

**ASSESSING THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION IN PROJECT
EXECUTION BY METROPOLITAN, MUNICIPAL AND DISTRICT
ASSEMBLIES: A CASE STUDY AT LA DADEKOTOPON MUNICIPAL
ASSEMBLY**

By

**Richard Ben Debrah
(BSc. Construction Management)**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis.

RICHARD BEN DEBRAH
(Student PG 5323618) Signature Date

Certified by:

DR. GODWIN K. K ACQUAH
Supervisor Signature Date

Certified by:

PROF. BERNARD BAIDEN
Name of Head of Department Signature Date

ABSTRACT

Today's world of business has been reduced to a global community where businesses can interact and communicate with others instantaneously mainly because of technological advancements, innovations and tenacity of human beings. This study was conducted to investigate and assess the importance of communication in project execution at La Dadekotopon Municipal Assembly (LaDMA). The main aim of the study was to assess project communication management in project execution at LaDMA. This study adopted the case study method as the research design. To operationalize the study's objectives, the study used the purposive sampling technique to collect data from three key and relevant representatives of LaDMA. In relation to the first objective, it was established that LaDMA uses different types of communication channels during projects and these are formal site meetings, town hall meetings, instruction books at site and issuing of letters. It was however found that the LaDMA does not employ social media tools such as WhatsApp, twitter, Facebook and Instagram to effectively reach their different constituents. In relation to the second objective, it was found from all the three interviewees that LaDMA's project communication management positively affects the assembly's project deliveries. In relation to the third objective, it was found that the main challenges of project communication management at LaDMA are delays in getting meetings organized, stakeholders not receiving feedback, delays and inconsistencies during project execution and it is also expensive to bring stakeholders together in terms of the time and other resources. It was found that these challenges and bottlenecks negatively affect project deliveries at LaDMA. Based on the findings of this study, the study recommended that LaDMA should establish a system of regular communication, to send and provide up to date and prompt information to project teams and other stakeholders during project execution. This study also recommends that LaDMA should resort effective use of information technology such as Social media channels including Facebook, Whatsapp among others.

Finally LaDMA should employ the use of all other tools in communication during project execution in other to reach out to stakeholders and ensure that projects are well executed with right specification and value for money.

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ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|---|
| AMA | Accra Metropolitan Assembly |
| DACF | District Assembly Common Fund |
| IGF | Internally Generated Fund |
| LADMA | La Dade Kotopon Municipal Assembly |
| LEKMA | Ledzokuku Municipal Assembly |
| MMDAS | Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assembly |
| MPCU | Municipal Planning Coordinating Unit |

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the Almighty God and my beautiful family.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Today's world of business has been reduced to a global community where businesses can interact and communicate with others instantaneously mainly because of technological advancements, innovations and tenacity of human beings (Kotler and Keller 2012). Again, businesses and organizations are constantly evolving and changing the way they are organized. Firms and project organizations alike need to therefore have leaders that understand these changes and are able to adjust seamlessly (Taleb 2017). One key area that needs to be abreast with changes in the global business environment is the field of project management (Gido and Clements, 2014).

Again, today's projects are an assemblage of different team members drawn from different nationalities with different cultures, values, beliefs, idiosyncrasies and nuances (Culo and Skendrovic, 2010). According to Milicevic, et. al., (2014), it therefore becomes critical that project leaders selected to lead project have the requisite leadership and communication skills, knowledge and experience. According to Zulch (2014), communication is the single most important factor that determines the success or otherwise of project managers. Communication is the transmission of meaning from one person to another or many people, whether verbally or non-verbally (Barret 2006).

Also, project leaders today need to be equipped with skills to enable them manage diversity, leverage on the strength of different team members to achieve project management success (Streich and Brennholt, 2015). However, when project leaders fail to communicate effectively with their team members and stakeholders, it often results in project management failures (Ssenyange 2017). This is largely because poor communication raise issues of ambiguities, confusion regarding responsibilities, scope

and objectives, poor defined tasks and critical processes, resentments, low motivation and ultimately, affecting project outcomes (Steyn 2012; Rajkumar 2010).

Considering that project management entails selling project ideas, reselling these ideas, explaining project scope and methodologies to different stakeholders, bargaining with suppliers and service providers, negotiating and resolving disputes, conflicts, project managers need to develop and sharpen their communication management skills (Kiseilnicki 2011). Communication is highly indispensable for any organization, team, association and group. For any group of people, there are leaders and there are followers (Muller and Turner 2010). This group usually come together with the intention of realizing agreed goals and objectives. Leaders of such groups, teams and organizations are expected to exhibit and in fact implement certain key leadership traits of which communication plays a leading role (Steyn, 2012).

As pointed out by Emmit and Gorse, 2007 and Heldman (2011), project leaders communicate with several methods and tools such as language, character, attitude, behavior and personality. It therefore behooves project leaders to determine which communication method or tool ought to be used in each given moment and situation (Butt et. al., 2016). Thus, project leaders need to know how to enhance the flow of information in all directions – such as horizontal, diagonal, lateral, downward or upward (Kernbach 2015; Winch 2012). When effectively executed, the flow of information will result in getting feedback that can be used to further enhance the communication process and thereby leading to the realization of project objectives and targets (Mnkandla 2013; Talukhaba 2011).

Based on the above, it can be surmised that project communication are indispensable to effective project execution and delivery. It is against the foregoing that this study is being executed with the intention of assessing the effect of project communication management on project execution and delivery at LaDMA.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

It has been found that Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in spite of their strategic role in bringing socio-economic development to their people as a result of the decentralization, continue to suffer from the challenge of funds transfer and therefore resulting in project delays (Akorlie, 2015). MMDAs partly rely on disbursement (District Assemblies' Common Fund – DACF) from the consolidated funds to finance their developmental projects. Unfortunately, transfers to MMDAs has not been properly managed over the years and this has resulted in MMDAs not being able to implement their programmes. SEND-Ghana found that about 45.7% of 416 projects commenced by district assemblies between 2010 and 2013 were not completed within schedule and the main cause of these delays is due to poor communication management between project managers and stakeholders in DACF (Akorlie 2015). In fact, SEND-Ghana has established that as high as 43.1% of projects of MMDAs were delayed because of DACF transfer delays (Akorlie 2015). It has further been found that MMDAs projects are not delivered to expectation, tend to be costly and also delays as a result of human-created bottlenecks such as poor communication management and bureaucracy (Kissi, et. Al., 2018).

Again, authors such as Aje et al. (2009) and Hassanien and Afify (2007) have all strongly established in their studies that project in developing countries tend to be poorly executed and delivered largely due to poor communication management. The

reason for this disparity stems from the refusal of developing countries to readily accept new learnings and changes in the areas of project communication management. Developing economies tend to be stuck with old methods of project communication management and tend to be slow in adopting current best practices with respect to project management. According to Agyakwa-Baah (2009) and Hassanien and Afify (2007), the culture of resisting change has often been the bane of project management success because project organizations are simply not conversant with modern techniques of project communication management.

Even though LaDMA is made up of affluent neighbourhoods, the municipal assembly's projects still delay and not delivered to expectation and within budget with some travelling beyond three to five years of the designated time schedules. These delivery and execution issues has therefore caused certain localities with the municipal assembly to be deprived of social amenities. Again, cost overruns, poor quality and delays in projects means that LaDMA is unable to meet the socio-economic development of its people and therefore serving as issues of grave concern to the leaders in those communities.

Based on the foregoing, the key questions that require answers and investigations include: What is the true effect of communication on project management success? What are the main project communication skills and tools that project managers must have and use? What are the main challenges that project managers at LaDMA encounter during projects? What are the strategies and tactics that can be employed by project leaders to facilitate project management success? What are the useful lessons that can be learned from this study that other MMDAs can adopt? It is therefore in

obtaining answers to these nagging issues and questions that instigated the execution of this study.

1.3 RESEARCH AIMS

The main aim of the study was to assess project communication management in project execution at La Dadekotopon Municipal Assembly (LaDMA)

1.4 OBJECTIVES

This study sought to;

1. Identify the current project communication management practices being used at LaDMA
2. Identify the channels of project communication being used by the Project Professionals in LaDMA
3. Identify the main challenges to project communication management on project execution at LaDMA
4. Find solution to the challenges identified

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Sequel to the above research objectives, the following research questions was posed:

1. What are the project communication management practices currently used at LaDMA?
2. What are the channels of project communication being used by the project professionals in LaDMA?
3. What are the main challenges to project communication management on project delivery at LaDMA?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study was being executed because it was the hope of the researcher that the outcome of the study will in particular help formulate project communication management strategies that will curb the occurrence of project delays and shoddy works in the District Assemblies in Ghana. The findings of this study in particular brought to the fore the most significant effects of project communication management practices at the District Assemblies and by so doing, facilitating the development of effective strategies and remedies. In effect, the outcome of this study enabled the La Dadekotopon Municipal Assembly in particular and other Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies in general appreciate the factors that influence project communication management practices on project execution and delivery. In the same vein, the findings of the study added to the growing literature on project management especially in the public sector. It was similarly served as a source of reference to researchers, academicians, institutions and students who sought to conduct related studies in the future.

1.7 METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the case study method as the research design and the reason is that the case study will enable the study conduct in-depth analysis and investigation on the study's subject matter. According to Yin (2003), the case study approach ensures that studies are able to observe and analyse into detail the chosen object of investigation. Considering that no districts are the same in terms of certain administrative, cultural and socio-economic dynamics, the case study enabled the study to assess the influence of project communication management on effective project execution and delivery at LaDMA. It must however be mentioned quickly that using the case study as the main

research design precluded the generalization of the study to other MMDAs even though it greatly shed more light on the subject matter. This study targeted top officials of LaDMA directly involved with projects. This means that the Municipal Planning Officer, the Municipal Works Engineer and Head of Urban Roads were be roped into the study.

This study again employed the purposive sampling technique to ensure that only the right officials who possessed detailed knowledge on project management issues, strategies and tactics were contacted. The purposive sampling technique as pointed out by Saunders et al. (2009) allows studies to only focus on collecting data from people who are regarded as possessing information and data pertinent to the operationalization of the study's objectives. This study also collected data from key officials of LaDMA involved in project execution. To collect data from the respondents, the study developed a data collection instrument and this instrument will largely be made up of an interview guide.

However, to conduct the interview, the study first of all obtained an introductory letter from KNUST which introduced the researcher as well as explained the objectives of the study. Having obtained permission, the study identified the target population and conducted interview using the interview guide developed. The researcher gave the respondents a week notice that an interview was to be conducted on the study. Giving them a week notice is enough time for the respondents to meet the researcher on a face to face interview.

Having conducted the interview, the data was analysed qualitatively using the thematic analysis.

1.8 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study sought to assess the importance of project communication in project execution at LaDMA. The study was carried out in LaDMA since a lot of projects are being embarked upon as compared to the other Assemblies due to its strategic nature of location. Other projects interventions are also being carried at LaDMA and this afforded me the opportunity to assess how communication are done in terms of project execution.

The findings from this study are open to generalization unless differences can be identified in other Regions.

1.9 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The study was structured into chronological chapters with subheadings. It is divided into five independent but interrelated chapters, chapter One of the study includes background of study, problem statement, research questions and objective of study, methodology, scope of study and its significance. Chapter Two reviews all relevant literatures relating to the study as well as the researcher's views concerning the previous study. Chapter Three includes the methodology applied in collecting and analysing the data, Chapter Four presents results of the study as well as data analysed and interpretation the analysed data. Chapter Five includes a summary of the study, conclusion and recommendations based on the findings from the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the literature on the main constructs and concepts of the study such as project communication, the effects of project communication management on the effective delivery of projects and the main causes of project communication management. This chapter also presented the conceptual framework which serves as the theoretical underpinning of the study.

2.1 THE CONCEPT OF PROJECT COMMUNICATION

Communication as a term is said to have come into being when the Phoenicians created the alphabet about three thousand five-hundred (3,500) years (Fisk and Reynolds 2010; clearly 2008; Barrett 2006). Communication comes from the Latin word “communicare” which translates into “making common” and indeed, any form of communication needs to establish a common form of understanding and appreciation (Rajkumar 2010). Communication has been defined differently but the final analysis, the term is the process whereby meaning or information is transmitted from one individual to another or from several persons to many people be it through verbal or non-verbal methods (Barrett 2006).

According to Talukhaba et al. (2011), communication is a process that entails obtaining all relevant and useful information, assigning meaning to this information and effectively disseminating this information to entities and individuals deemed in need of this information. These definitions first of all suggest that communication is process and therefore implying that

communication can always be improved upon and that it never ends until the project is finally delivered successful or otherwise.

These definitions also suggest that the person communicating must make sense and that whatever is being communicated or shared must be relevant, needed, timely and accurate if the receiver is to react or respond in a fashion expected. Information on the other hand is data processed and presented in formats that makes them meaningful.

2.1.2 The Typical Communication Process

There are certain basic processes that communication must follow. According to Steyn (2008), in its most basic level, the communication process involves three main elements. Here, the message to be communicated is transmitted via the sender (typically has a reason and objective to communicate) who encodes the message through the channel of transmission by a verbal or non-verbal method to the receiver (Kliem 2008). The receiver in order to understand and make meaning out of the message will have to decode the encrypted message.

To avoid issues of miscommunication, ambiguity and equivocation, it is important that all the various components of the communication process must work effectively (Rajkumar 2010). Reasons why communication takes place during projects include but not limited to requesting for information, disseminating information, seeking answers by asking questions, giving firm instructions to project team members, developing and building teams and also seeking avenues of establishing strong networks (Tubbs and Moss 2008). In all

these, it has been pointed out that the sender plays a crucial role in the success of the communication process (Talukhaba et al. 2011).

In project management, this means that the project leader must be skilled in speaking, writing, reasoning and listening actively (Kotze et. al., 2008). Another important element or component of the communication process has to do with the feedback that the processes generates and which serves as input in perfecting the communication process or taking actions to remedy troubling situations (Talukhaba et al. 2011). According to Zulch (2014), it is incumbent on project managers to regularly monitor and evaluate their communication process to ensure that there not barriers or bottlenecks that distorts messages communicated. To also ensure that the communication process achieves its aims and objectives, the receiver must be skilled at deciphering the encoded message and making sense of the message sent (Rajkumar 2010).

It is only when the receiver understands the message sent that communication is said to be successful (Rajkumar 2010). This in effect means that during projects, it becomes critical for all information and messages communicated are effectively decoded and understood (Hargie 2007). As found by Muller and Turner (2010), ineffective communication are a bane of project delivery success because it causes misunderstanding on several fronts. For instance, poor communication in terms of ill-defined project scope, objectives, budgets, timelines and poorly defined tasks all lead to project delivery failures (Tubbs and Moss 2008).

2.1.3 Project Communication Planning

In order to be effective, all project communication activities must be well planned since this detailed planning will facilitate effective execution (Engelbrecht 2010). According to Steyn (2008), project communication planning therefore requires that project leaders provide answers to questions – “what will the project need from its communication systems” and “what are the suitable communication methods that will address the requirements? Project communication planning is vital because it facilitates information and important project reports getting to the right persons at the right time, in the right condition (Rajkumar 2010).

The need for project communication planning stems from the typical project manager’s outfit or office being the Centre of project information and control systems (Engelbrecht 2010). This places additional responsibility on the project manager in terms of communicating with salient stakeholders based on their needs and interests. According to Engelbrecht (2010), project managers need to determine and develop detailed communication which clearly illustrates how salient stakeholders will be communicated with. According to Tubbs and Moss (2008), a typical project communication plan must among other things capture the following:

1. Clear lines of communication (right from the sender thorough the medium to the receiver) and also showing responsibility and authority. According to Smit and Cronje (2002), there are two types of communication that project leaders can use - formal and informal.
2. Having a communication scope and format;
3. Communication schedule;
4. Getting feedback which confirms messages sent are clearly understood;

5. Filing of documents for easy retrieval, storage and disaster recovery and
6. Showing how messages will be communicated using emails, document, telephone, meetings, workshops and presentations.
7. Making sure that project communication plans are presented and agreed upon prior to the commencement of the actual project so as to give clear directions in relation to salient stakeholders

2.1.4 Types of Communication Employed During Projects

There are different types of communication employed during projects and all these different types of communication combine to effectively ensure that projects are delivered successfully (Rajkumar 2010). According to Tubbs and Moss (2008), projects can be informal or formal. Informal communication usually employ channels such as informal social groupings, rumors and the grapevines, (Van Staden Marx and Erasmus-Kritzinger 2002). Formal communication tend to flow in four different directions - Downward communication where message commences from the top and flows downwards till they reach workers at the bottom of the project structure.

Downward communication basically entails project leaders disseminating project information such as the scope, strategies and policies to workers down the structure (Van Staden et al. 2002). With downward communication, information is filtered, modified or even changed at each level and that each divisional manager or supervisor determines the nature of information to hold and which to relay to subordinates (Van Staden et al. 2002).

Upward communication on the other hand entails disseminating information to upper levels of the project structure and this informs top management about the progress of the project (Engelbrecht 2010). Horizontal or lateral communication occurs when information is exchanged between managers or people of the same level or hierarchy. Diagonal communication occurs when different levels or hierarchies communicate with each other (Higgin and Jessop 2001).

The main types of project communication tools and channels are as follows:

Face-to-Face Communication: This type of communication entails project team members meeting directly and physically so as to interact and discuss project progress, ideas, new developments etc (Tubbs and Moss 2008). Face-to-face communication avenues include seminars, conferences, meetings, and workshops (Kliem 2008). Face-to-face communication and interactions have been found to be very effective since feedback is instantaneous and project leaders can fairly accurately determine how well new messages were received based on members' reactions and demeanors. It has also been pointed out that face-to-face communication and interactions are highly effective because it enhances the morale of team members and frequent interactions one-on-one spur and ginger team members to excel (Van Staden et al. 2002).

Responsive Communication: The ability of project managers to be active and good listeners is one key characteristic that is needed to (Heldman 2011). Through active listening, project managers communicate that they appreciate team members' contributions, concerns, issues and suggestions (Tubbs and Moss 2008). Project managers can communicate that they have listened through their body languages, through their communication styles, methods of motivation and how they generally relate with team members (Heldman 2011).

Written Communication: These include emails, memos, letters, faxes and other written documents sent to or receive from project members. Written communication are particularly used to communicate project schedules, budgets. Scopes, deadlines, procedures, processes and even how tem members are to be motivated. Written communication are usually used to ensure that all ambiguities are cleared. According to Heldman (2011), lucidity and clarity is vital during projects and written communication especially are important in ensuring that all ambiguities and doubts are cleared. The different written communication channels have their merits and demerits. For instance, emails allow project teams to instantly communicate with each other irrespective of the distance between them.

Electronic Communication: Advancement in technology has today made it easier for project organizations to rely on electronic forms of communication. Today, project managers and project members use social media tools (such as youtube, whatsapp, emails, Facebook and instagram) to effectively communicate with project team members (Engelbrecht, 2010). Electronic channels of communication are swift, less costly and highly effective. For instance, project organizations continue to use Skype video calls to engage with project members and even use video conferencing to share ideas, brainstorm and discuss issues that help in advancing the course of projects. Project organizations today easily and swiftly attach spreadsheets and even videos through emails to facilitate detailed discussions and presentations while other electronic devices such as Google drive and Drop box are increasing being used to facilitate exchange and sharing of vital project documents.

Oral communication which takes place during face-to-face interactions, conversations, over the telephone, meetings, discussions, talks, interviews and announcements (Kliem, 2008).

2.2 DISSEMINATION OF VITAL AND INFORMATION

Sharing of vital information is one of the major roles of project leaders and this information is shared with different stakeholders whom usually possess multiple and diverse needs, concerns and interest (Fisk and Reynolds, 2010). It is therefore important that project leaders communicate key project information such as the scope, budgets, timelines, deliverables, roles of team members and their responsibilities. Thus, effective communication systems within project is able to ensure that all stakeholders get timely and accurate information which all things being equal, will facilitate project delivery success. Again, communication when effectively executed ensures that all ambiguities and equivocations are eliminated and therefore ensuring that each team members knows what is expected from them.

2.2.1 Receiving Information

It is also critical that project managers put in place effective communication systems that makes it possible for them to receive vital information needed to solve and address project related issues. By frequently receiving information and communicating with projects' diverse stakeholders, project managers are able to take effective decisions that reduce or completely eliminate conflicts with stakeholders. As pointed by Binder (2007), by instituting detailed and effective

communications systems, project leaders are able to leverage on this to make the project environment more conducive for effective work to be done.

2.2.2 Makes It Possible to Anticipate Unforeseen Contingencies

Communication play critical roles right from the commencement to the delivery of projects (Fisk and Reynolds 2010). This is because project environments are usually fluid, dynamic and turbulent. Project environments are constantly undergoing changes with respect to scope, timelines, budgets and even specifications. In spite of this fluidity and constant change, project managers who develop project communications plans are better able to manage project changes better than projects with no communications plans. According to Binder (2007), project communication plans help project managers to know the type of communication medium to use, when to use them, how to use them. Communications plans also help firms to determine right from the onset who to contact with what type of information, the frequency of communications and information sharing and even the needs and expectations that must be communicated (Yang et al. 2010).

2.2.3 Bridging and Closing the Communication Gap with project Members and Stakeholders

Today's project environment is often made up of different stakeholders and people with different walks of life, different language proficiencies, different cultures and different methods of handling and dealing with people (Higgin and Jessop 2001). There is the need to therefore ensure that all members are well-informed and communicated with in different mediums and manner so that at any

point in time, all project members and stakeholders are not left out of the communications channel (Ceric, 2014). Project communications management therefore exist to ensure that there is no language barrier and that project managers use jargons, language and other forms of communications that are understood by all project team members and stakeholders (Fisk and Reynolds, 2010).

As found and observed by Aje et al. (2009) and Hassanien and Afify (2007), communications among other things implies the capacity for project managers to interact, talk, speak and been paid heed to or listen to by project team members and stakeholders. In effect, project communications are able to bring different team members and stakeholders together to achieve a common objective (Yang et al. 2010).

According to authors such as Ceric, (2014) and Dainty, et. al., (2006), communications during projects are highly crucial and that effective communication is the prerogative and obligation of project managers. Considering that over 80% of a typical project manager's time is spent on establishing and nurturing interpersonal communications with all project stakeholders, there is the need for them to perfect their communications skills. Moreover, typical project environments are rife with uncertainties, turbulence and doubts. It is therefore the job of the project manager to inspire, motivate and incite their team members to stay committed to projects (Fisk and Reynolds 2010). Effective communications are therefore seriously employed by project managers to facilitate project delivery success since project team members and stakeholders are better able to manage and deal with project complexities and

uncertainties (Aje et al. 2009). Thus, it is important that project managers effectively identify salient stakeholders and their interest so that suitable communications methods are used reach and interact with stakeholders.

Based on the foregoing and as observed by Nielsen and Erdogan (2007), project managers need to be especially skillful at communicating with different stakeholders since poor communications skills raises the risk and possibility of project delivery failures.

2.3 The Main Challenges Implementing Project Communications Management

Project Communications as established in this chapter are highly indispensable to project delivery success (Fisk and Reynolds 2010; Clearly 2008; Barrett 2006). In spite of this apparent significance of project communications, it is still fraught with several implementation challenges (Higgin and Jessop 2001). This section of the chapter therefore presents the main challenges of project communications implementations.

2.3.1 Complexity of Projects makes Project Communications Implementation Challenging

Projects are highly complex because of the different stakeholders with different interest, needs and expectations and this makes project communications implementation very challenging (Lester 2013). Again, because different individuals with different levels of expertise, experience and qualifications are brought together to execute projects, project managers tend to struggle with respect to how to communicate with these diverse project team members (Cheung, 2014). As opined by Peh and Low (2015), project communications

tend to permeate throughout the project and this involves interacting with multiple sectors, different organizational levels, dealing with individuals with different outlooks and viewpoints and all these combines to make project communications very complex and intricate.

2.3.2 Information Asymmetry

One of the major challenges of project communications has to do with in adequate information or information asymmetry between project leaders, team members and project stakeholders (Aje et al. 2009). It has been established that project managers sometimes are unable or fail to promptly disseminate information on timely basis to different stakeholders and this usually leads to project delays and cost overruns (Oberlender 2000). According to Muller and Turner (2005), it is not uncommon to witness situations of stakeholders including team members not being aware of important project information such as design drawings, reports, contracts, work instructions, scope, objectives and timelines.

This situation therefore keeps stakeholders in the dark and they in turn therefore do not show that enthusiasm and motivation needed to deliver projects on time. It has also been observed that information asymmetry occurs in situations where technical details and specialized services are not adequately explained to the understanding of clients and this therefore suggest project leaders have failed in communicating effectively with category of stakeholders. According to Cohen (2011), project communications experience implementation challenges because project leaders fail to appreciate the significance of sharing timely and accurate information with project stakeholders. The resulting issue is that stakeholders

including project clients are left dissatisfied and therefore jeopardizing the acceptance of the project even after it has been delivered.

2.3.3 Lack of Trust between Stakeholders

Another project communications implementation challenge stems from the lack of trust among stakeholders and therefore making interactions, exchange of ideas and information difficult. This is because projects especially during the initiation phase brings together different contracting parties and entities who are not used to each other and are still trying to understand each other. This apparent lack of trust makes communications hugely challenging and project leaders are often required to devise different strategies of making these contracting parties trust each other (Bankvall 2010).

Considering that building and construction projects are highly interdependent, complex and highly interactive, team members also tend to depend on each other for information (information dependency). According to Pekerikli, (2013), in instances where one group's work will commence only when another group's work ends, there is the need for frequent communications to facilitate seamless and efficiency within projects. It is therefore incumbent of project leaders to develop an atmosphere devoid of suspicion and this can only be accomplished when the right communications methods are employed (Bourne 2016).

2.3.4 Lack of Skillful Project Managers

Communicating with different stakeholders with diverse interest and concerns forms about 80% of the project leader's daily functions (Mabelo 2011; Steyn 2008). This implies that project leaders must be skilled at communicating with

diverse stakeholders. According to Laufer (2008) and Steyn (2008), project leaders must specifically possess communications skills, presentations, and interpersonal skills among other skills. Unfortunately, however, it has been found that some project leaders are skillful in other areas such as planning, controlling, organizing and selecting project team members but lack the skills and know-how when it comes to communicating effectively with project stakeholders (Killen 2007).

In fact, Galvez (2015) and Killen et al. (2007) established in their studies that some project managers, professionals and experts while being good at their core areas of expertise lack the ability to effectively communicate and deal with different but highly interlinked units and stakeholders of the project. In fact, Aiyewalehinmi (2013) established in his study that there is a significantly positive nexus between construction project productivity and project information quality. This finding therefore buttresses the important role that communications and plays. It also shows how the lack of quality communications during projects leads to low construction project productivity and eventually, project failure. Aiyewalehinmi's work is supported by Cheung (2013) who established that project communications inefficiencies are one of the major causes of project failures in the building and construction sector.

2.3.5 External Factors

It has also been found that factors external to the project environment such issues with project financing, legal issues, incomplete documentation, impromptu absence of important project members, changes in scope, delays in the supply of project logistics (Kiseilnicki 2011). All these factors contribute to make project

communications implementation very demanding and, in some cases, serving as complete barriers to project communications effectiveness.

2.3.6 Internal Factors

It has also been found that there are some internal bottlenecks that impede the effective implementation of project communications strategies. Some of these factors are – insufficient dissemination of information, weak and ineffective communications channels, and inexperienced project leaders with respect to project execution. Errors in project management practices and processes and conflicts within project team members which affects communications effectiveness (Kiseilnicki 2011).

2.3.7 Political Factors

Some projects tend to experience communications challenges because of people having vested interests, issues and expectations which frequently disrupt communications. Rajkumar (2010) sees this as political impediments and interferences and that this tends to occur usually at the higher echelons of the project organizations. Even though political interferences are normal in organizations, their influence tends to be more pronounced during projects and therefore negatively affecting dialogue and communications. To minimize the effect of political interferences demands that project managers put in place concrete measures that not only identify major political actors but more importantly, institute steps that will win their trust and therefore, their acceptance and buy-in of the project (Bourne 2016).

2.4 EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Milicevic et al. (2014) sought to investigate the significance of successful communication of project team members within Serbia's agricultural sector. This study collected data from 16 project managers and 98 project team members using survey questionnaires. It was found that project leaders who develop effective active listening skills and focus on open and direct communications with team members facilitates project management success in Serbia's agricultural industry. This study further established that factors such as lack of time, work pressure and cultural differences contribute to poor communications during projects.

Zulch (2014) sought to identify the major features and characteristics that project managers in the construction sector should have to facilitate successful communication. Data was collected from project managers in South Africa using survey questionnaires. It was established that characteristics of project managers which are crucial to successful project management include the development of trust, collaboration and teamwork; allowing team members to take responsibility for their work; sharing the vision of the project with team members; task orientation; people orientation; information disclosure to team members for decision making purposes and supporting team members training and skills acquisition.

Different leaders have different leadership styles and also have different methods of communication with their followers (Laufer 2008). As pointed out by Zulch (2014), it is therefore the prerogative of the project leader to be discerning

enough to know which communication styles to adopt based on the unique characteristics of both projects and project team members.

Yang, et. al., (2010) have indeed suggested that experienced and skillful project leaders need to change their communications styles to suit the specific needs of projects, and even within, project, there are different leadership and communications styles that must be adopted and implemented. For projects, the impact and role of communications become more apparent because project leaders are expected to deal with multiple stakeholders who all possess diverse needs, have different expectations, concerns and issues (Ikechukwu 2017; Laufer et al. 2008). The presence of these stakeholders with their diverse needs right from the on-set places enormous pressure and responsibility of project leaders to effectively communicate with these stakeholders so as to facilitate successful completion of projects (Cheung et. al., 2013).

Project managers are held in high esteem by their team members because they are trusted to lead the team till the successful completion of the project on time, within budget and to specification (Ramesh 2010). Effective communications skills have been of one the main instruments that project leaders use to glue team members together in order to achieve project management success (Muszynska 2015). The reason is simple. Projects have different stakeholders such as financiers, investors, employees, team members, top management, communities, suppliers, creditors, banks and regulators (Cheung et al. 2013).

And in spite of all these multiple stakeholders, project managers are expected to share timely and accurate information, collaborate with different stakeholders, collate information which serves as input for decision-making, integrate

information and knowledge to achieve stated project targets (Henderson 2008). This is where the skills of the project manager as a good communicator helps him/her to relate with all stakeholders (Bourne 2016).

Different authors have investigated the effect and influence of project communications management on project success and have come out with different results. Ankrah, et. al., (2009) for instance investigated the various factors affecting the culture of a construction project organization in the United Kingdom (UK) by collecting data from nine highly experienced project management experts through interviews. The study established that communication within construction projects in the UK is one of the major factors that affects project management success culture.

Again, Ankrah, et al (2009) investigated the perception of stakeholders of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for big-scale public sector development projects in Thailand. The authors collected gathered data from 78 project managers, deputy project managers and senior supervisors using both survey questionnaires and interviews. It was revealed by the study that project communications management when effectively employed affects project managers' leadership value and project management success. It was also found by the authors that poor communication skills were the second most important adverse characteristics of project managers and therefore implying that project managers do not have good communications skills.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the study presented the methodological approach used in collecting and analysing data. This section in particular presented the research design, target population, data sources, sampling techniques and sample size, the data collection instrument data collection procedure and how the data collected would be analysed.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopted the case study method as the research design and the reason was that the case study enabled the study to conduct in-depth analysis and investigation on the study's subject matter. According to Bryman and Bell (2011), the case study approach ensures that studies are able to observe and analyse into detail the chosen object of investigation. Considering that no districts are the same in terms of certain administrative, cultural and socio-economic dynamics, the case study will enable the study to assess the influence of project communications management on effective project execution and delivery at LaDMA.

It must however be mentioned quickly that using the case study as the main research design precluded the generalization of the study to other MMDAs even though it greatly shed more light on the subject matter.

3.2 TARGET POPULATION

This study targeted top officials of La Dadekotopon Municipal Assembly directly involved with projects. This means that key officials such as Municipal Planning Officer, Head of Works Department (Municipal Works Engineer), and Head of Urban Roads Department were roped into the study.

3.3 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

This study employed the purposive sampling technique to ensure that only the right officials who possess detailed knowledge on project management issues, strategies and tactics are contacted. The purposive sampling technique as pointed out Saunders et al. (2009) allows studies to only focus on collecting data from people who are regarded as possessing information and data pertinent to the operationalization of the study's objectives.

3.4 SAMPLE SIZE

This study collected data from three key officials of LaDMA based on the fact of their positions, roles, experience and relevance to the study. The researcher selected the Municipal Planning Officer, Head of Works and Head of Urban Roads who is the Chief Engineer.

Moreso, the Municipal Planning Officer was selected due to her position as the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area (GAMA) Project Coordinator for LaDMA who leads in the execution of all GAMA projects of the Assembly. The second respondent Head of Urban Roads was considered for the sample size because he act as Project Manager for all road related project and play an important role in project communication. The last respondent who is the Head of Works or

Municipal Works Engineer was selected to provide data for this study due to his position as being in charge of design and supervision of LaDMA's development project; the DACF projects, IGF projects, DDF projects and any other projects the Assembly undertake.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

To collect data from the respondents, the study developed an interview guide. This was to ensure that the respondents answer questions posed to them. The interview guide was developed using the set objectives of the study. Published articles, books and journals were analysed in relation to the study objectives to establish existing knowledge and view. This was done using the desk studies approach.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

To contact the respondents, the study first of all obtained an introductory letter from KNUST which introduced the researcher as well as explain the objectives of the study. Having obtained permission, the study identified the target population and contacted them. Having agreed to participate, the researcher agreed on the date and time to meet and conduct the interviews.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Having collected the data, it was analysed using qualitative methods. For this study, the data was analysed using thematic analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an analysis of the data collected from representatives of LaDMA. The data was collected using structured in interviews and the data was again analysed using thematic analysis which is a form of qualitative analysis. The chapter was organized a long four chapters. The first section dealt with the background of the respondents while the section second presented the findings and analysis in relation to the first objective of identifying the current project communications management practices executed at LaDMA. The third section focuses on the identification of the effects of project communications management on the effective delivery of projects at LaDMA while the final section focuses on the main causes of project communications management at LaDMA.

4.1 BACKGROUND OF THE RESPONDENTS

This study used the purposive sampling technique to collect data from three key and relevant representatives of LaDMA. As shown in Table 4.1, these three respondents are the Municipal Works Engineer who is responsible for designing and supervising assembly projects, the urban roads director who is also the chief engineer at LaDMA and the Municipal Development Officer whose role includes leading teams in the preparation of all plans seeing to their implementation and reporting on them. The background of the respondents indicate that they are really top management personnel and as a result, were in a better and privileged position to shed more light on project communications management practices and

issues at LaDMA. It was also found that all these three respondents have been with LaDMA for more over two years and therefore implying that they have been with the assembly long enough to participate in the study.

Table 4.1: Background of the Respondents

| Position | Number of years spent working on LaDMA's projects | Roles |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Municipal Works Engineer | 3-4 | Designing and supervising assembly projects |
| Urban Roads Director | 3-4 | Chief engineer |
| Municipal Development Officer | 1-2 | Leading teams in the preparation of all plans seeing to their implementation and reporting on them |

Source: Field Data (2019)

4.2 The Current Project Communications Management Practices Executed at LaDMA

This section presents analysis and findings on the first objective of identifying the current project communications management practices executed at LaDMA.

4.2.1 The Major Project Communications Channels Used BY LADMA during Projects

It was found that LaDMA uses different types of communications channels during projects. However, the main communications channels employed at the assembly were found to include formal site meetings, instruction books at site and issuing of letters. It was specifically found from the Municipal Development

Officer that LaDMA “communicate through assembly members and meetings. Projects are usually selected from the medium term development plans which are prepared in a participatory manner with all stakeholders”. According to the Urban Roads Director “We organize meetings as technical officers of the assembly... with stakeholders such as town hall meetings. We also prepare reports and submit to the regional coordinating council and national development planning committee”. See Table 4.2 for details.

These findings are actually not new, they are usual forms of communication that most organizations employ to communicate with their stakeholders (Muller & turner, 2010). What is however lacking from these responses is the failure of LaDMA to employ social media tools such as WhatsApp, twitter, Facebook and Instagram to effectively reach their different constituents. It has been found by Remidez and Jones (2012), social media is today one of the most widely used channel of communications during projects and this stems from the fact that social media applications are instantaneous, generates immediate feedback.

Again, Grabner and Kaluscha (2003) have found that using social media tools during projects fosters trust and confidence and it is therefore crucial that LaDMA start adopting social media to enhance its communications efforts. In fact, LaDMA cannot be doing what it has continuously done for decades and expect to improve its communications strategies. It has been found by Remidez and Jones (2012) again, gone are those days when project managers can immediately assemble their teams, where status reports are presented during weekly, monthly or quarterly meetings and still achieve expected project outcomes. The situation has completely changed today and project stakeholders

are usually scattered across the globe and certain project stakeholders such as investors may demand real-time access to project data to take certain key decisions and all these can be done when social media applications are employed. In effect, not currently using social media applications is a serious flaw in LaDMA's communications strategy that must be addressed immediately.

4.2.2 The Current Project Communications Management Practices AT LADMA

It was found that LaDMA employs different project communications strategies to ensure that all stakeholders are effectively reached with the right message at the right time and at the right place to achieve intended objectives.

Sending Up-To-Date and Prompt Information

With respect to sending and providing up-to-date and prompt information to project team members and stakeholders, it was found from the Municipal Works Engineer that "Project leaders at LaDMA make sure that they send/provide up-to-date and prompt information to project team members and stakeholders by ensuring the right specification is followed". It was also found from the Urban Roads Director that "Project leaders at LaDMA make sure that they send/provide up-to-date and prompt information to project team members and stakeholders through the MPCU (Municipal Planning Coordinating Unit) where all professionals meet to discuss various project related issues". See table 4.2 for details.

Making sure that Messages Sent are Clear and Devoid of Confusions

It was also found as illustrated in Table 4.2 that Project leaders at LaDMA make sure that messages sent are clear and devoid of confusions by making sure our

messages are clear and according to the interviewees, “this is normally done by a follow up to the contractors by making phone calls” (The Municipal Works Engineer). It was further found from the Urban Roads Director “Project leaders at LaDMA make sure that they send/provide up-to-date and prompt information to project team members and stakeholders through the MPCU where all professionals meet to discuss various project related issues”.

Developing Communication Plans to Avoid Inconsistencies, Chaos and Omissions

It was further found that another project communication practice of LaDMA had to do with developing communication plans to avoid inconsistencies, chaos and omissions. As pointed out by the Municipal Works Engineer, “Project leaders at LaDMA make sure that they develop communications plans to avoid inconsistencies, chaos and omissions through having an organogram and communication channel chart of LaDMA”. According to the Municipal Development Officer, “Project leaders at LaDMA make sure that they develop communications plans to avoid inconsistencies, chaos and omissions because LaDMA has a communications plan in the medium-term development plan and also the assembly has a popular participation plan”. It was further found from the Urban Road Director that “Project leaders at LaDMA make sure that messages sent are clear and devoid of confusions by because there are avenues for feedback for the recipients”.

Based on the above responses, it can be said that LaDMA is very much aware of the significance of project communications management and to therefore ensure that the right message is sent at the right time to the right stakeholders and through the right medium. As pointed by Talukhaba et al. (2011), project

communication when effectively executed can be of immense contribution to all stakeholders. Considering that LaDMA has different stakeholders with different needs, expectations and interest, it becomes crucial the assembly perfects its communication efforts. Thus, by making sure that they constantly send up-to-date and prompt information to project team members and stakeholders; by making sure that messages sent are clear and devoid of confusions and also ensuring that they develop communications plans to avoid inconsistencies, chaos and omissions, LaDMA is in effect setting itself up for success during projects (Steyn, 2012; Kernbach, Eppler & Bresciani, 2015; Winch, 2012).

**Table 4.2: The Current Project Communication Management Practices at
LADMA**

| Respondents | The major project communication channels used by LaDMA during projects | The current project communication management practices at LaDMA |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Municipal Works Engineer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have formal site meetings • Instruction books at site • Issuing of letters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We do stakeholders' meeting • Organize site meetings • We also through MPCU (Municipal Planning Coordinating Unit) interact with various stakeholders • Project leaders at LaDMA make sure that they send/provide up-to-date and prompt information to project team members and stakeholders by ensuring the right specification is followed. • Project leaders at LaDMA make sure that messages sent are clear and devoid of confusions by making sure our messages are clear and this is normally done by a follow up to the contractors by making phone calls • We also ensure effective and efficient project delivery • By making sure that project executors understand clearly the terms and condition of the project • Project leaders at LaDMA make sure that they develop communication plans to avoid inconsistencies, chaos and omissions through having an organogram and communication channel chart of LaDMA |
| Chief Engineer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memos • Meetings • Letters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning, managing and monitoring communication • Project leaders at LaDMA make sure that they send/provide up-to-date and prompt information to project team members and stakeholders through the MPCU where all professionals meet to discuss various project related issues • Project leaders at LaDMA make sure that messages sent are clear and devoid of confusions by making sure that messages are clear and precise as information is disseminated to all team members as project progresses • Project leaders at LaDMA make sure that they develop communication plans to avoid inconsistencies, chaos and omissions by making sure that channels of communication are clearly indicated as per contract documents for any project at LaDMA. Also, this information is explained to all stakeholders |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| | | before commencement of any project. |
| Municipal Development Officer | Communicate through assembly members and the meetings LaDMA organizes. Project are usually selected from the medium term development plans which are prepared in a participatory manner with all stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We organize meetings as technical officers of the assembly. Meetings with stakeholders such as town hall meetings. • We also prepare reports and submit to the regional coordinating council and national development planning committee. • We provide information to assembly members who also inform their populace. • Use of local radio stations every week. • Project leaders at LaDMA make sure that they send/provide up-to-date and prompt information to project team members and stakeholders because by law, the MCPU is the body responsible for project implementation and monitoring. We meet at least quarterly and also undertake quarterly monitoring visit of project sites. • Project leaders at LaDMA make sure that messages sent are clear and devoid of confusions by because there are avenues for feedback for the recipients • Project leaders at LaDMA make sure that they develop communication plans to avoid inconsistencies, chaos and omissions because LaDMA has a communication plan in the medium term development plan and also the assembly has a popular participation plan. |

Source: Field Data (2019)

4.3 THE EFFECTS OF PROJECT COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT ON THE EFFECTIVE DELIVERY OF PROJECTS AT LADMA

This section presented the findings in relation to the second objective of identifying the effects of project communication management on the effective delivery of projects at LaDMA.

The respondents were ask the question “in your estimation, has LaDMA’s project communication management affected project deliveries?” and it was found from all the three interviewees that LaDMA’s project communication management positively affects the assembly’s project deliveries. See table 4.3 for clarification.

It was for instance found from the Municipal Works Engineer that “Project communication management affects project delivery at LaDMA because about 88% or more projects awarded are well executed within time and good project completion report to prevent deviation and bad work-done”.

It was also found from the Director of Urban Roads that “LaDMA’s project communication management has affected project execution positively” while the Municipal Development Officer opined that ...“we receive feedback for stakeholders to effect changes in implementation if necessary”.

The respondents were further asked to “explain how LaDMA’s project communication management affect project deliveries” and it was found from the Municipal Works Engineer that LaDMA’s project communication management “helps to ensure that terms and conditions of projects awarded are well understood by the parties to prevent deviation and bad work-done”. In the opinion of the Chief Engineer, “LaDMA’s project communication management affect project deliveries because stakeholders involved understand the project well and also monitor and assess the project effectively. This results in quality and timely delivery of projects.” In was in addition observed from the Municipal Development Officer that LaDMA’s project communication management makes all stakeholders come onboard and be part of the project implementation and success of the project”.

Based on the findings on the effect of LaDMA’s project communication management, it can be said that when effectively done, project communication ensure that project deliverables at the Assembly are achieved because it usually clears all doubt and ambiguities about key project expectations such as scope,

delivery times, and cost and even the identification and reaching of salient stakeholders. The fact that terms and conditions of projects awarded are well understood by the parties to prevent deviation and bad work-done is testament to what several authors such as Ceric (2014), Aje et al. (2009) and Hassanien and Afify (2007), one of the most important of project communication management has to do with ability to bring all stakeholders on board, agree on project timelines, cost and for that matter, helping to avoid delays, costs overruns and going beyond scope.

The above findings therefore from the three respondents agree and confirm with what Ceric (2014) established to the effect that there is a strong and positive nexus between project communication management and project delivery. Thus, for a country that is struggling to build and develop its social infrastructure, these findings are encouraging and actually suggest that top management of LaDMA are very much aware of the effect of effective communication and do all what they possibly can to keep communicating with their constituents devoid of confusions, ambiguities and equivocations.

Another effect of LaDMA's project communication management as revealed by the respondents has to do with the ability of project communication at the assembly to help salient stakeholders to understand the project well and also monitor and assess the project effectively. This results in quality and timely delivery of projects. This in effect means that LaDMA is able to leverage on its communication practices and strategies to get the buy-in of major stakeholder's right from the on-set and in the process, identifying and addressing diverse stakeholders' worries, concerns, interest and expectations.

This finding is important because LaDMA is constantly commencing and continuing with different projects in the catchment area and because it is made up of different stakeholders including embassies, banks, hotels, key government installations and residence for members of the diplomatic corps, there is the need to communicate with these diverse stakeholders when projects such as road constructions are going to commence. Road constructions for instance come with road diversions, noise pollution and they generally serve as a nuisance.

However, through effective communication, the assembly is able to dialogue, interact and explain to the understanding of this affluent community key issues such as the duration of projects, persons in charge, contact details of key persons and how to address all grievances and issues that may arise during projects. Thus, the identification and effective interactions and communication with its salient constituents help the assembly to initiate and complete projects on time, and more importantly, to the satisfaction of major stakeholders.

From the foregoing therefore, it can be surmised that project communication practices and efforts of LaDMA has been highly instrumental in facilitating project deliveries.

Table 4.3: The Effects of Project Communication Management on the Effective Delivery of Projects AT LADMA

| Respondent | The Effects of Project Communication Management on the Effective Delivery of Projects at LaDMA | How LaDMA’s Project Communication Management Affect Project Deliveries |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Municipal Works Engineer | Project communication management affects project delivery at LaDMA because about 88% or more projects awarded are well executed within time and good project completion report to prevent deviation and bad work-done. | It helps to ensure that terms and conditions of projects awarded are well understood by the parties to prevent deviation and bad work-done |
| Chief Engineer | LaDMA’s project communication management has affected project execution positively | LaDMA’s project communication management affect project deliveries because stakeholders involved understand the project well and also monitor and assess the project effectively. This results in quality and timely delivery of projects. |
| Municipal Development Officer | Yes. We receive feedback for stakeholders to effect changes in implementation if necessary | It makes all stakeholders come onboard and be part of the project implementation and success of the project |

Source: Field Data (2019)

4.4 THE MAIN CHALLENGES OF PROJECT COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT AT LADMA

This section of the chapter analyzes and discusses the findings in relation to their objective of identifying the main challenges of project communication management at LaDMA

4.4.1 The Main Challenges of Project Communication Management at LaDMA

When the interviewees were asked “Can you please mention the main challenges of project communication management at LaDMA”, it was established as illustrated in Table 4.4 that the main challenges are:

1. Delays in getting meetings organized
2. Stakeholders not receiving feedback
3. Delays and inconsistencies during project execution
4. It brings delays (bureaucracy) when stakeholders must be consulted before decisions are taken
5. It is also expensive to bring stakeholders together in terms of the time and other resources

These findings imply that the deployment of project communication management strategies and policies at the assembly are fraught with challenges that threaten its effective implementation and execution.

For instance, the finding that the assembly experiences delay in getting meetings organized is serious because as found in the section 4.2, meetings are one of the major communication methods that the assembly uses to communicate project related information to salient stakeholders. Thus, the failures to effectively bring all the major stakeholders together under a roof to discuss, deliberate and share information on upcoming or existing projects are really disturbing and therefore imply that there are fundamental weaknesses in the assembly’s methods of organizing meetings. This finding implies that both the assembly does not know the schedules of its stakeholders and therefore picks wrong venues, dates and

time and for which reason the stakeholders are unable to attend or that the assembly's communication methods are flawed and needs adjustments.

As found by Lester (2013) and Peh and Low (2015), one of the most important challenge that threatens effective communication with project stakeholders has to do with their diversity in terms of expertise, influence, needs and expectations and therefore making it very difficult bringing all them of together to deliberate on key project related issues. The inability of LaDMA to organize meetings on time is therefore highly symptomatic of complex project because as found and concluded by Cheung (2014), projects with complicated stakeholders tend to struggle with respect to quality communication and interactions.

Another challenge mentioned by the interviewees had to do with stakeholders not receiving feedback from LaDMA on regular and continuous bases and therefore threatening project deliveries. This particular finding is not surprising considering that LaDMA is often unable to meet regularly with project stakeholders to update them on project progress. This finding is worrying because it is important that stakeholders are met periodically to update them on project progress and considering the power and influence of stakeholders, it is very disturbing since they can make or break the assembly's projects. This finding also implies that LaDMA is yet to identify more effective means of communicating and reaching its diverse stakeholders and therefore, leading to situations where stakeholders are not provided timely and accurate feedback.

This particular finding is what Aje et al. (2009) and Muller and Turner (2005) termed information asymmetry where sufficient information is not supplied to salient stakeholders to facilitate taking certain vital decisions. In fact, this finding

confirms and supports what Aje et al. (2009) and Muller and Turner (2005) found to the effect that in certain projects, vital information is either deliberately withheld from stakeholders or this information inadvertently does not get to stakeholders on time. Irrespective of whatever reason, this particular finding implies that the communication strategies of LaDMA are flawed and must be urgently reassessed to make it more effective.

This study further found from the Municipal Development Officer, that another challenge of project communication management at LaDMA stems from undue bureaucracy and delays “when stakeholders must be consulted before decisions are taken”. This finding is not surprising and actually supports what Muller and Turner (2005) established to the effect that some projects are highly complex and full of red tape and this eventually leads to communication break-down. This is because changes are always being made to project scope and different messages are being sent to stakeholders and as a result, stakeholders become confused, tired, and suspicious and in some cases, begin to avoid working on information supplied by project executors (Muller & Turner, 2005).

It was further found from the Municipal Development Officer that “it is also expensive to bring stakeholders together in terms of the time and other resources”. This finding implies that project communication management at LaDMA is also hampered due to the lack of financial resources. This finding is very alarming because without periodic and regular interaction with stakeholders, projects may stall due to stakeholders’ actions and inactions (Cohen (2011), and it is therefore important that resources are obtained to ensure that constant interaction and communication are affected.

4.4.2 The Effects of LaDMA's Project Communication Management Challenges on Project Deliveries

The interviewees were asked the question “please what are the effects of these challenges on project deliveries?” and it was found as illustrated in Table 4.4 that these challenges and bottlenecks negatively affects project deliveries at LaDMA. It was for instance found from the Municipal Works Engineer that one of the effects of LaDMA's project communication management challenges on project delivery is “delays and modifications in designs leading to cost-overruns”. It was also found from the Chief Engineer that the challenges lead to “untimely delivery and project failures which leads to cost (project overruns)”. It was further found from the Municipal Development Officer that another one of the effects of LaDMA's project communication management challenges on project deliveries are “delays, increased cost and raises the expectations of the people”.

These findings on the effects of project communication management challenges are not surprising and actually corroborate what several authors such as Laufer et al. (2008), Killen et al. (2007) and Aiyewalehinmi (2013) found and concluded to the effect that project communication are often fraught with several bottlenecks and challenges that incapacitate project leaders' communication efforts. These findings just go to buttress the observations of Muller and Turner (2010) that project communication management are of so much importance that failure to strategize and effectively execute project communication management be tantamount to setting the project for doom and inevitable failure.

These findings again imply that project leaders of LaDMA are yet to perfect their project communication management to such an extent that they are able to

navigate through the bureaucratic quagmire to still reach project stakeholders in a timely manner with vital and accurate information and feedback. This is because it is inevitable that project leaders will occasionally hit a snag when implementing their project communication strategies during the public sector. Thus, it requires that project managers who find themselves in the public sector must learn the ropes and must be resourceful when seeking funding and support when executing their project communication strategies.

Table 4.4: The Main Causes of Project Communication Management at LADMA

| Respondent | The main challenges of project communication management at LaDMA | The effects of these challenges on project deliveries | Overcoming challenges |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Municipal Works Engineer | Delays in getting meetings organized Stakeholders not receiving feedback | Delays and modifications in designs leading to cost-overruns | Sensitization of stakeholders on project execution Making clear the channels of communications among the stakeholders of the project |
| Chief Engineer | Delays and inconsistencies during project execution | Untimely delivery and project failures which leads to cost (project overruns) | Effectively adhering to project management practices |
| Municipal Development Officer | It brings delays sometimes when stakeholders must be consulted before decisions are taken It is also expensive to bring stakeholders together in terms of the time and other resources | Yes, and some of the effects are: Delays, increased cost and raises the expectations of the people | Doing proper facilitation so that stakeholder is not kept for a longtime to avoid provision of lunch and other refreshments Going to stakeholders rather than making them come to us. |

Source: Field Data (2019)

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter presents the summary of the study, draws conclusions in line with the study's objectives as well as making recommendations that the study believes will enhance project communication at LaDMA in particular and other MNDAs in general.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This has been a study to investigate how public sector organizations leverage on project communication to achieve desired project outcomes. This is coming on the back of the numerous challenges associated with construction projects in the country. The main objective of this study is to investigate and assess the importance of communication in maintaining quality and time delivery of project execution at LaDMA. To operationalize the study's objectives, the study used the purposive sampling technique to collect data from three key and relevant representatives of LaDMA. These three respondents are the Municipal Works Engineer who is responsible for designing and supervising assembly projects, the urban roads director who is also the chief engineer at LaDMA and the Municipal Development Officer whose roles include leading teams in the preparation of all plans seeing to their implementation and reporting on them.

In relation to the first objective of identifying the current project communication management practices executed at LaDMA, it was established that LaDMA uses different types of communication channels during projects and there are formal

site meetings, town hall meetings, instruction books at site and issuing of letters. It was however found that LaDMA does not employ social media tools such as whatsapp, twitter, Facebook and instagram to effectively reach their different constituents.

It was found that LaDMA employs different project communication strategies to ensure that all stakeholders are effectively reached with the right message at the right and at the right place to achieve intended objectives. It was specifically found that Project leaders at LaDMA make sure that they send/provide up-to-date and prompt information to project team members and stakeholders by ensuring the right specification is followed. It was also found that Project leaders at LaDMA make sure that messages sent are clear and devoid of confusions by making sure messages are clear. It was further found that another project communication practice of LaDMA had to do with developing communication plans to avoid inconsistencies, chaos and omissions.

In relation to the second objective of identifying the effects of project communication management on the effective delivery of projects at LaDMA, it was found from all the three interviewees that LaDMA's project communication management positively affects the assembly's project deliveries. It was specifically found that LaDMA's project communication management helps to ensure that terms and conditions of projects awarded are well understood by the parties to prevent deviation, delays and cost overruns. It was further found that LaDMA's project communication management affects project deliveries because stakeholders involved understand the project well and also monitor and assess the

project effectively, and therefore resulting in quality and timely delivery of projects.

In relation to the third objective, it was found that the main challenges of project communication management at LaDMA are delays in getting meetings organized, stakeholders not receiving feedback, delays and inconsistencies during project execution, it brings delays (bureaucracy) when stakeholders must be consulted before decisions are taken and it is also expensive to bring stakeholders together in terms of the time and other resources. It was found that these challenges and bottlenecks negatively affect project deliveries at LaDMA.

5.2 CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions have been drawn with respect to each objective:

1. In relation to the first objective of identifying the current project communication management practices executed at LaDMA, this study concludes that even though LaDMA uses different communication channels to reach its diverse constituents during projects, the assembly needs to do more especially in terms of adding social media channels if the assembly is to broaden and modernize its communication strategies and practices.
2. In relation to the second objective of identifying the effects of project communication management on the effective delivery of projects at LaDMA, this study concludes that when effectively executed, project communication management affect project delivery and timelines. This study in the same vein concludes that project communication management are firm-specific and that it is important that stakeholders for each project are identified to ensure that

the right message is sent through the right medium until it gets to these stakeholders.

3. In relation to the third objective, this study concludes that project communication management is fraught with several challenges and that when these challenges are not identified and solutions found to address them, they eventually result in undesirable outcomes such as stakeholder dissatisfaction, delays in project execution, going beyond scope and cost overruns.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations have been made:

1. This study found that LaDMA does not use social media channels to augment and support its traditional methods of communicating with its stakeholders and this as a result affects the Assembly's project communication efforts. To solve this challenge, this study recommends that LaDMA should resort to use effective use of information technology that is social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and WhatsApp since these social media platforms are used by most people. The reason for suggesting social media as an addition to the Assembly's repertoire of communication channels has to do with these social media platforms being readily available, fast and easy to deploy and not being expensive to run even though the benefit is far greater. It is the conviction of this study that when effectively employed, social media tools will help LaDMA too regularly and constantly keep in touch with stakeholders and in the process facilitate effective project communication management at LaDMA.

2. This study also recommends that management of LaDMA should establish a system of regular communication to send/provide up-to-date and prompt information to project team members and stakeholders. This recommendation is made based on the finding that the Assembly struggles to meet stakeholders and this always leads to delays in project execution.
3. This study also recommends the promotion of Communication consistency and that project leaders should always ensure that messages sent are clear and devoid of confusions and that project leaders should also try to develop communication plans to avoid inconsistencies, chaos and omissions.
4. It is also suggested that project leaders should see the importance of team charter and must identify stakeholders about their preferred communication medium and they make sure they use this medium to communicate. In the same vein, Project leaders at LaDMA must always ensure that all stakeholders have access to suitable tools needed for communication for smooth execution of projects.

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APPENDIX

KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (KNUST)

INTERVIEW GUIDE

ASSESSING THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION IN PROJECT EXECUTION BY METROPOLITAN, MUNICIPAL AND DISTRICT ASSEMBLIES: A CASE STUDY OF LA DADEKOTOPON MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY (LaDMA)

Dear Respondent,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study which is a requirement for the award of a Masters' Degree in Project Management from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. As shown above, the study seeks to investigate and assess the importance of communication in maintaining quality and time delivery of project execution at LaDMA. As a representative of LaDMA, I entreat you to provide answers to the questions posed in this interview. The study only seeks to gauge your agreement or disagreement on the issues raised. Again, you are assured that all information obtained will not be divulged to third parties.

1. Your position/role at LaDMA

4. Number of years spent working on LaDMA's projects

- a. Less than a year b. 1 – 2 years c. 3 – 4 years d. Above 5
years

SECTION 2: THE CURRENT PROJECT COMMUNICATION

MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AT LaDMA

5. Can you please mention the major project communication channels used by LaDMA during projects?

6. Can you please mention the current project communication management practices at LaDMA??

7. Do project leaders at LaDMA make sure that they send/provide up-to-date and prompt information to project team members and stakeholders? Please explain

8. Do project leaders at LaDMA make sure that messages sent are clear and devoid of confusions? Please explain

9. Do project leaders at LaDMA make sure that they develop communication plans to avoid inconsistencies, chaos and omissions? Please explain

**SECTION 3: THE EFFECTS OF PROJECT COMMUNICATION
MANAGEMENT ON THE EFFECTIVE DELIVERY OF PROJECTS AT
LaDMA**

10. In your estimation, has LaDMA's project communication management affected project deliveries?

10b. Can you please explain how LaDMA's project communication management affect project deliveries?

SECTION 4: THE MAIN CHALLENGES OF PROJECT

COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT AT LaDMA

11. Can you please mention the main challenges of project communication management at LaDMA?

12. Please what are the effects of these challenges on project deliveries?

13. In your estimation, what can be done to overcome these challenges?

Other comments?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!