what value he brings, and how the issues within the faculty or university impact on him and on his job; then he cannot conceivably be able to perform at his optimal potential. A team leader that does not fulfil this communication responsibility is doing his team members as well as the university a disservice.

Step 6 is a direct reflection on listening skills. Team leaders should focus on becoming communicating leaders. Brownell (1990, 145) discusses the HURIER Listening Model that comprises of six elements: hearing, understanding, interpreting, evaluating, remembering, and responding. She further suggests that listening skills can lead to better relationships in a business environment. It can lead to a measure of higher trustworthiness; higher support; higher commitment; higher interpersonal influence; lower stress levels; and more success in the work place.

Escalating problems to a higher level is important if it has a negative influence on the performance of the team. Some decisions do not fall within the scope of an individual or a team leader and such problems need to be solved at faculty level or by the HOD or the Dean. It is however, also the responsibility of a team leader to escalate not only problems but also success stories. If a team member feels comfortable enough to willingly escalate problems, suggestions and ideas to improve performance, he also needs to be assured that it will be escalated to the right people. If this does not happen it will demotivate the team member totally. However, if it is successfully escalated and proper feedback is given, so that the team members can understand the impact that they have had; it will motivate them to perform at a higher level.

These steps, as prescribed in the model, and adapted for the HE environment and more specifically for self-managed teams, makes a good basis for a training program. A training programme should be developed that can sensitise the leaders as well as team members to the steps that should be included in the model. The model as it stands is only a guideline for the process of communication within teams, and a gateway to the building of good relationships within teams. It is not so much a comprehensive communication model.

In the next section, we are going to allude to the importance of internal communication in relationship building and discussing the research question and objectives.

4.2.1 Answering the research question – striving towards better internal communication in relationship building

James E. Grunig, a well-known scholar in public relations and communication, has published various articles on the topic of internal communication, he declared in 1992, after a comprehensive literature search and evaluation, that….. "In spite of all of this research, however, we emerge from this section with little theoretical understanding of how internal communication makes organizations more effective". (Grunig 1992, 575). Despite this lament by Grunig, there is enough evidence of communication, and more-over internal communication to convince us of the invaluable effect that the correct communication can have on a company, its employees as well as its overall wellbeing (Men 2014, 12; Kim & Rhee 2011; Brewer 2010, 331). In fact, Men and Bowen (2017, 12) stated that internal communication is the art and science of "managing interdependence and building mutually beneficial relationships between the organization and its employees".

This project aimed to answer the research question: How can communication, between staff members on different campuses be improved to enhance the co-operation and output of quality teaching and learning?

The first step was to determine how staff members felt about the internal communication. This was determined using a model developed for Telkom. The model explained six steps that need to be followed to ensure that staff members are informed, cared about and listened to. The setting that the research took was that of subject teams and communication within those teams. The research focussed also on the role of the team leader to ensure that the communication took place, as it is ultimately part of the team leader's (subject head's) responsibility to keep all the members in his team informed of changes, decisions and procedures.

This research question further led to the following objectives:

To determine the problems and challenges experienced by lecturers in self-managed teams concerning effective communication.
In general, the results indicated that most of the staff were satisfied (there were no average scores lower than 3) with the way that communication took place and felt they were informed. However, there were always a few respondents that felt they were never, or seldom informed. For the sake of quality and consistence, it is vital that all staff members should be informed and kept up to date. All staff members should be treated

equally and the internal communication channels should be open and accessible at all times.

To examine the identified communication models that might be of value to use as a guide for developing a new communication model.

The researcher looked into two communication models that were developed within a South African concept. The first for a multi-campus University. However she felt that the model was too urbane and more focussed on corporate internal communication than communication at the lower levels of the organisation where informal conversations often takes place. The second model was developed for Telkom, a telecommunication company. The researcher decided to use this model for the survey as the model was easy to test and understand – it was also easy to apply the model to the level of supervision (leadership) and communication that was surveyed. The model was further used to develop a new model for the internal communication in the Faculty of Management Sciences self-managed teams on multi-campuses of TUT.

To advise the faculty on a way forward that can lead to more effective and efficient communication.

The way forward is discussed in the following session under recommendations.

4.3 Developing a new model

Any good communication model always includes senders and receivers, coding and decoding and the communication channel, verbal or non-verbal.

In understanding the basic model of communication, a two-way communication should always include some feedback. Only when we have feedback, do we know that communication actually took place. It is not a unilateral activity. Understanding this, many scholars and researchers have debated the importance of activities such as listening and monitoring, as a function of communication. Kim and Rhee (2011, 262) report that strategic information within an organisation can benefit from their employees' communication actions by ensuring positive relationships are in place. Informal and unusual networks of communication can enhance the flow of strategic communication. Kim & Rhee (2011, 262) further state that the intentional quest for information, forwarding and distribution of information, by employees, can lead to organisational effectiveness.

A model should however also include motivation, interpersonal relationships and feedback. We also need to realise we do not live in isolation; therefore the influence of the macro environment should also be taken into account. A good example will be the influence that the international Covid-19 pandemic had on the way we communicate.

The functional model of communication, the four-ear model of Schulz von Thun, (Ernst & Huschens, 2019,780) explains the essential functions that communication fulfils and the four levels upon which communication always takes place.

The levels or channels are:

1. Factual level - this is a purely verbal level or a written text
2. Self-revelation level – the sender reveals something of his personality
3. Relationship level – depends on the relationship between sender and receiver
4. Appeal level – what response is expected

In both internal and external corporate communications, this model can make a significant impact to making sure that information is not just seen as numbers, data or facts; communication also needs to be more group-specific, personal and emotional. This increases motivation, credibility, openness and loyalty.

Taking all of the above into consideration, the researcher suggests a model that combines the six steps in the Telkom model with reference to the influence that environment will play, as well as, the role that personal aspects, within the communication process, will attribute.

As with every good situation, we need to take into account some negative aspects that need to be considered and mitigated as far as possible. The first being noise (any outside disturbance) and the second, informal communication lines (the grape-vine), that can be positive or negative.

Grunig added on to his initial description of symmetrical communication by insisting that internal symmetrical communication should be founded on empowering employees by allowing participation in decision-making (Grunig & Grunig 2011). The idea is that such a communication system would raise a participative culture and would encourage managers and employees to take part in discussions where each party can voice their opinion and the other party listen and consider all suggestions. The importance is a mutual understanding of individual roles (Grunig & Grunig 2011).

This leads to an appreciation of the so-called ‘grapevine’ inside an organisation and focus on the dissemination of information along the informal communication channels. This type of information can also often lead to misinterpretation and negative spreading of rumours, if no formal timeous communication takes place on issues of importance.

The proposed model takes into account all the elements alluded to above.

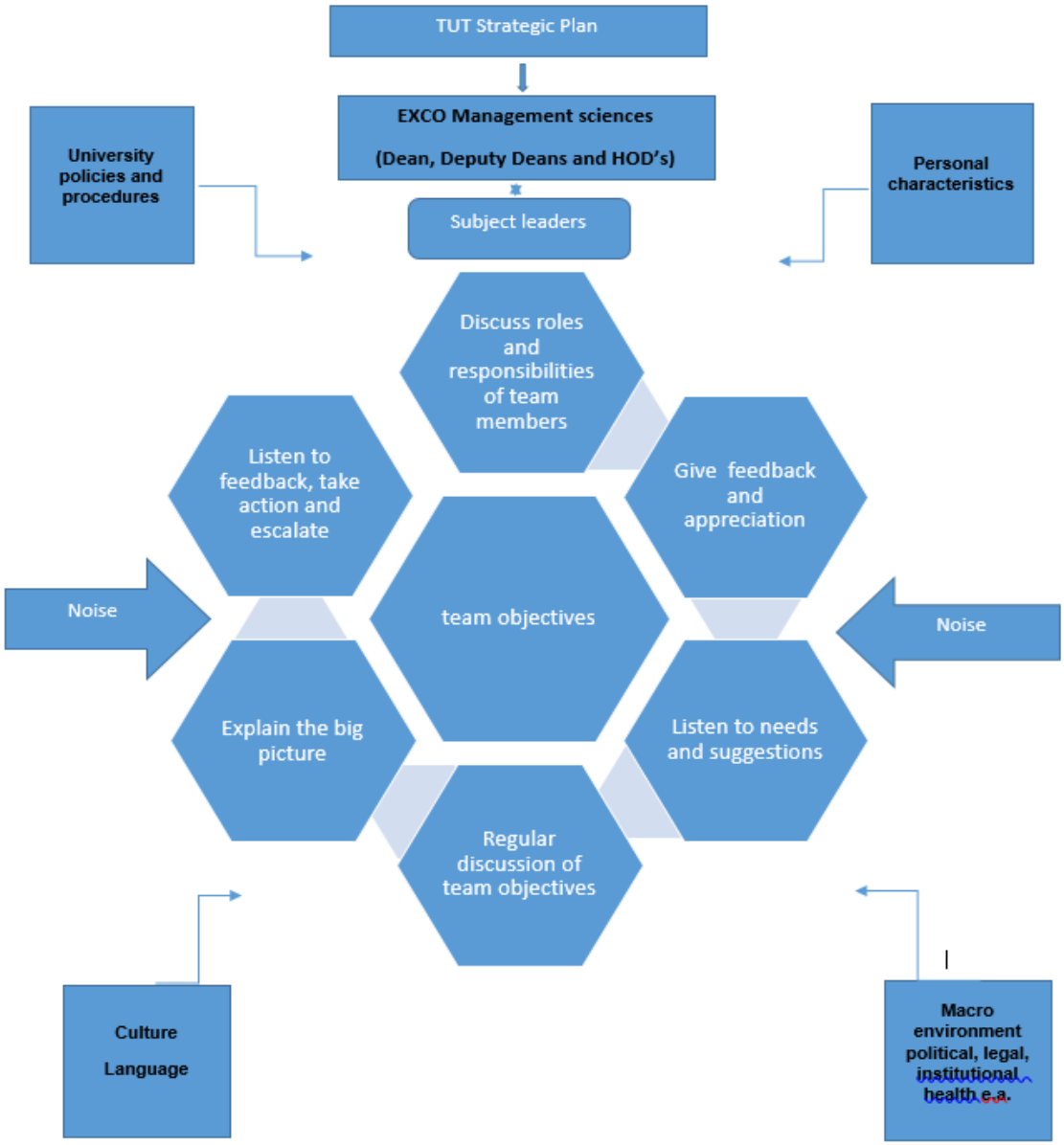

Figure 4: Proposed new Internal Communication model for TUT Faculty of Management Sciences (adapted from the Telkom model by the Researcher)

In a university setting, the strategic plan of the University, is the master plan that needs to be followed and strived towards. This strategic plan will be cascaded down to faculty level, then department level. Communication within a subject team and to subject leaders or subject heads, will come through the Dean and the faculty Exco to the HOD. The HOD will communicate to the departments.

As can be seen in figure 4, the six elements of the original Telkom model pivots around the team objectives, and will guide the conversations within the subject team.

Added to the model, is the additional environmental influences that have an effect on the process. This includes the policies and procedures within the university.

Personal characteristics of the team members will have an influence on how members interact, listen and respond. This also goes hand in hand with the culture and language. In South Africa there are 11 official languages and we also need to be cultural sensitive. If these aspects are not considered, it can lead to misunderstandings and conflict within the teams.

Lastly, the macro environment has a great influence on the way we work. This is also an aspect where we have the least (or none) influence over. The Covid-19 pandemic is an example of an occurrence in this environment that influenced us. Technology is a factor that came to the fore during 2020 and TUT had to adapt to it very quickly. Online teaching and online meetings became the norm. Student unrest and the unstable political environment is another problem that often affects the academic calendar. The political environment plays a huge role in the way we plan, re-plan and often have to completely change our plans.

All around us, noise, influences the way we relate and conduct ourselves every day. The noise refers to any other aspects that can influence individuals or the process of communication in general.

5 Recommendations, conclusions and reflection

In this final chapter of the thesis, recommendations on the findings are discussed. The researcher concludes the thesis with the further vision of the development plan. A reflection on the learning and experience of the researcher in this study will make up the final section.

In this section, we are first going to look at recommendations for the future. Then we will conclude our findings and lastly, the researcher wrote a short reflection on the process and the learning that took place.

5.1 Recommendations:

The comfortable way and the way we are used to doing things is not always the best way. Therefore, new and innovative techniques, means and methods need to be investigated.

The researcher started this development project with the aim to improve on internal communication. This problem escalated especially because of the distance between the different campuses. In a way, Covid-19 has levelled the playing field for all, previously face-to-face meetings were held once per year and for the rest a quick update was given telephonically. Now subject teams meet more regularly via the MS Teams tool. There are no face-to-face meetings and all the lecturers are dependant on virtual platforms and alternative ways of communicating.

The researcher recommends training, implementation and measuring of performance of the subject heads. It is recommended that the faculty provide a short training programme for all subject heads at the beginning of each year. This training programme can be based on the model for internal communication. Furthermore, the subject head position needs to be added to the workload of the individual and enough weight needs to be allocated to the task. Thereafter the short survey can act as a measuring tool for assessing the effectiveness and performance of the individual subject heads.

Proper training on how to utilise the virtual and electronic tools for meetings and communication needs to take place. Exploring alternative tools and programmes can also assist. Researching all the tools available, one comes across the like of: Ryver, Zoom, U Share, MS Teams, Google Hangouts (google Meet), Slack, Click Up and Stormboard, to name but a few. There is even mention of augmented reality and the use of this in team meetings. Some of these tools are already utilised with MS Teams and WhatsApp being

the most used. However, the WhatsApp groups are overused and an alternative should be pursued.

One should never underestimate the value of good personal relationships within the subject teams. Departments should host informal get-togethers, even if it is just for coffee, a light lunch, or even motivational talks. Team members can get to know each other on a more personal level and that could enhance the collaboration between staff members. However, due to the distance between the different campuses, as well as Covid-19 restrictions, this might not be an occasion that can take place more than once per year. Team meetings online, for the whole department, irrespective of campus, is worth considering.

This study will not pay homage to 2020 and 2021 if we do not refer to, and embrace our new way of communication: online meetings in a virtual world.

A new reality has established itself in our world: the post-Covid reality. Online meetings and online presence is the new normal. A computer is our channel and medium of communication. The human care, touch and feel is no more. It is important to be sensitive to employees' discomfort with the new way of conducting business. Our communications have changed. According to Newman and Ford (2021, 1-11), there are five ways in which we need to prepare for this new online way of conducting our business.

The first is that we need to explain this new reality to all the employees. Lay all fears and anxieties to rest. When online meetings are held, the leader needs to ask: "how is everyone doing, is there something I can help you with?" Give time for all to switch on their cameras and greet each other.

Secondly, re-establish the corporate culture, and make sure the perception of leader credibility is recognised. The team needs to re-commit to the organisation's culture. The leader needs to make sure that trust is established. Be there for your team members and offer support, be it technical support or support of a more personal nature. Celebrate milestones virtually. People still want to feel valued and included.

The third way is to upgrade the leaders' communication practices and techniques. Modify the way communication takes place. The old ways of face-to-face communication does not work in a virtual world. Communicate frequently and in a timeous manner. Follow up to make sure that messages were understood clearly.

Employing a shared leadership approach is the fourth step. Identify potential leadership skills in each of the team members and encourage collaborations and information sharing to allow members to play to their strengths within the group. Share successful undertakings and celebrate achievements, give feedback and coach team members who might need help.

Step five entails monitoring the development and ensuring that team members are aligned with the cultural values of the organisation and dedicated to the vision and mission.

All-embracing the above, it is important to define and enforce online, virtual platform communication norms and etiquette.

5.2 Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to identify how communication, between staff members on different campuses can be improved to enhance the co-operation and output of quality teaching and learning, within the Faculty of Management Sciences.

The following conclusions are made. Team leaders will improve the performance of their teams if the team members really understand how they should do their jobs, and exactly how they need to improve their performance. This requires greater emphasis on individual coaching, guiding and development and places an emphasis on task-related communication.

Team leaders scored low on their preparedness to ask for, and listen to, their employees feedback on their own performance as team leader. The conclusion drawn from this is that, despite the fact that they realise and even encourage open two-way communication between them and team members; they are still not 100% committed to uncovering their own weaknesses to team members.

There is consensus for the notion that it would save time and be more effective to communicate with a team as a whole. However, while there is a definite need and role for this, the team leader that actually makes the effort to spend more time communicating with individual team members, will reap the value of this action many times over.

Furthermore, the researcher proposed a model that can be used for future training purposes of team leaders within the faculty. This model followed the six steps in the Telkom model but also took into account the external factors, internal factors and corporate factors that will have an influence on the communication process.

Due to the recent COVID 19 pandemic, communication inevitably progressed to new modes of communication. More companies are transitioning to virtual teams, facilitating communication completely through video conference technologies. This type of communication has distinct characteristics. Virtual teams are not bound by distance or time zones. It relies purely on communication technologies that bring their own unique challenges that a team leader needs to mitigate.

In the study it was clear that most of the respondents had a distinct understanding of what their responsibilities were. It is the responsibility of a team leader to ensure each team member understands accurately what is expected from him and how his contributions fit into the team's overall goals.

When all is said and done, the researcher envisions the way forward as starting with the writing of a training manual and conducting a training workshop for the subject teams, subject heads, in the beginning of the year. The measuring of performance through a short survey should take place at least twice per year to identify problems and good practices. Coaching should be done where needed.

5.3 Reflection

I have gained so many competencies during my life as an academic as well as a manager. However, I have never participated in any programme on teaching, teaching methodologies and the management of teaching. This programme, in general, taught me so many new and innovative ways to view and interact with teaching and the management of the teaching programme. A fresh perspective resulted that gave me a fresh pair of eyes in how I regard the teaching environment around me.

The development part of the programme and in particular the thesis part, has provided opportunities to think outside the box and to engage with projects that I never would have tackled before. It seems that all of us were drawn to issues that really had an influence on our own working environment and we saw the potential to improve upon them.

The project that I chose is important for me personally because of the fact that we are sitting at a distant campus. Over the years I have heard so many stories and complaints about how the subject teams are managed and the lack of communication is always

something that jumps out. Even today I had to listen to complaints of “Pretoria does it differently…”.

It was important for me to develop a model as well as a training programme on the role that subject teams should play and more specifically the subject leader. Unfortunately, with Covid that bowled us out for a few months, the whole process was delayed. It took me one whole year to get ethical clearance for the project. The lecturers were seen as vulnerable and therefore I had to jump through hoops to make it happen. Added to that, I had to change the focus to a total online process of obtaining information. Lecturers felt overwhelmed with the new online approaches and as such were not willing to take on any additional responsibilities.

By the time I got the ethical clearance, there was just not enough time to do the study, develop a new model and test it, and then develop a training programme and test it again.

This project turned out to be just what it says - a project – there is still work to be done. I would love to develop a training programme for these self–managed teams and see if that will make the team members as well as the team leaders and ultimately the HOD’s work easier.

I will not go into my personal situation; however, I just want to say that the past year has been the most difficult time of my life. It was difficult to get my focus back, but I am proud that I managed to finish the project.

It has not been easy- but then – nothing that really matters it ever easy…….

Thank you for the opportunity to learn and grow.

*“All of us might wish at times that we lived in a more tranquil world, but we don't. And if our times are difficult and perplexing, so are they challenging and filled with opportunity.” – **Robert Kennedy***

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Attachments

Appendix A Questionnaire

COMMUNICATION EVALUATION OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION IN SELF-MANAGED SUBJECT TEAMS

Please indicate your agreement/disagreement with the following statements, rating 1-5 where1= never 5=regularly.

1	My team leader fully informs me, of my responsibilities within the subjectteam.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I understand the procedures I need to follow in doing my job within thesubject team	1	2	3	4	5
3	My team members are willing to consider suggestions that I make	1	2	3	4	5
4	My team members and team leader is appreciative if I do my job well andeffectively	1	2	3	4	5
5	I know exactly what I need to do to do my job better	1	2	3	4	5
6	I am told by my team leader about the value that I bring to my group	1	2	3	4	5
7	My group members are willing to listen to my concerns	1	2	3	4	5
8	My team leader or and HOD/Section Head is willing to listen objectively toproblems regarding relationships within the group	1	2	3	4	5
9	My team leader asks me for feedback regarding his/her performance asteam leader	1	2	3	4	5
10	My team leader discusses the team's goals and targets with the team	1	2	3	4	5
11	My team leader discusses the role that the team plays within thedepartment with us.	1	2	3	4	5
12	My team leader listens to team member's questions and suggestionsregarding the goals/progress of the team	1	2	3	4	5
13	My team leader relates our work to the strategic plan of the department/faculty	1	2	3	4	5
14	The team leader escalates problems within the team to the section head/HOD	1	2	3	4	5
15	The team leader communicates our team's suggestions, to improve ourefficiency, to the HOD and ask for support or assistance.	1	2	3	4	5
16	My team leader gives feedback to our team on the results of our input.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B Permission from the Dean

Tshwane University of Technology

Office of the Dean
Faculty Management Sciences

15 July 2020

To whom it may concern:

Permission to conduct research within the faculty of Management Sciences.

I hereby give permission to Dr Annemarie Breytenbach to conduct research in the department of Marketing Management. She is currently enrolled for the Masters programme in Educational Management through the University of Haaga Helia.

The title of her research is:
"Internal Communication within a multi-campus University: Creating a sense of Community in the Faculty of Management Sciences".

The methodology will include the electronic distribution of questionnaires to members of subjects' teams within department.

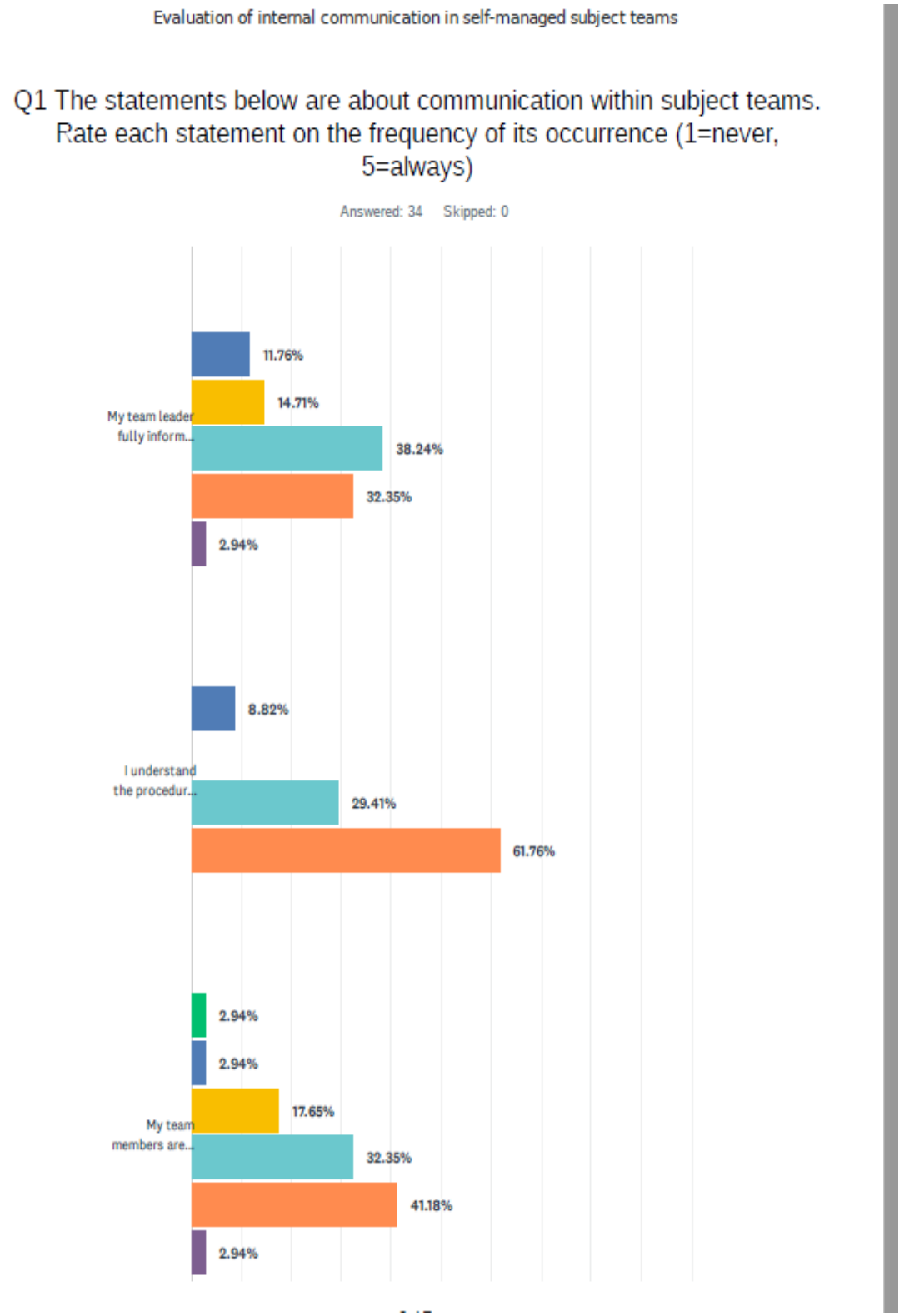
I wish her success in her studies.

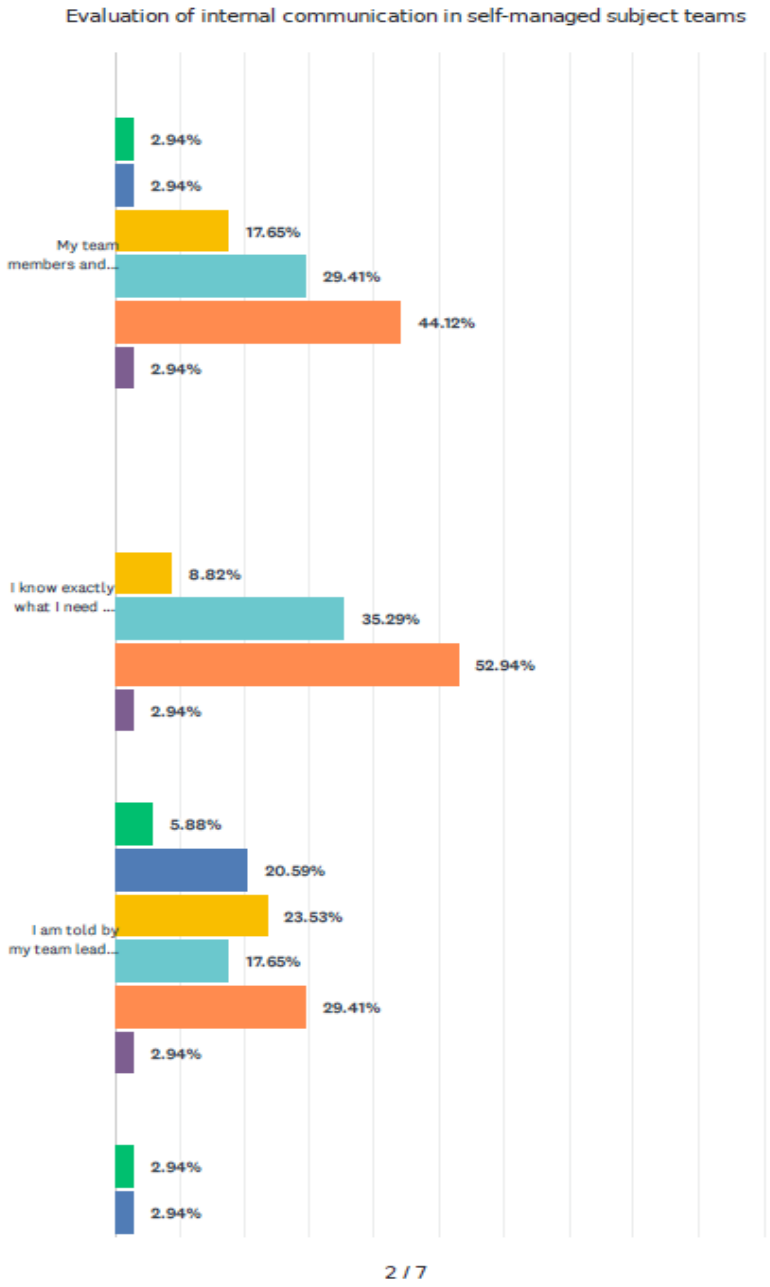
Kind regards

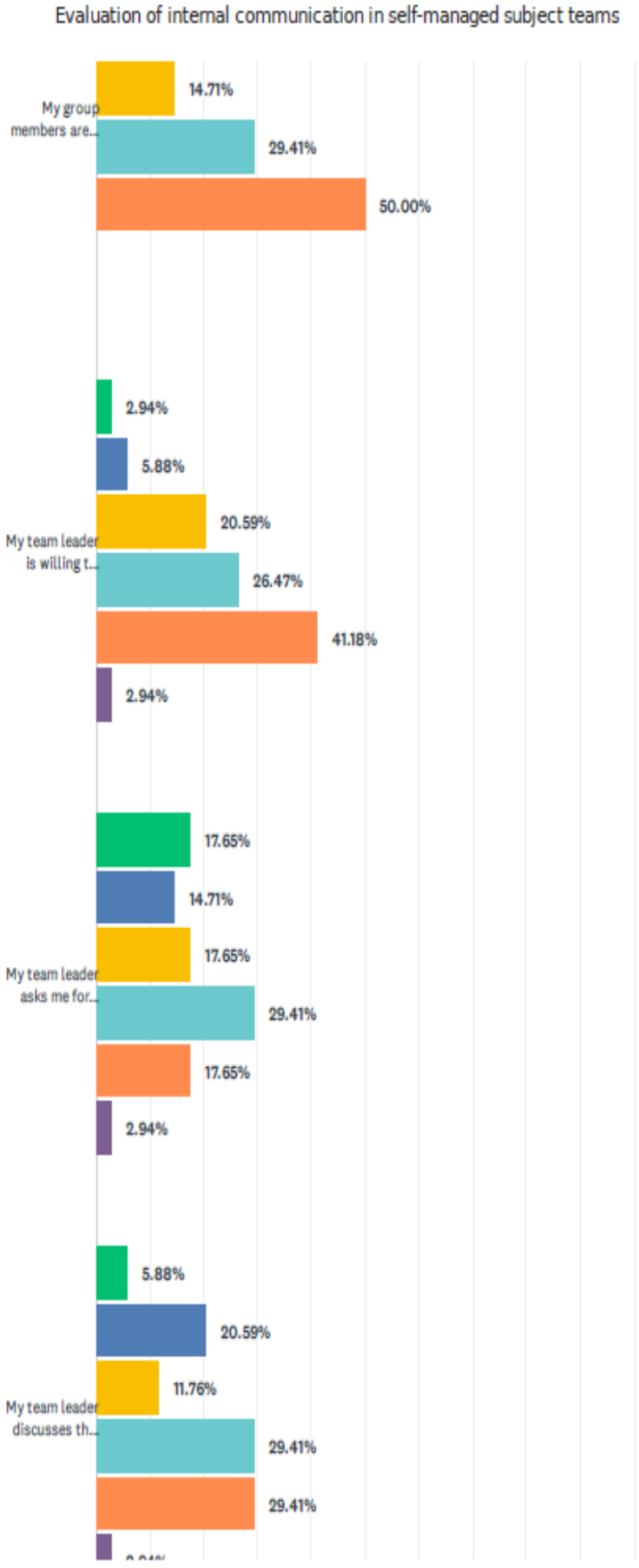
DR AE NESAMVUNI
EXECUTIVE DEAN: FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

We empower people

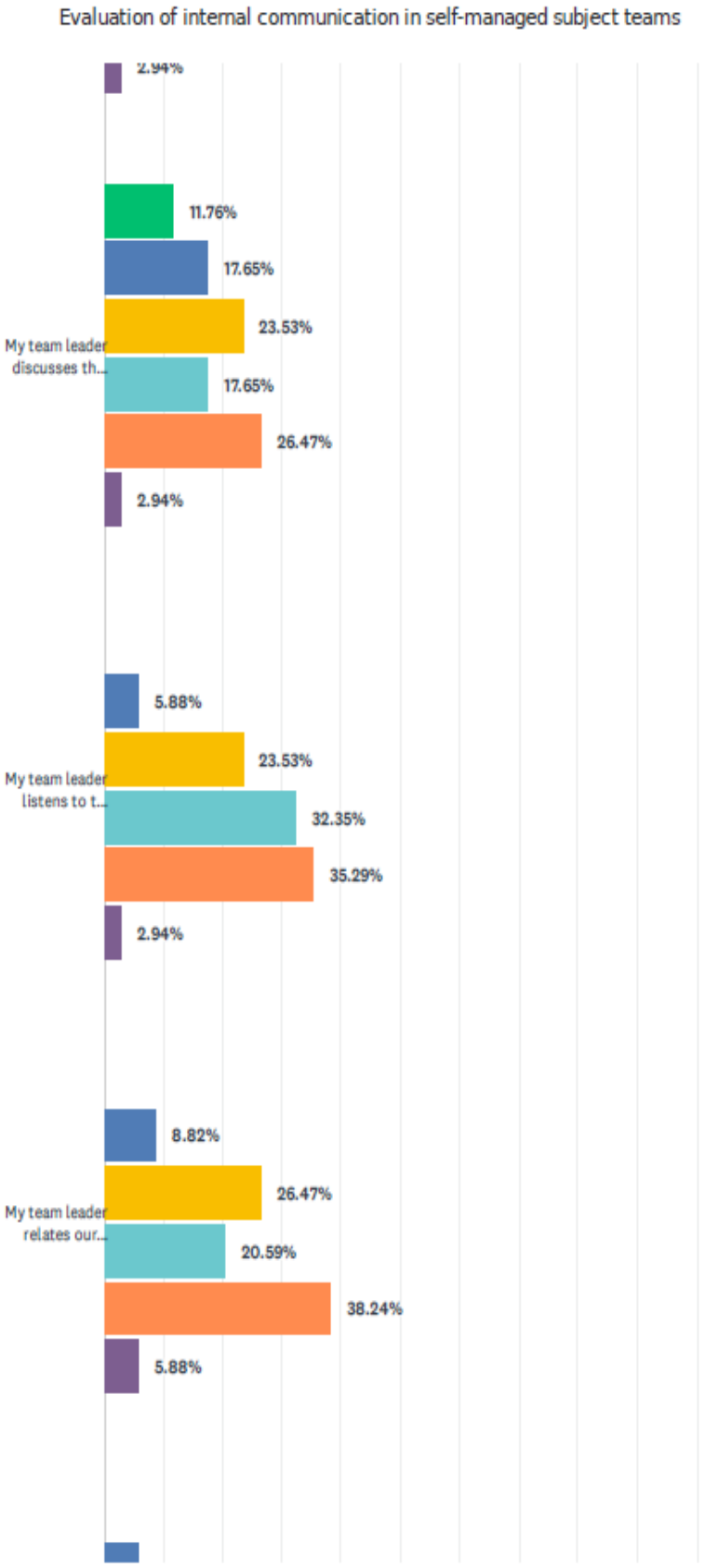
Appendix C Graphic Results



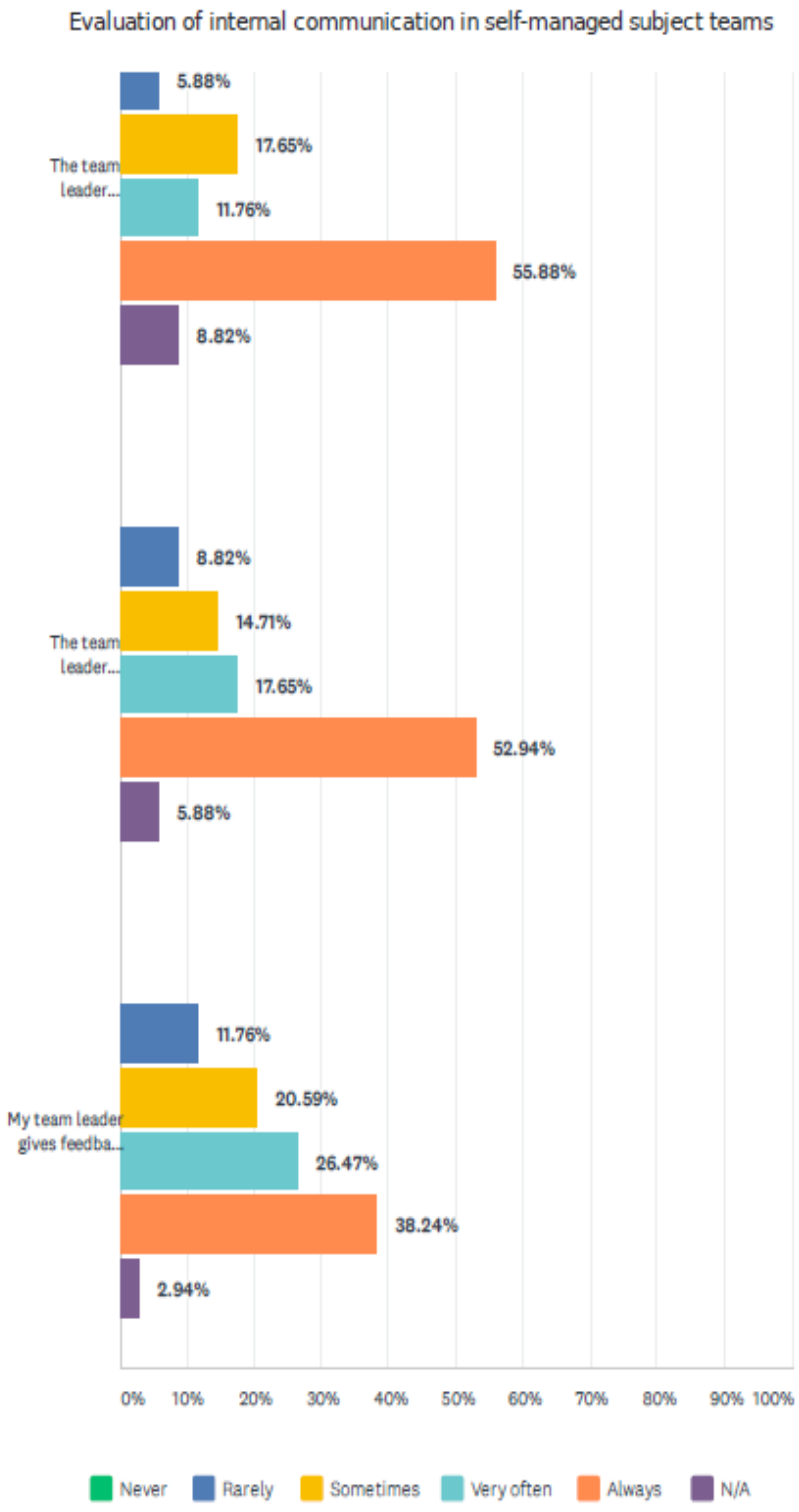

Evaluation of internal communication in self-managed subject teams
2.94%
2.94%
17.65%
My team members and...
29.41%
44.12%
2.94%
8.82%
I know exactly what I need ...
35.29%
52.94%
2.94%
5.88%
20.59%
23.53%
I am told by my team lead...
17.65%
29.41%
2.94%
2.94%
2.94%
2 / 7


Evaluation of internal communication in self-managed subject teams
My group members are...
14.71%
29.41%
50.00%
My team leader is willing t...
2.94%
5.88%
20.59%
26.47%
41.18%
2.94%
My team leader asks me for...
17.65%
14.71%
17.65%
29.41%
17.65%
2.94%
My team leader discusses th...
5.88%
20.59%
11.76%
29.41%
29.41%

3 / 7


Evaluation of internal communication in self-managed subject teams
2.94%
11.76%
17.65%
23.53%
My team leader discusses th...
17.65%
26.47%
2.94%
5.88%
23.53%
My team leader listens to t...
32.35%
35.29%
2.94%
8.82%
26.47%
My team leader relates our...
20.59%
38.24%
5.88%

4 / 7


Evaluation of internal communication in self-managed subject teams
The team leader...
5.88%
17.65%
11.76%
55.88%
8.82%
The team leader...
8.82%
14.71%
17.65%
52.94%
5.88%
My team leader gives feedba...
11.76%
20.59%
26.47%
38.24%
2.94%
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%
Never
Rarely
Sometimes
Very often
Always
N/A

Evaluation of internal communication in self-managed subject teams

BASIC STATISTICS	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	MEDIAN	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
My team leader fully informs me of my responsibilities within the subject team.	2.00	5.00	4.00	3.94	0.98
I understand the procedures I need to follow in doing my job within the subject team.	2.00	5.00	5.00	4.44	0.88
My team members are willing to consider suggestions that I make.	1.00	5.00	4.00	4.09	1.00
My team members and team leader are appreciative if I do my job well and effectively.	1.00	5.00	4.00	4.12	1.01
I know exactly what I need to do to perform my job better.	3.00	5.00	5.00	4.45	0.66
I am told by my team leader about the value that I bring to my group.	1.00	5.00	3.00	3.45	1.28
My group members are willing to listen to my concerns.	1.00	5.00	4.50	4.21	0.99
My team leader is willing to listen objectively to problems regarding relationships within the group.	1.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	1.07
My team leader asks me for feedback regarding his/her performance as team leader.	1.00	5.00	3.00	3.15	1.37
My team leader discusses the team's goals and targets with the team.	1.00	5.00	4.00	3.58	1.28
My team leader discusses the role that the team plays within the department with us.	1.00	5.00	3.00	3.30	1.36
My team leader listens to team members' questions and suggestions regarding the goals/progress of the team.	2.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	0.92
My team leader relates our work to the strategic plan of the department/faculty.	2.00	5.00	4.00	3.94	1.03
The team leader escalates problems within the team to the section head/HOD.	2.00	5.00	5.00	4.29	0.99
The team leader communicates our team's suggestions to improve our efficiency to the HOD and asks for support or assistance.	2.00	5.00	5.00	4.22	1.02
My team leader gives feedback to our team on the results of our input.	2.00	5.00	4.00	3.94	1.04