SUCCESSFUL PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Insights from Distance Education practices

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DEDICATION

To the intellectually introspective and those who seek cultivation of self-realisation.

Acknowledgements

There are always the best of int entions when embarking on distan ce education projects, but upheavals and perplexities often interfere with such intentions, and threaten to derail progress. It is through lived experience of taking part in projects and heading projects t hat such realisation h as dawned on us. By making this acknowledgement, we attribute this intelligence to those with whom we worked on distance education projects. Their contribution came in various guises, includin g criticism of managemen t styles and processes; active participation in specific tasks resulting in achieving milestones; investment of long hours in search of procedures that would minimise risks and confl icts; unity of purpose during difficult stages of the different projects; and p roactive decision makin g towards the attainment of goals. Specific mention goes to colleague s we worke d with durin g the pioneering stage of the Zimbabwe Open University; the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning professionals whose assiduity and per spicacity account for institutional progress; as well as the following for initiating, sponsoring or participation: the Malawi Centre for Distance an d Continuing Education; the Commonwealth of Learning; t he Commonwealth Secretariat; the Rot ary Club International (Rubery Club, England); the Canadian International Development Agency; and the I nstitute of Development (IDM Botswana). Systematic project management has assured successful attainment of the most difficult goals.

Foreword

The goal of this book is to provide a step-by-step guideline f or managing projects in general, and managing distance education projects in particular. It is directed at two audiences, namely, practitioners who find th emselves having to ru n numerous projects, both big and small, on a day-to-day b asis, and open and distance learning practitioners who are team members of projects within their institutions.

The writers are also ho peful that th e book will be useful to aspiring pr ofessionals whose wish is to undertake specific projects. The principles and t heories about project management they come across, will go a long way in cultivating a culture of quality project management in their respective circumstances.

More importantly, the handbook is meant to be practical, and usable at various levels of distance education systems. W hat immediately comes to mind i s the Virtual University of the Small States of the Commo nwealth (VUSSC). Th e VUSSC i s a developing and vibrant institution, and the present volume serves as a contribution to the commonwealth of knowledge that the VUSSC epitomises.

Readers are urged to consult other readings to augment their insights. This will result in a consid erable depth and sophistication in t he use of p roject management skills and techniques. Since the book provides only a short guideline, and presents n o more than the skele ton for the f ield under discussion, readers are en couraged to enhance their newly acquired knowledge in two ways. Firstly, this could be done by consciously applying the ideas to typical dista nce education situation s. Secondly, practitioners should sha re experiences with other professionals in the discipline o f open and distance learning.

Paul West

Commonwealth of Learning

Vancouver, Canada

October 2009

WELCOME!!

It is a plea sure to welcome you t o this fascinating cour se: **Successful Project Management.** We believe that everyone engages in a project of one type or another, but not all o f us take time to get information about best ways to man age the project before it be gins. The aim of this tr aining course is, therefo re, to help you open up new horizons so that you can harness your full potential in managing a personal project or t hat of the organisation you work for. Althoug h focus is on distance education (DE) project management, there are generic principle s that apply to different project types.

You need t o develop, knowledge, skills, and appropriate attitudes so that you ca n become a more effective project manager who is able t o achieve intended goals. Conversely if you are n ot the manager of a given project, and are a member of the project team, going through this course will help you make more meaningful contribution towards achievement of the project objectives. This is your opportunity, and your greatest benefit will accrue if you:

- Keep an open mind.
- Interact freely with colleagues during the training.
- Contribute your opinions and experiences freely.
- Relate new ideas to typical project s you have engaged in or those you intend to manage.
- Encourage colleagues to share with you their experiences.
- Ask questions to ensure that you do not leave the training with doubts on your mind.

What are your objectives?

You probably came for this training after your organisation r ealised your potential as project manager, or you came on your own in order to le arn ideas o n how best to manage a project. What did you discuss and ag ree before coming? In other words, what are yo ur objectives for participating in this course? To remind yourself, say something below.

?? Activity

By investing in this training, I would like to achieve the following three objectives:

1.
2.
3.

Overview

Successful Project Management in Open and Distance Learning is a harvest of lived experience in project management. Its primary objective is to sensitise those whose professional commitment is the purveyance of open and distance learning products and services. On the platform of knowledge and how such knowledge is globalised, DE has emerged with vigour to defy the erstwhile stigma that it plays second fiddle to what has been termed conventional education. Evidence of successes in DE abound, but for that to happen it is not a question of approaching it in a hit or miss fashion. The present volume adds voice to that state of affairs, but this time with special attention duly paid to the field of distance education. Truthfully, project management has been written about, but in our literature review, at least in Southern Africa, there has been no specificity in writing about the potential of ideas about DE in elevating praxis to even higher echelons.

Bearing the foregoing in mind, lived experiences have been carefully selected and synchronised with generic ideas and principles of project management. By starting with the evolution of project management, the objective was to locate the discipline in its historical context, thus creating awareness to the project manager that he/she will be practising within a community of professionals. This is followed by the definition of the concept of *project,* which concomitantly elucidates related terms to which the project manager will find recourse from time-to-time. Before migrating to Chapter 3, a brief panorama of areas associated with project management in ODL is presented.

Chapter 3 characteristically touches on the vortex of project management processes, namely communication and interaction among stakeholders and team members. The Chapter places into perspective the interaction techniques that the successful manager should muster in a given context. The issue of emotional intelligence is accentuated to signify that management of a project is more than intellectual engagement, and is buttressed on the affective dimension of human relationships. It is on the basis of this foundation that Chapter 4 introduces the central issue of project planning. The Chapter justifies the purpose of project planning and in the same stride makes a clear distinction between a poorly managed and a well-managed project. This, as the Chapter explicates, is done systematically, in order to eliminate risks.

Chapter 5 logically follo ws planning effort by highlighting d ecomposition of tasks in what is referred to as structuring an d scheduling of the project. Key issues that are expanded upon include: the work breakdown structure; definition of activities; scheduling of such activities; allo cation of activities; and planning alternatives. Instruments such as th e Gantt Ch art are explained conte xtually. Both the feasibili ty and viability of a given project repose in the way the project team conducts business. This matter is accommodated in Chapter 6 whe re ideas of building up a team are given voice. It is argued, in that chapter, that first and foremost, the project manager should have an accurate knowledge of the self before getting to know team members. In brief, individual differ ences are crucial and should be managed with sagacity. The key idea discussed in the Chapter is the close link between teamwork and productive project management.

The project baseline, which is the focus of Chapter 7, argu ably falls into place when planning is complete and the team members have agreed all the scheduled dates. At this juncture, values are stored, and these inclu de the agreed tasks; th e scheduled start and fi nish dates for the tasks; team me mbers who will be responsible fo r scheduled tasks; and the budgeted cost. All that is done cognisant of performance, cost, time a nd scope (PCTS) of th e project. On grounds t hat first thin gs will have been given their priority, Chapter 8 deals with yet another very important aspect, namely, project control and evaluation. In orde r to make informed decision s both during and after the pr oject there ought to be regular meetings, regu lar reports, regular reviews, as well as budget control. The Chapter ends with a reminder to the project manager of what he/she sh ould have done for successful man agement to occur. This is in the form of a checklist. Chapter 9 focuses on the issue of managin g project team meetings.

Chapter 10, the conclu ding chapter is the rallying point of insight s and wisdom garnered during the study of the entire text. It i s argued, and we think logically so, that simulation is clo sest to verisi militude. Case studie s have been consciou sly developed to enable a pplication of ideas and principles of project management discussed hitherto. By engaging actively with the Case Studies, we are optimistic that you will typically apply the discourse of project management to your situation and continue to be a successful project manager ever after.

Abbreviations

BOCODOL: Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning

COL: Commonwealth of Learning

DE: Distance Education

DTP: Desktop Publishing

FAO: Food and Agricultural Organisation

IT: Information Technology

L1: first Language

MOU: Memorandum of Understanding

NGO: non Governmental Organisation

ODL: Open and Distance Learning

OER: Open Education Resources

PC: personal Computer

PCTS: Performance, Cost, Time, and scope

PDC: Programme Development Co-ordinator

PERT: Programme Evaluation Review Technique

PMBOK: Project Management Body of Knowledge

PPS: Project Planning and Scheduling

SADC: Southern African Development Community

TVET: Technical, Vocational Education and Training

WBS: Work Breakdown Structure

ZOU: Zimbabwe Open University

Chapter 1

The Evolution of Project Management

Project Management is evolving.
A project mentality is essential
In any organisation that wants
To compete in the topsy turvey world

Learning Outcomes

After working through this chapter, you should be able to:

- describe how project management evolved into an important area of study;
- outline the main phases in the history of project management, showing the significance of such phases in the efficient running of distance education; and
- explain why possession of knowledge about project management is important for distance education practitioners.

Introduction

If you obtained one of your qualifications through distance education study, you will have noticed that at the beginning of a given study module there is the heading: **Course Team.** Under it are listed course writers, content editors, language editors, graphic designers, programme coordinator, chief editor, course coordinator, etc. Does this not strike you that all these professionals make a contribution to a single lesson? It really should because when you compare the lesson by a lecturer in the conventional classroom, the lecturer prepares the lesson without necessarily consulting any of those people listed in the DE material. What is striking is that these people have to work together to come up with a single product. Equally striking is the probability that to collaborate, and come up with a single product is something that certainly takes time. Somebody has to coordinate the process taking into account issues like time, human relationships, resources, and so forth. Let us suppose that coming up with a single lesson takes one week. Let us also suppose that there will be so many lessons for the so many courses constituting the study programme. To conclude the process the group has to begin somewhere, and end somewhere. In today's terminology, a task of this magnitude is referred to as a project, as will be elucidated later.

To come u p with a q uality product and service, somebody has to oversee o r supervise the project. This applies t o any project in any fie ld of human endeavour other than projects in distance education. It can then be un derscored that unlike the conventional face-to-face classroom situation, DE practitioners have to bear in mind that the management of projects, in the various sections, drives a given DE institution. This is wh at makes working in a DE en vironment exciting and distinguishable from oth er pedagogic and andra gogic circumstances. What is more, some of the projects in DE are not just confined to one institution. For example, a generic teaching initiative to be disseminated across partner institutions can override institutional autonomy. Thus, according to And ersen, Grude and Hang , 1995:173) distance education projects can make "demands for change in areas of complexity".

Having appreciated the fact that project management is the mainstay of the situation under discussion, it is necessary to inform an d discuss t he subject by answerin g these questions.

- When was project management legitimised as a discipline in its own right?
- What developments have taken place in project management to date?
- What is the significance of project management i n organisations, in general, and in DE situations, in particular?

The justification

'Project Management' is an important topic b ecause all organisations, large and small, are involved in implementing new undertakings as diverse as the development of a new product or ser vice, or a public relat ions campaign. To keep ahead of their competitors, every orga nisation is faced with development of complex services and processes. These need cross-functional expertise in a given organisation.

The justification for undertaking pro ject management in any organisatio n lies at two levels, namely, the macro and the micro level s. On the macro or broader level, an organisation is motivated to implement project management techniques to ensure that what is undertaken, small or major, is delivered on time, within budget and t o specified standards. On the micro level, project management has the objectives of:

- making the project workplace conducive to teamwork;
- ensuring that deadlines are met;

- reducing cost; operating within real-time basis; and
- ensuring that important documents and in formation is shared amon g members of the team.

It is for the foregoing reasons that undertaking project management can be just ified. What other justification can you think of with reference to your workplace situation?

Brief History of Project Management

Lewis (2002:xi) has argued that although management of projects has been going on for thousands of years, the practice has been widely recognized as a discipline in its own right fo r only abou t ten years. A very short history indeed! Azzopardi (2009) confirms this view as discussed presently.

Azzopardi argues that project management ha s been practised for thousands o f years, dating back to t he Egyptian epoch, but it was in the mid 195 0s that the organisations commenced formal project management tools. The origins of proje ct management are traced in two different problems of planning and control in projects in the United States of America. One of these was to do with missile projects in the navy, where contracts consisted of research, development work and manufacturing of parts that had never been manufactured before. The project was characterised by high uncertainty, since neither cost n or time could be accurately estimated. Times of completion were based on probabilit ies: optimistic, pessimistic, and most likely. Thi s led to what has come t o be known as the pro gramme evaluation review technique (PERT). Later a new methodology known as pr oject planning and scheduling (PPS) was introduced in the private sector. PPS req uired realistic estimates of cost and time, and was consid ered more definitive than PERT. The use of project management techniques was facilita ted with the advent of the personal computer, and associated with low cost project management software.

As a discipline, therefore, project m anagement developed from different fields of application including construction, engineering, telecommunications, and defence. The 1950s marked the beginning of the modern project management era. Accordin g to Azzopardi (2009) four periods are identifiable.

Prior to 1958

During this time, the evolution of techn ology, such as auto mobiles and telecommunications shortened the project schedule. As a n example, automobile s

allowed effective resource allocat ion and mobility, whil st the telecommunication system increased the speed of communication. Addition ally, the job specificatio n, which later became the basis for work breakdo wn structure (WBS) was widely used. One of the major projects dur ing that time was con struction of the Hoover Dam in 1931 – 1936.

1958 – 1979 Application of Management Science

This was t he period of significant technology advancement such as the first automatic plain-paper copier by Xerox in 19 59, and th e rapid de velopment of computer technology. Bill Gates and Paul Allen founded Microsoft. This facilitated the emergence of several project management so ftware companies including Oracle in 1977. An example of a project und ertaken during this pha se is th e Apollo proje ct initiated in 1960 with the objective of sending man to the moon.

1980 – 1994: Production Centre Human Resources

This era is character ised by a re volution in the development in the information management sector with the introduction of the personal computer (PC) and associated computer communications networking facilities. The result was availability of low cost PCs that had high efficiency in the managemen t of project schedules. An example of major projects underta ken then (for there we re several) is the Space Shuttle Challenger project of 1983 – 1986. The projects of the time foc used on risk management, group dynamics, and quality management.

1995 – Present: Creating a New Environment

This period is characterised by developments related to the I nternet. The facility has provided fast, interactive, and customised new medium that allows people to browse, purchase, and track pro ducts and services online instantly. Many of to day's project management software packages ha ve an Internet connectivity feature. This allow s automatic uploading of data so that anyone with a standard browser can:

- input the recent status of the assigned task within a given project;
- find out how the overall project is doing;
- be informed of any delays or advances in the schedule; and
- stay in the loop for their project role while working independ ently at a remot e site.

From the foregoing, it is clear th at the evolution of Pr oject Management as a discipline has interesting pointers for all those w ho engage in projects. To give your

personal comment on what has bee n covered thus far, sha re your views by workin g on this activity.

?? Activity

> 1. To what ext ent do you agree with the view rai sed at the beginning o f our discussion that employees of dist ance education organisations are more project oriented than those operating in face-to-face organisations?
> 2. Why do you think Project Management deserves to be treat ed as a discipline in its own right?

The developments outlined by Azzopardi in the four phases clearly show that project management has been in the field of engin eering, industry and construction. How does insight from the four phases benefit project management in distance education, which is a social science?

Key Points to Remember

This chapter sought to present a brief explanation of the evolution of project management by focusing on these issues.

- The distance education practitio ner should bear in mind that project management is the mainstay of his/her role.
- Project Management has evolved into a discipline over the years against a background of its increased justification.
- The evolution of Proje ct Management can be classified into four distinct phases, each showing progress in methodologies.
- Project Management has been eminent in the fields of engineering, construction and other big projects. Bringing it to bear on social science activities, demonstrates its application potential.

Chapter 2

What is a Project?

Work over a fixed duration,

Designed to produce a facility,

Which produces a product or service

Learning Outcomes

After working through this chapter, you should be able to:

- explain the connection between project management, on the one hand, and change management and risk management on the other;
- define the concept of project management and related concepts;
- demonstrate knowledge of areas in a distance education set up that are sources of projects;
- illustrate the significance of (performance, cost, time and scope (PCTS) as targets of a project to be accomplished; and
- identify the characteristics of a project manager as a leader.

Introduction

In the beginning, the word 'Project' was associated primarily with engineering, in particular with developments at the forefront of technology. The next place it cropped up was in Information Technology where Software Programming required sophisticated project methodology. Today, though, a project mentality is essential in our topsy turvey world of the new millennium. The organisations that will remain healthy are the ones that have an effective and widely understood approach to managing projects as a way of implementing change.

Projects and Change

According to Eric Verzuh (2005:1):

> we live in a world where change-and the rate of change-is constantly increasing. In order to survive and prosper, organisations need to continually modify their products and services. Projects are the means by which these innovations are effected. Greater change = more innovations = more projects.

There is a close connection between a given project and change, and the following must be borne in mind.

- To master change we must first identify what the desired outcome of change should be. A successful project begins with a clear and agreed definition of the outcome.
- Next, it is important to plan the route by which we expect to arrive at the desired outcome, the resources required and the expected time it will take to complete the work. These are indeed integral components of any project plan.
- Change needs to be driven if it is not to be haphazard, lengthy, and costly. Anyone who has successfully completed a project will know that implementing even a simple plan, demands drive and determination.

Probably, the best way to begin is to define some of the terms we shall constantly keep referring to.

Important Terms

Project

A project can be defined as initiative to bring about change. This is done in order to achieve specific objectives, within a timescale, in a given context. A project is normally allocated a budget. Viv Martin (cited in Baume, Martin and Yorke, 2002:1) lists the attributes of a project as follws. A project :
- has a clear purpose that can be achieved in a limited time;
- has a clear end when the outcome has been achieved;
- is resourced to achieve specific outcomes;
- has someone acting as sponsor who expects the outcomes to be delivered on time; and
- is a one-off activity that would not normally be repeated.

Paradigm

A paradigm is a belief held by someone about what a particular aspect of life is like. For example, when different people look at a thick forest, they will have different paradigms. The tourist might see a tourist resort; the carpenter might see good timber for making furniture; while the poet might see an opportunity to write about untainted nature. People will, therefore, have different perceptions about a given project.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders is the term used when referring to the people who have an interest in the outcome of the project. These will vary from project to project, and include contributors, customers, managers, and finance people.

Logistics

In the military, you cannot fight a battle without ammunition, guns, food and transport. This is an aspect of logistics. Similarly, you cannot run a project without certain requirements, e.g. you cannot develop a curriculum without a budget, subject experts, students to benefit from the curriculum, and so forth.

Project Risks

Project risks are the anticipated and unanticipated obstacles that might arise in the course of a given project. A risk analysis is conducted in order to isolate the most likely ones, and involves answering the question: "What could go wrong?"

The Project Problem

The project problem can be defined in terms of the deficiency or the gap to be closed, and starts from where you are (the is) to where you want to go (the ought to be), e.g. these three questions present a project problem we associate with a family:

- "There is no money in the house to pay the child's school fees".
- "There ought to be money to pay the fees".
- "What can we do to raise the fees?"

There is definitely a deficiency or a gap to be closed.

Milestone

The milestone is an event that represents a point of special significance in the project. Usually it is the completion of a major phase. For example, when training people to write course materials is completed, that is a milestone to be followed by actual writing. A milestone is characterised by deliverables, that is, something you can see or touch e.g. a report or the learner support model of a particular study programme.

Scheduling

Scheduling is the activity of specifying milestones and assigning target dates to those milestones to ensure that deadlines are adhered to.

Project Team

The project team is made up of all those who participate in the project, and typically, members are committed to the activity of the majority. A project team is more than a group, because while the group might be involved in a project, group members may not have the required commitment.

Project Areas in open and distance learning (ODL)

There are several other terms that we will be referring to during discussion, but for now these will suffice. In distance education, for example, there are management issues, there are matters concerning the support of learners, identification and development of courses and programmes. There are also issues of quality assurance of programmes as well as issues of either adapting or adopting programmes offered by one institution. This involves contextualisation and broader consultation. Added to that, there are communication and technology issues as well. It will be noted that there are gaps, or deficiencies in these areas. Depending on which aspect of open and distance learning you have an interest in, it will be overtly clear that the areas themselves are a minefield for projects.

To borrow a leaf from the Malawi Centre for Distance and Continuing Education, here are some areas they identified as having potential for both macro and micro projects in a DE set up. At their planning meeting (June 2006), they classified these areas into three categories, namely, projects to do with DE management and administration, programmes development, and learner support. Space has been left for you to add any areas you think forms part of each category, but has not been mentioned.

Project Areas in Open and Distance Learning Management

Management	• Quality Assurance • Partnerships • Procurement • Consultancy • Facilities and resources • Staff development • Public relations
Programmes	• Originating new programmes • Adapting new programmes • Copyright issues • Developing a house style • Review of programmes • Research
Learner Support	• Field support service • Enrolment • Guidance and counselling • Gender and tutorial services • Materials distribution • Monitoring the delivery system

Projects in the area of Information Technology (IT) can also be added to the three categories cited above. When you compare these project areas with what happens in a conventional education organisation, it will be clear that DE organisations tend to be different in the sense that they are project driven.

Now, let's set another milestone. Let us suppose you work for the Swaziland Emlalatini Centre for Distance Education, the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre, the Tanzania Institute of Adult Education, or any institution in SADC, respond to this task. Briefly, summarise the project you are involved in or one you intend to embark on. State in what area of DE it is, whether learner support, IT, programmes, etc.

?? Activity

My project is about:

The project problem is:

These are the stakeholders in my project:

The milestones that necessitate scheduling are:

Bear these in mind as you go through the training. We now turn to the definition of a project. The shortest definition of a project is one given by Juran (cited in Lewis, 2002:2). He defines it as **a problem scheduled for solution.** Lewis (2002) himself defines a project as: A multi-task that has performance, cost, time, and scope requirements and is done only one time.

That means a project has specific performance requirements that have to be met (performance); a budget (cost); a definite starting and ending points (time); and clearly defined range of work to be done (scope). We shall henceforth refer to these as the PCTS targets of a project. A graphic way of expressing what a project is through Figure 2A.

Figure 2A: The PCTS targets of a Project

Performance   **Cost**

Time   **Scope**

In sum, therefore, a project is a one-off scope of work, of predetermined cost, designed to bring about a change of a defined quality performance in a given time. For example, the construction of the Tanzania-Zambia Railway (TAZARA) was a project, which had to be completed on time specification, and within a budget. No w

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that it is complete, it is no longer regarded as a project. Th e continuous programme of maintenance, to keep it in good condition is something separate. You may want to relate this example to your project.

The Standish Group (www.standishgroup.com) offers intere sting statistics about th e success and failure of projects in t he United States of America. This is with specific reference to software projects. It was found that only about 17 percent of the projects meet the PCTS targets; 50 percent must ha ve the targets changed, that is, they a re late, overspent and have the performance requirements reduced; and 33 percent are actually cancelled.

This is quite informative and causes us to reflect on the significance of the statistics. Isn't it somewhat surprising that as many as 83 percent of p rojects either fail to meet targets or are cancelled altogether? If anything this state of affairs proves that it is necessary for you to learn something about project management towards a bette r understanding of procedures and skills the proj ect manager ought to be acquainte d with. So, what is project management?

What is Project Management?

Before reading on, mention any three things you are e xpected to do as proje ct manager in a distance education set up.

You may now add t o your inte resting response the explanation that project management is the facilitation of t he planning, schedulin g and controlling of all activities that must be done to achie ve project objectives. The objectives include the PCTS targets previously alluded to. Many people share a common misunderstanding of the role of the proje ct manager. In educational contexts, project managers have been known to have practically nothing to do except to:

- decide for members what is to be done;
- tell somebody to do what needs to be done and why it should be done;
- listen to e xcuses and promises from the person supp osed to d o something, and to follow up again to see if the task has been done;
- wonder whether it is not time to get rid of the p erson who cannot do th e thing right;
- consider how much simpler and be tter the task would have been done if the manager had done it himself/herself; and

- complain privately that members are not playing their assigned roles properly.

A familiar story! Think of your own situation when a particular project was in progress. How did the manager manage the project?

On the contrary, the role of the project manager is that of an enabler. The manager's role is to:

- plan with the members;
- help the team members get the work completed;
- get scarce resources that are required;
- buffer members from disruptive outside forces;
- facilitate communication to ensure information reaches stakeholders; and
- provide leadership.

As far back as 1962, Packard gave a definition of leadership, which can be summarised as the art of getting others to want to do something that is believed has to be done. The distinction between a dictator and an effective project manager is that a dictator gets others to do things that he/she wants done. On the other hand, as a leader, the project manager gets members to want to do the work. Without leadership, projects tend to just satisfy the minimum requirements. The DE project manager actually manages several integral components of a project. Among them are: communication issues, the project team, cost issues, the action plan, the scope of the project, project risks, project stakeholders, and change. He/she also manages conflicts that inevitably arise when members from different sections of the institution come together to work on an assignment outside their normal job description. To reflect on the ideas discussed so far, work on this brief activity.

?? Activity

i. In what ways is project management linked to change management?

ii. How does the paradigm of a project member affect his/her participation in the project?

iii. What are the project logistics for the project you chose and listed above?

A useful tool you could use to capture the essence of the new project you intend to go into is to complete a one-page form that can guide you before starting with a team. The form should be submitted to the sponsor after completing it.

The Project Case Form

Brief background to the project
General aims
Initial risks
Expected outcomes
Benefits of undertaking this project
Initial estimates of cost and time **Cost** **Time**
Outcomes
Prepared by   **Date**

Key Points to Remember

This chapter sought to introduce basic notions about pr oject management. The points to bear in mind are:

- There is a close connection between the sco pe of a pro ject and ch ange management. This is simply because a projec t is carried out in order to solve a problem, and the solution of a problem brings about change in a g iven situation.

- There are certain concepts that are normally used in project management , and these are worth mastering by the project manager.

- Within a given project, t he issues o f performance, cost, time and scope is fundamental.

- There is often a misunderstanding of the role of the project manager, and this misunderstanding can be dispelled by a systematic study of p roject management as an area of human endeavour.

Chapter 3

Interaction For Successful Project Management

Interaction is contextual,

Relates to project management,

Is interpersonal,

Accounts for project success

Learning outcomes

After working through this chapter you should be able to:

- develop terms of reference for the project team;
- distinguish between verbal and non-verbal elements of communication;
- apply to typical distance education projects the different ways of using words to achieve interactivity;
- communicate convincingly when delivering your message during project management meetings;
- bring message to life through manipulation of diction, pitch, tone, pace, and volume;
- explain the significance of emotional intelligence as you interact with the team; and
- relate newly acquired concepts to projects of interest.

Introduction

It is good to have a definition of what a project is, as well as to be aware what area s in distance education are sources of projects within a given organization, but such awareness is insign ificant if we a re unable as managers of projects to interact communicatively with project stake holders. You may have a meticulous plan on paper, and schedule the project supported with what you believe to be a good team, but unless you interact with me mbers with some degree of efficiency, the project will not be a success. Typically, there is discourse we associate with project management to the extent that th e manager and the t eam can be legitimate ly regarded as a speech community. However, the discourse finds expression within the normal broader discourse of relationship s that is known as social speech. The project speech community has a purpose and uses languag e to interact. Interaction can be defined in simple terms as acting upon one another, through language in

order to exchange meaning and share understanding of the various stages of the project.

Handling DE projects has shown that every stage is full of perplexities, by way of unexpected developments (conflicts, discoveries, new ideas, ideas that fail, misunderstandings, and so forth) that shape and re-shape original intentions. No manager can predict with accuracy what the outcome of a given project milestone will be. Full knowledge of the outcome will materialize when the manager and the team have spoken, to the extent that we can say before interaction and before results are achieved, they are partners in ignorance. They simply have to exchange ideas, or interact in order to achieve those results they will have planned for. In fact, even successful planning is dependent on interaction. It is, therefore, the objective of the present chapter to answer the question: How can communicative interaction be promoted for successful project management?

The terms of reference

Embarking on a project with a group of employees in the organization without clarifying their roles is like rounding up thugs from the street and call them security guards who will look after diamonds at night. This may sound far-fetched, but in reality all that is being said is that without a road map of who does what, why, when, and towards what end chances of failure are predictable. At the very outset, it must be communicated to every team member what is happening and why. The project manager is well advised to consult with departmental heads from whom team members are drawn. The departmental heads are the ones who actually choose who to assign to the project. You as project manager will then put in writing the main ideas that will guide members. This is best expressed through a carefully conceived document known as terms of reference. Before inauguration of the project team, at the very first meeting, the document should be communicated to the team in the presence of departmental heads, and possibly with the sponsor of the project if only to demonstrate the seriousness of purpose and commitment.

It is at this stage where interaction that is focused on the project properly begins. There will be step-by-step discussion of the points contained in the terms of reference, and the presumption is that this will lead to further clarity. By the end of this meeting, all the important questions will have been answered and participants

are then requested to append their signatures to the document before it is filed in the project notebook. Below is an example of terms of reference.

Sample Terms of Reference Document

Name of Organization ……………………………………………………………….

Project Sponsor …………………………………………………………………….

Distance Education source of the project (e.g. Management, Learner Support, Programmes development, Information Technology, etc.)

………………………………………………………………………………………

Project Title ………………………………………………………………………..

Name of Project Manager …………………………………………………………

Terms of Reference

Roles

The roles of members of the project team are to:

▪ Define problem for which solution is sought

▪ Plan for the 4 aspects of the Project (PCTS)

a. Performances

b. Cost

c. time lines

d. scope

▪ Determine project stages

▪ Control implementation of project

▪ Schedule key activities (exit milestones)

▪ Monitor project quality

▪ Identify and minimise project risks

▪Agree roles of stakeholders

▪ Come up with resolutions and implement them

▪ Build project notebook through Secretariat

Project Team Meetings

▪ Shall be held once every two weeks (Thursdays) unless cancelled

▪ Secretary shall call for agenda items in advance

▪ Secretary shall keep committee records in the project notebook

▪ Deputy Project Coordinator shall chair meetings in the absence of the Project Coordinator

Meeting Procedures

▪ Role players to communicate progress to the Project Manager before the date of the next meeting

▪ In the meeting, Chair to update committee on progress

▪ Committee members to deliberate issues and make resolutions

▪ Committee to evaluate progress and advise on potential risks

▪Meetings will be focused and brief

Project team members

Name		**Signature**
……………………………	…………	…………….
……………………………	…………	…………….
……………………………	…………	…………….
……………………………	…………	…………….
……………………………	…………	…………….
……………………………	…………	…………….

Project approved by ……………………   Designation …………………..

(Signature of Sponsor)   (Position)

Project Manager …………………………   Date ………………………

(Signature)

Go over the sample terms of reference again, then work on this activity.

?? Activity

1. Suggest any improvements to the terms and to the sample document as a whole, bearing in mind the distance education organization you work for and the type of project you are interested in currently.

2. Why do you think the signatures of the team members, the project sponsor, and the project manager are necessary?

3. Why would you think that the terms of reference are interactive at this stage of the project?

Share your views with colleagues, and always keep in mind typical project situations that your organization is involved in, or intends to embark on. Let us now explore some of the useful ideas about successful interaction.

Ways with words

It is emphasized from the outset tha t to manage a project successf ully demands certain ways with word s. This is n ot solely about public speaking, th ough it is equally true that project management dem ands elements of a public speaker from the project manager. It is all about being fluent at work, and that in itself requires that you devel op your facility with words, phrase s, ideas i ssues and feelings that are pertinent to the DE project you will be handling. Please note that words alone play a minor role, but it is how yo u use them to come a cross to others that really matters. The use of words to interact is referred to a s **verbal communication**, and the use of gestures, facial expression, etc. is referred to as **non-verbal communication**. In combination, these two constitute the most effective interactive tool. Do you agree with this view?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Justify your response before reading on.

Since interaction (communication) is a two-way affair, what you tra nsmit also needs to be received by the othe r persons, in our case, team members and

stakeholders in the project. Interaction will be deemed communicative when those who receive your message absorb it, and in turn give you feedback towards a common position. This is the sort of thing that happens when participants in the project append their signatures to the terms of reference document. Signing is confirmation that interaction has occurred. If the team members you are targeting have not heard what you said, then you have not said anything. Those of you who have read Shakespeare will recall what Prince Hamlet said to his band of actors, "Suit the action to the word, and the word to the action". This is very instructive to you the project manager simply because being fluent means matching your words to your action. Could you start practicing this?

To do that we discuss the following six ideas:
- Speak with ease.
- Explain complicated ideas simply.
- Communicate convincingly.
- Bring your message to life.
- Speak clearly and audibly.
- Use pauses appropriately and powerfully.

Before a close examination of each, pause a while and say to yourself what you understand by each one e. Think of a project you are doing or intend to do in your institution, how, for example, does explaining complicated ideas of that project facilitate interaction? Are you aware of what ideas could sound complicated to members before engaging them in a planning meeting?

Speak with Ease

Your use of language instantly tips project team members about how competent or how educated you are, but most importantly how knowledgeable you are about the project that you are persuading them to render their expertise. Andrew Leigh (2008) has observed that numerous studies show the link between success and a good vocabulary, and let us add "success in project management". Everyone of us has a bank of vocabulary, but while it is fine to have it, what finally counts is how much of that we readily exploit to suit the purpose of interaction. Also, how much of that is appropriate and can concretise whatever message is to be conveyed so that there is dialogue leading to resolutions about the project milestones.

Please note that this is not the place to take you back to the classroom where grammar is preached until students go to sleep, but rather to make you awake to the realization of what you can do in practice to facilitate speaking with ease (if you have challenges with that). Project managers who hurry through their messages and leave listeners wondering what they are trying to put across might be having problems with control over their active vocabulary. A creative approach should include these points.

- Firstly, and most importantly, familiarize yourself with the vocabulary that is commonly used in DE – e.g. *adaptation* versus *origination of study materials*; *the Gantt chart*; *tutorial cycles*; *needs analysis; collaboration*, etc.- then the vocabulary of the particular project you will be dealing with.

- Steadily massage your vocabulary by checking how satisfied you are with your bank of vocabulary and expressions.

- Read in order to make yourself encounter words you do not already know and find out what they mean by reading well-written books that challenge your vocabulary.

- Learn, at least, one new word each day, and within four months you will acquire in excess of one hundred new words.

- Make your sentences short, and use the active voice to communicate your intentions.

- Take every opportunity to listen to individuals in the team, who express themselves well, as well as to other people you interact with. Make use of the words you pick to enhance your interactive capacity by appealing to the mind and to the feelings of team members as appropriate.

- Keep a good dictionary and check any new expressions you are unsure about, and keep an otebook for such purposes. This practice is never outdated at any stage of your career, more especially when it comes to project management.

You may want to add some ways you could use to speak with ease, then work on this activity.

?? Activity

To check on your bank of vocabulary and how you rate yourself regarding interaction efficiency, tick either 'Yes' or 'No'.

Item	Response	
	Yes	**No**
1. I am familiar with the vocabulary commonly used in a DE organization.		
2. As project manager I am satisfied with my bank of vocabulary.		
3. I am in the habit of reading to improve my active vocabulary.		
4. I make certain that I learn at least one new word or expression every day.		
5. I am always conscious of the length of my sentences when I address team members.		
6. I listen and learn from team members whose command of the language is effective.		
7. I consult the Dictionary regularly for new words and expression		
8. It is necessary for a project manager to keep a record of new vocabulary in a notebook.		
9. Most project managers I know show an awareness of the importance of language in management.		
10. I am convinced that once I have learnt new vocabulary, I should use it actively.		

For some items you probably ticked 'Yes' while for others you ticked 'No'. Suggest how you are going to improve in those items where you ticked 'No'. Where you ticked in the affirmative, we encourage you to keep up the good practice.

Simplify complicated ideas

Somebody is usually appointed project manager on the basis of his/her expertise in that area where the project occurs. For example, in a DE institution a project on alternative ways of calculating costs for different programmes is best driven from the finance section. The incumbent project manager will be familiar with the deeper knowledge and issues pertaining to costing than someone from the corporate services section. The only problem with this view is that those who are more

knowledgeable about issues may not be sen sitive to the fa ct that what they think is simple, will be complicated to some members of the team. The saying that familiari ty leads to myopia can be quite true in this case.

Think of the section of the institution you belong to, and say to yourself what ideas are likely to be complicated for those who come from different departments. Remember that a project is typically comprised of representative from departments. As an example, in a project on course development, chances are that representatives from procurement, estates, finance or corporate services might experience difficulties coming to terms with words like: 'programme regulations', 'credit points', 'vertical and lateral sequencing of subjects', 'learning outcomes', 'assessment procedures', to name but a few. Though these might sound simple to the expert, it is best to develop a sensitivity that will make interaction during project meetings more comprehensible.

The project manager is, therefore, well advised to avoid jargon. Give jargon its marching orders by substituting complex words with simpler ones, or by explaining complex concepts in more accessible language.

?? Activity

Think of complex ideas and concepts from the area of DE you operate in. State your area, and then list some of those.

1. The area you operate in:

2. The list of ideas and concepts:

Put across your ideas convincingly

One of the important points to b ear in mind is th at the project manager must sound convincing. To sound convincing you must believe in the p roject, and it is only when

this precondition is in place that you can convert those team members who may have doubts. As you communicate your intentions an d as you interact with th e team, the interest and enthusiasm you cherish for the project must be manifested in your very words (verbal communication) and your ve ry actions (non-verbal communication). Arguably, that is the best way t o convince stakeholde rs, otherwise if you are unconvinced about the merits of the project towards achieving the strategic goals of the institution, why should team members be the opposite?

Do you realize that once we talk about you manifesting enthusiasm brings us back to eloquence and language proficiency? To be convincing you may want to do some of these things:

- Plan every meeting you are going to chair by having a clear agenda.
- Decide which items of the agenda are the most import ant and begin with those when minds are still fresh.
- Carefully select words, from your fund of voca bulary that you could u se to introduce each agenda item.
- Match the seriousness of the item on which interaction takes place with facial expression and gestures, but making sure that you spice it with a sense of humour to make it readily digestible to th ose you in teract with, your interactants.
- Cite concrete examples from shar ed experience in order to illu strate the issues under discussion.
- Recruit interactants at various points of the dialogue to share their conviction, and compliment them for elevating the discussion towa rds attainment o f project milestones.
- Recapitulate key points at the end of the me eting to re inforce everyone's conviction.

You have probably ma naged a project before, or if you ha ve not, you have been a project participant at some point. How convincing did you find yourself, or that manager you served under? See if what you say helps you answer this question.

?? Activity

The content of your message

The term 'messaging' is used to refer to the act of conveying content with the view to accomplishing more than simply transmitting su ch content to passive recipients, but stimulate interaction. Messaging is all about packaging content related to the project in the most communicative language, hence the insep arability of content from language

As project manager you should remember that although words and actions are an important part of sound ing convincing, the cont ents of the message can potentially affect the cr edibility of what you say. As an example, in a project w here a project manager of a learner support project communicates that th e project do es not nee d much input from course developers woul d, in practical terms, be conveying inaccurate content, which might ren der his/her suitability for the project leadership outright doubtful. It is, therefore, judicious to get one's facts right as manager so as to avoid putting off some team members by observing the following:

- Plan the information you are going to communicate before hand, and make a clear distinction between facts of the matter u nder discussion and personal opinion. There is a strong likeliho od that among team members th ere are some who may have better expertise than yours though they ma y not be project managers.

- There is prudence in supporting your argument with facts, so you do well to select those facts, and not unnecessary detail to buttress your argument.

- Quite apart from mars halling the relevant facts, what you say should be logical and easy to follow. This you do by consciously making use of tho ught connectors. These are words and phrases like: 'however', 'in addition to', 'compared with', 'namely', 'compared to', 'first and foremost', 'lastly', 'i n conclusion', 'for exa mple', and ma ny others. Do these sound familiar fro m your school days?

- Somebody has said that brevity is the soul of wit. In presenting conte nt, the project manager is encouraged to be brief and to the po int. The span of attention for most peopl e is short, so a yarn of stories ca n only dissuade prolonged attention as can be jud ged from facial expre ssions and other indicators.

- In a team meeting, underpin your o pinions and facts with tangible evidence. Facts and statistics are an instance of good tangible evidence. To illustrate, the project manager who wants to encourage teamwork to ensure success of the project might cite success rates of proje cts elsewhere. For example, he/she might say that the Standish Group (www.standishgroup.com) has found that only 17% of all software projects done in the USA meet their original targets; 50% h ave their targets chang ed, meaning that they are usually late and overs pent; and the remaining 33% are actually cancelled, that is they fail. This can be used to ask the team, at the commencement of a project (a) what they make of the statistics; (b) what they think makes projects fail; and (c) where they want to see their project among the three categories.

You may now contribute to our discussion by r esponding to the next activity, which requires that you reflect on the fore going. Make reference to personal experience in project management.

?? Activity

1. Why do you think it is necessary to beef up your presentation of content with statistical evidence in a project meeting?

2. What are the interactive benefits of making your presentation of content logical and easy to follow during a project meeting?

3. Why do you think it is important to give people the most important information first when you make a presentation?

4. With reference to a typical distance education project of interest to you, suggest the main content and illustrate how you would present it logically.

Bringing the message to life

Let us suppose you are able to sound convincing and present your co ntent logically. Is that all you need to put your message across more interactively? You may need to consider bringing the message to life, not to say it will be dead, especially when you are able to fulfil the above mentioned messaging conditions. Creative managers often enliven their impact using creative phrases and catchwords. For example, think of a situatio n when you begin to notice that some people are now busy drawing cartoons while you are presenting. Does that tell you anyt hing? Yes, probably they are getting bored.

The secret is to define the purpose of interaction before a project meeting. If you are vague about your aims this may explain why you do not achieve the intended effect. A lifeless p resentation sends mixed signals b ecause if you present the message without clarity about the result you want to achieve, then it is likely your impact will be seriously diluted. A lively message, among other things, should:

- have an aim of what the language will achieve;
- be proactive of what obstacles might stop the message from being well received; and
- consciously try to overcome obstacles.

We can simplify this sequence in the form of a diagram.

Figure 3A: Message clarity

Aim ⟹ Obstacles ⟹ Solutions
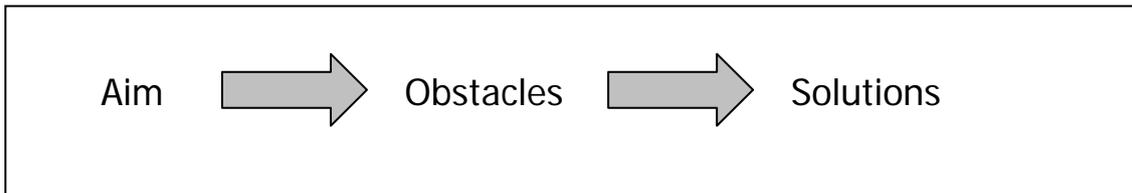
The obstacles alluded to may include resistance by some members due to personality clash or lack of interest in the project; content that is beyond comprehension; workplace politics that might be at the back of the individual member's mind; or pure ignorance of what is being communicated. These are the perplexities you come across when presenting the message, and the solutions lie in the use of language. There are no ready quick fixes because every situation dictates different responses. The manager has to be sensitive to the situation and respond accordingly. He/she may:

- Introduce well-timed humour. A joke cracked in good taste has been known to relax a tense atmosphere. Somehow it brings the message to life.
- Use examples to which members can readily relate. These could be from the workplace, and which you as project manager know that they will stir personal interest. That type of language makes interactants feel they are part of the project.
- Use similes e.g. "Tutors who resort to the lecture method during weekend tutorials encourage students to be as silent as a grave when one tries to engage them in a discussion". This makes the impression about unimaginatively handled tutorials vivid.

- Choose language that directly makes the individuals feel they are part of the interaction, e.g. 'Let us' not 'Let me'; 'We are going to' not 'I am going to'; 'Our understanding is…' not 'My understanding is…', etc.

- Dramatise issues or narrate short stories to illustrate important points.

- Use language that shows you acknowledge how attentive and cooperative the team members are e.g. "I can see that you have been listening very attentively, judging by your superb contribution".

- You can also bring the message to life by using language that encourages forging ahead with the project rather than that which slows down effort. Words like: "At this pace, we are really getting there", or "The good ideas from the team have taken us far", make the members feel they are achieving. However, words like: "This project is making our hair turn grey", or "We always have palpitations when we think about this monstrous project", or "Colleagues, I think there is burnout on account of this project", can only make your message lifeless.

- Occasionally, ask referential questions while you are making the presentation. These are questions to which you genuinely do not know the answer, open-ended questions that stimulate original responses. When members say why they think or feel in a certain way, chances are that they will be compelled to be mentally alert and interact most meaningfully.

Remember these are suggestions only, and for them to be successfully applied depends on your situation. You can only come to terms with them if you say something personal about them in the activity that follows.

?? Activity

1. How does citation of examples during presentation bring your message to life?

2. In what ways does good humour improve interactivity when the project manager is putting across ideas?

3. Suggest any two referential or open-ended questions that you can use to bring your message to life.

4. Why do you think such questions achieve the goal of enlivening your message?

Clarity and audibility of expression

Are you aware that we are so used to hearing our voice that we tend to pay little attention to how we sound when we speak. This is because in everyday social interaction we get by in our conversations without paying much attention to what we communicate and how we communicate it. However, in order for those we interact with in the context of a project to understand us, what we communicate must be clear while at the same time we must be heard (clarity and audibility). A distance education project for which an institution invests financial, IT, human and other resources should be perceived as a serious matter. As manager of the project you cannot, therefore, afford not to be heard because you are unable to articulate issues clearly. You should pay attention to what you say and how you say it. This includes diction, pitch, volume, tone, and pace. Never mind this jargon because we are going to clarify it in a moment.

Diction

Diction refers to how you say what you say, that is, whether you pronounce words and sentences clearly or not. This is an issue in many countries where English, the language through which interaction for projects is a second, or even a third language. Even among speakers of the same mother tongue, there are dialect variations of the first language (L1) that influence the way English words are pronounced. This situation is exacerbated in circumstances where the team is made up of members from different nationalities. A typical case can be cited from a particular DE institution in Southern Africa where an Indian professional headed a project and the team membership comprised people whose first languages were Setswana (Botswana), KiSwahili (Uganda), Nyanja (Malawi), Shona (Zimbabwe), and Ibo (Nigeria). As you will appreciate, this situation can be complex especially that the people pronounce English words differently.

So, how does the project manager deal with such a situation to ensure clarity and audibility?

- Firstly, it is necessary to acknowledge the differences in pronunciation, and assure participants that it is not a disadvantage, but rather an advantage since members will benefit from the differences.
- Secondly, when making a presentation, you should occasionally check if you are speaking clearly by asking for feedback.
- Thirdly, ask one member to summarise what you have already *said*.

- Fourthly, avoid jargon because it can only worsen the uptake of the messages.

- Fifthly, practise enunciating your own words. A good dictionary will give you a lead on pronunciation in accordance with what we call standard English. For example, it is not standard English to pronounce the word 'target' as 'tajet'. You can think of other examples that can lead to lack of clarity.

Pitch

Pitch refers to the manner in which you vary your voice in order to create the required effect. A project manager whose pitch is weak is often unaware that he/she talks in a monotone. A monotone can be boring when you address project team members. Boring voices occur for several common reasons, which you can easily correct in order to achieve interactivity. Some of these are: dreary content, over-reliance on a written script, and a voice that lacks variety. Do you think you can do something about these three aspects of pitch? What do you think?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

If your answer is 'Yes', what can you do then? To begin with, reading your presentation is a sure way of being monotonous, so practise putting across your message with minimum reference to the script. That way you will be able to raise or lower your voice and accompany it with non-verbal emphases for effect. Presenting content that you have not carefully thought about is another sure way of being monotonous, especially when such content is not logically sequenced. So, plan your content and ensure it attracts attention. Finally, give your voice, the instrument of interaction, some colour and variety. Accompany that with a smile wherever possible. More importantly, practise how to vary your pitch, learning what words and phrases to emphasise by putting energy into them. What do you think about this?

Volume

Talking either too loudly or too quietly can undermine clarity and audibility. If you find participants asking you to speak up or to repeat yourself, it probably indicates that you have a rather quiet voice even though it sounds perfectly normal to you. You should not rule out the fact that some of the people who ask you to repeat yourself are bewildered by ignorance of what you are saying, and you should use your

judgment to decide wh ether you really have to repeat yourself or simplify the message to accommodate them.

Tone

Tone conveys whether you are being friendly, angry, cheerful, patient, passionate, etc. and can play an i mportant part in establishing clarity and audibility. When things are difficult at a particular stage o f the project, as they are bound to be at times, I have noted that the project manager who is wei ghed down by the pressure presents the message with characteristic la ck of enthusiasm. The tone of dejection and low spiritedness becomes evident. Presentation is usually accompanied with loss of patience for those wh o appear unnecessarily dull and slow to g rasp simple messages. This often borders on anger as the project manager feels peeved and out of sorts. The misfortune is that like f lu, this disposition contaminates team members, and you en d up with a meeting th at is depressed. If the manager displays a to ne characterized with lack of enthusiasm, why should team members be enthusiastic?

Pace

Pace is concerned with how fast o r slow the p roject manager speaks. Either wa y, speech that is too fast or too slow d oes not achieve its goal. When you are too fast, you lose some of the audience, and when you are too slow the same applies. The good project manager will strive for a balance between th e two, and ways to slow down include:

- adding more pauses to give people time to think;
- varying your delivery p ace so that sometimes you slow d own, and at other times speed up; and
- using less energy in actually speaking, so that word s come out more smoothly and less jerkily.

Among some of the ways to speed up speech are:

- put more energy into talking so that the words come out more strongly
- practise before you present; and
- learn to time yourself with a watch. This helps you improve speed.

You will note that these are suggestions and th e extent to which they will work for you towards audibility and clarity depends on your eagerness to improve where you think you have a deficiency. The bottom line though is that pace affects interactivity, and should be the project manager's concern to improve it.

?? Activity

1. In what way is d iction linked with th e specialist vocabulary of the area of distance education from which a project of interest to you is derived?

2. What do yo u think is the distinction between pi tch and tone? Explain how each one affects clarity and audibility.

3. "The project manager has to spea k fast in orde r to ensure t hat he/she covers more items in t he meeting". To what extent do yo u agree with this view?

Using pauses for successful interaction

A pause can be defined as mo mentary silence that is calcu lated to have some effect on the prog ress of the dialogue. The purpose of a pause is to leav e space for reflection and for team me mbers to fill in the gaps, and the good project manager should not regard it as a waste of time. A pause can be timed to coin cide with the end of an important point, and this will a llow interactants to reflect and digest the point raised in retrospec t. It can also coincide with an open-ended question to allow team members to p lan a fit ting response in language th at is appro priate to the situation. In sum, the benefits of momentary silence are that it:

- creates a f eeling of o penness and spaciousness for yourself and others;
- adds gravitas to how you come across;
- helps reduce cognitive load by allowing members time to think prospectively; and
- serves as a sign of respect for the previous speaker.

When you use silence well, you will be more observant and focused.

Emotional Intelligence

Let us f inally examine an aspe ct of su ccessful interaction that we as proje ct managers often take fo r granted. Oftentimes we take little or no re gard of the affective dimension, forgetting that it is on the basis of h ow people feel that they make choices about w hat to abso rb or pay attention to in project management meetings. It is this sen sitivity that distinguishes the successful and more interactive manager from the less succe ssful one. Andrew Leigh (2008:58) has defin ed emotional intelligence as "being aware about what is happening to others emotionally and at the same time knowing how your own emotions are affected." One may add "during a project meeting". As an e xample, the project manager with low emotion al intelligence would not be realizing that at any given momen t during a meeting there is potential to make others feel devalued, inade quate, intimidated, angry, frustrated, or guilty. It is, therefor e necessary to ensure on his/her part that such negative feelings are constantly repulsed, and sensitivity and choice of language are key.

As the meeting progresses, and as interaction a nd dialogue becomes more inclusive of every member, frustration or a s ense of being devalued does not o nly emanate from you the manager, but from other team members whose responses help in t he reconstruction of dialogue as they interact with colleagues. The mana ger must b e alive to such developments and consciously st abilize the tenor of discourse so that objectives can be attained with mini mum injury to emotions. On your part, act as a party host by pretending that everyone in the meeting is a guest at your party. Typically as host you would pay particular attention to each person before moving on to the next. That approach has the potential of improving the chemistry among the participants. How easy do you think it is to build up emotional intelligence in yourself?

☐ Easy   ☐ Difficult

Perhaps this is a d ifficult question to ask. My response is that while there is so me debate about how far we can increase ordinary intelligence such as capacity with mathematical calculations or your facility with l anguage, one can cert ainly develop one's emotional intelligence. This is made possible by the fact that it is possible t o read the social dynamic, that is, what is happening at any given moment during a project meeting. You will now be requested to give your own views about thi s important aspect of interaction by working on an activity.

?? Activity

Sensitivity is an important aspect o f developing emotional intelligence when dealing with a team in a given DE project.

1. What would you say are positive aspects of sensitivity?

2. What would you say are negative aspects of sensitivity?

3. From personal experience, cite spe cific interaction circumstances, in a given project, when team me mbers feel devalued, ignored, intimidated, or frustrated.

In project managemen t, emotional intelligen ce involves reading situations and interpreting the behaviours of the team me mbers and stakehold ers under your leadership, their intentions, emotional states, and their willingness to interact. Fortunately, there are ways to increase your e motional intelligence, a nd these are best appreciated by answering these important questions re lative to you r particular situation.

- What is the spatial pict ure in the situation? In other words, how have the y chosen to occupy space? Some might adopt sleeping postures.
- What sort of behaviours do you observe in the situatio n? For exa mple, coming in late, moving in and out, mini dialogues, etc.
- What is hap pening in th is situation? That mean s you have to check ou t for involuntary signs as indicators of what is happening inside a person.

- What are the signs of th ought and meaning in this situat ion? Pay attention to the words used and t   he accompanying non-verbal actions to help you determine the mood of the meeting and act accordingly.

This is prob ably not easy to do, bu t has nevertheless to be done for t he sake of a successful project in d istance education. It will be conclu ded that when properly equipped with the l anguage related interactive skills, the project manager is bette r positioned to go through meetings with success. Such meetings will in clude planning meetings, scheduling meetings, meetings in which teams are structured, meetings to do with project evaluation, and meetings aimed at reviewing progress.

Key Points to Remember

Systematic interaction is a precondition for successf   ul management of distance education, mainly because participants have to wo rk as a tea m. Interaction directly implies a conscious control and exploitation of the most effective potential of expressive language in both its verbal and non-verb   al manifestations. As   an example, project managers who communicate and interact well usually listen hard for silences of the team members. They detect enthusiastic ag reement, bitter resistance or unspoken misgivings. This co mes from focusing, re ally listening and staying present. Towards that end, in this chapter we covered a range of key ideas on the subject of interactivity, and these included:

- Terms of reference for t he project team. These form the basis for both   initial and subsequent interaction.
- There are certain ways with wor ds that are facilitative of more eff ective communication and pur posefulness. These were discussed as advice t o the project manager e.g. how to s   peak with ease, the need to explain complicated ideas lucidly; and the essence of speaking clearly and audibly.
- We also dwelt on the importance   of message content, that is, the need to ensure that the content is log ically sequenced and put acr oss in a manner that brings the message to life.
- The issues of diction, voice pit ch, tone, volume, and use   of pause s were explored   as a way of illustrating   the fact that successful interact   ion is dependent on exploitation of these elements of communication.
- We concluded the chap ter with an examination of the need for the manager to   actively develop emotional intelligence   for   successful plannin g and scheduling of distance education projects.

Chapter 4

How to Plan the Project

Doing the right things,

With the right people,

At the right time and place,

With the right quality.

Learning Outcomes

After working through this chapter, you should be able to:

- Justify the purpose of planning in project management;
- Make a cle ar distinction between a poorly managed and a well-managed project;
- List and clarify phases of a well-managed project;
- Specify the main steps taken in managing a project and be able to present an unambiguous justification for each one; and
- Explain how the risk analysis template can be used to assess potential areas of risk.

Introduction

One of the tasks of t he project manager in any organisation is to achieve the organisation's objectives through t he effective management of reso urces, both human and hardware. This means using such resources to:

- make the correct interventions;
- do the right things;
- do the things at the right time; and
- with the right quality.

The need f or the proje ct manager to make sure that cer tain stages are properly planned cannot be overemphasised.

Project Planning and organisation

Of all the aspects of project management referred to above, planning is probably the most crucial. Without planning, it is difficult to imagine how, for example, the project manager can determine targets, to say nothing of how he/she can convince stakeholders to buy into the project. Both well-managed and badly managed projects go through stages or phases. Think of a badly managed project in your workplace. What phases did it go through? Dou remember seeing any of the characteristics in Figure 4A below?

Figure 4A: Phases of a poorly managed project
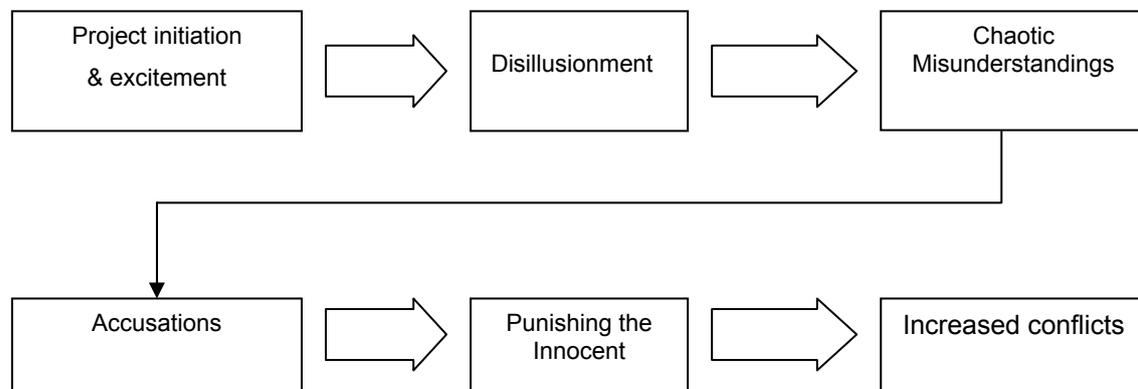
What follows in Figure 4B represents characteristics of the phases followed when a project is well managed. How do these phases differ from those in Figure 4A? There are three basic considerations that a successful project manager takes into account. These are:

- **Defining the problem**

  Defining the problem involves identifying the problem, then decide what the difference will be after solving it.

- **Developing solution options**

  In this case, the manager and his/her team determine how many different ways are available about solving the problem. They should brainstorm solution alternatives.

- **Planning the project**

Planning involves answering the questions – Wh at must be done? Who must do what? What is the cost? How is it to be done? When should it be done ? Project planning is summed up in Figure 4B.

Figure 4B: Phases of a well-managed project

```
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│      Define the problem         │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                 │
                 ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│     Brainstorm Alternatives     │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                 │
                 ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│ Plan the Project                │
│ Specify what has to be done     │
│ Decide roles                    │
│ Decide how a task is to be done │
│ Set target dates for each task  │
│ Determine cost                  │
│ Establish resources required    │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                 │
                 ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│     Brainstorm Alternatives     │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                 │
                 ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│      Implement the plan         │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                 │
                 ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│      Monitor the Project        │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                 │
                 ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│       Close the Project         │
│        Lessons learnt.          │
│      What was well done?        │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
```
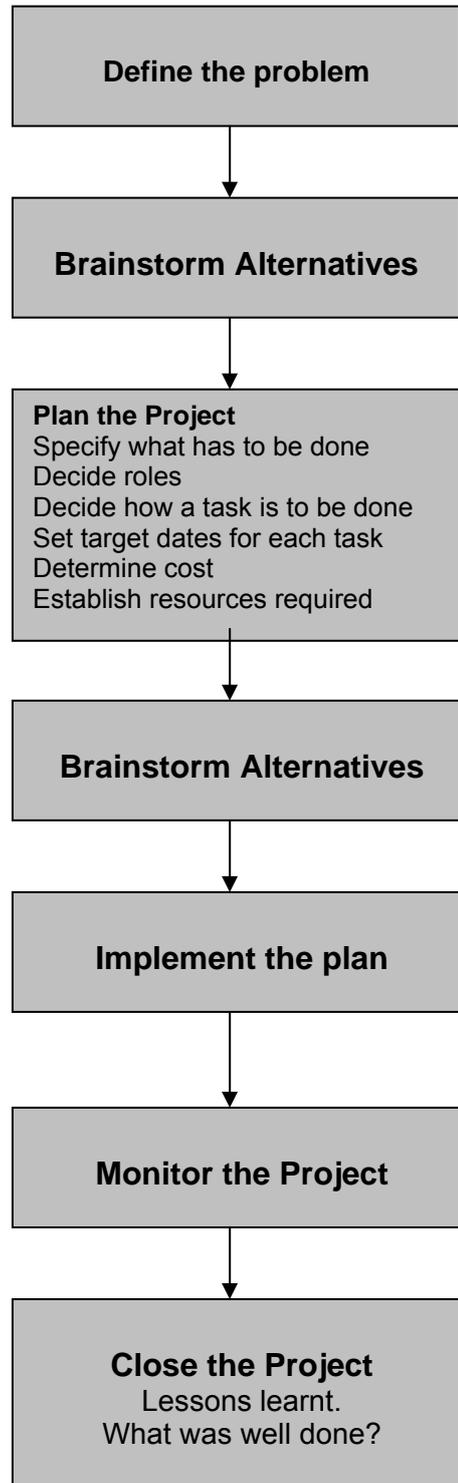
It is worth noting that the emphasis and timing spent on a particular stage will depend on the magnitude of the task, the amount of thinking and input needed for the job.

The good manager will ensure that the team members are clear what the problem is, why it is said to be a problem, why it has to be solved, and agree what alternative solutions are at the disposal of the team. Most certainly, if there is no agreement at the beginning, the project is likely to lead to some of the most difficult conflicts. There are several barriers to good planning, namely:

- Prevailing paradigms among the members. A paradigm is what each individual member perceives about a problem. People have different beliefs about a given situation.
- The nature of human beings. It is natural for members to be sceptical about colleagues or the project itself. This is usually because of workplace politics or personality clashes.
- Competing responsibilities. Members often belong to different sections of an organisation, and their being assigned to membership of the project may be against their will. Some will most likely consider the project to be interfering with what they consider their core responsibilities in the organisation.
- Negative attitudes. These arise for various reasons, one of them having to do with taking orders from a manager who is not the member's supervisor.

You may have other barriers from personal experience. Add them to the few already given above. When you have done that, let's turn to planning before the project begins, during the course of the project, and when we have finished the project. We shall base our discussion on a given project, which is:

Developing a communication course for immigration officers.

The problem

Immigration officers in the country face challenges communicating with visitors coming from all over the world. Currently there is no training programme to help them cope with the situation.

P= The team has to work together to develop the course.
C= The Ministry of Home Affairs has allocated a budget for the project.
T= Development of the course has to take place within the current financial year.

S= The course should help officers deal with speakers of different languages, not speakers of English only.

Before Starting the Project

The planning should include three steps.

Step One: Setting objectives

The following should be agreed. Add any two of your own in the space below.

- Define and agree what is to be accomplished.
- Ensure objectives are specific (clear to everybody), measurable, achievable (can be attained), realistic (not too far-fetched), and time-based (attainable within agreed time).
- Agree who will play what role.
- Establish a shared project vision.
- Agree about time lines (scheduling).
- As a team, specify how you will know when you are succeeding or failing stage by stage.

Step Two: Plan and organise for action

The following should be agreed. Add any two of your own in the space below.

- Determine the strategy the team is going to follow in order to tackle the job.
- Analyse the tasks and activities that need to be done.
- Agree on the resources required (people, time, materials, equipment, authority)
- Establish alternative methods in case things do not go according to plan.
- A leader whose authority is defined should be appointed. The head of the organisation should ensure the leader's role is explained to all.

Step Three: Establish controls

The following should be agreed. Add any two of your own in the space below.

- The standards of performance expected should be clear to every member.
- Measures to ensure compliance with agreed standards should be put in place by the team.
- Controls, milestones and exit points that will be used to keep in touch with progress should be agreed (time checks, formal reporting, informal reporting, observation, systems, etc.)

- Threats and risks should be raised at regular meetings.
- Failure should be recognised by all and confronted in a constructive manner.
- Ensure that ever team me mber understands the plan, it s time scale and where the individual's contribution fits.

Regarding risks, it is helpful to assess risks of failure relative to the schedule, th e budget, project quality, and customer satisfaction. The simplest way to conduct a risk analysis is to ask:

- What could go wrong?
- What could keep us from achieving the project objectives?

It is beneficial to list the possible risks first, then think about contingencies for dealing with them. Figure 4C gives a template for risk analysis.

Figure 4C Risk analysis template

What could go wrong?	Contingency measures

During the Project

Planning during the project involves re-planning when plans formulated before project inception need re-visiting. We shall refer to that step as the implementatio n stage.

Step 4: Implementation

There are four implementation components that the project manager should account for, namely, direction, duration, dynamics, and discussion.

Direction

To establish a sense of direction, t hese questions should be constantly asked, and answers provided:

- Are the team members complying with the objectives?
- Are we succeeding or failing?
- Is the project moving in the right direction?
- Are the controls being met?

▪ Is the product, at various stages, of good quality?

Duration

Duration refers to the time taken to accomplish the project on the basis of time taken for different tasks on the action plan. Three questions should guide operations.

▪ Are we sticking to the time scale?
▪ Are the milestones being met?
▪ Is the deadline still achievable?

Dynamics

Dynamics is concerned with the way members operate in order to achieve a common purpose. It is the project manager's prerogative to constantly check on the dynamics by asking and answering these questions.

▪ What is the level of productivity?
▪ Is everyone actively involved? If not, then why not?
▪ Is the group atmosphere positive or negative?
▪ Apart from words spoken, are there certain actions that indicate the prevailing team spirit?

Dialogue

Interaction is crucial during operations. For one thing, project members do not belong to the same department, hence the need to keep one another informed. It pays to repeat the same information, for among members are some who are slow to grasp, or others who may deliberately pretend that they have not heard. The project manager should keep the following questions in mind.

▪ Are members still aware of key issues: their individual roles, the purpose of the project, the time-lines, etc.?
▪ How is information being shared?
▪ Does everyone know what is going on?
▪ Do members who have replaced old ones know enough about the project?
▪ Are regular meetings held?
▪ During any given meeting is there a clear agenda?
▪ During meetings, are all members encouraged to contribute to the dialogue?
▪ Are members who fail to attend meetings informed about latest developments?
▪ Are stakeholders who do not attend meetings given regular update on the project progress?

After Completing the Project

When the last mileston e is rea ched, we say that the project has b een completed. What then remains is to reflect and assess the processes from the beginning up to the end. The team should meet and answer some questions. This will be Step 5.

Step 5: Project Evaluation

The following questions will guide decision-making and the way forward.

- When was the project completed?
- Were the milestones and exit points completed within the target time scale?
- What were the main causes of delay, if any?
- What went well?
- What went badly?
- Who worked well or badly, and why?
- How well and efficiently were resources used?
- Why did the project succeed or fail?
- Was the product of good quality?
- What changes could made in th e future for the better management of a comparable project?
- What lessons can be learned from the project?
- What can be done to improve teamwork?
- Did the project receive full institutional support?

On the basis of what has been d iscussed above, contribute your own views by working on this activity, which is based on the project topic already mentioned earlier, namely, ***Developing a communication course for immigration officers.***

?? Activity

> i.   What is meant by objectives that are measurable and achievable?
>
> ii. What is the distinction between milestones and exit points of a project?
>
> iii. When is informal reporting used during the operational stage of a project?
>
> iv. As project manager how do you ensure that every member is involved in the project activities?
>
> v.   What is the importance of dialogue among members when carrying out the project of the communication course?
>
> vi. Suppose that at the end of the project you concur with team members that the project sponsor (head of the institution) was not supportive. What steps would you take to ensure that the new project you are going to manage receives the necessary support?

Key Points to Remember

A distance education organisation has as its main business the conducting of projects almost on a day-to-day basis. There are main projects as well as sub-projects handled at different levels of authority. Unlike the teacher in the conventional school situation, whose primary responsibility is to look after the class for the day, the DE practitioner functions differently. He/she can be called upon at short notice to prepare a proposal for a group of learners who want to do a short course; conduct a feasibility study for a partnership with an organisation and submit a report; travel around the country to market a new course; establish why learners continue to do badly in a course and make recommendations; or establish the extent to which a course offered by another institution, in Namibia, for example, can be contextualised to suit the needs of learners in Mozambique. These are projects that require performance, cost, time, and have a certain scope. Planning becomes essential. So, to sum up:

- Where there is no plan, the manager has difficulties controlling the project.
- Members who must play a role in the project should participate in the plan.
- The plan should be agreed at a formal meeting, and signed by members.
- All project documentation must be properly filed.
- When a milestone has been achieved, there must be exit criteria to monitor it.
- The manager must ensure that any changes to the project plan should be approved before making them.
- The project team should act proactively by assessing possible risks to the project.
- All logistical matters should be carefully planned and reviewed regularly.
- Project planning involves re-planning.

Chapter 5

Structuring and Scheduling the Project

Work breakdown structure.

Define activities.

Schedule activities.

Allocate activities.

Plan alternatives.

Learning Outcomes

After working through this chapter, you should be able to:

- define the concept of WBS and clearly explain its significance in pr   oject management;
- specify a project topic and design a schedule following the WBS;
- build up the project team; and
- design a Gantt chart for use in scheduling.

Introduction

Now that we have discussed the various areas of planning in a global manner, let us single out an area of management that is extremely crucial, namely, work breakdown structure (WBS). We regard project managers in DE as the f oundation of the project, or that of project planning. A Guide to the Proj ect Management Bod y of Knowledge (PMBOK (cited in Micah Mathis, 2009:1) defines WBS as:

> a deliverable-oriented hierarchical decomposition of the work to be exe cuted by the project team to   accomplish the proje ct objectives and crea te the required deliverables.

The seemingly intimidating jargon will be unpa cked as we discu ss along. It will b e pointed out at the out set that cre ating a qua lity WBS requires ener gy, time, a nd people. However, before getting into detail, let us examine its purpose.

Purpose

Why, in your opinion do we need to create a WBS for DE projects? What purpose do you think it serves for the IT coordinator of five or more re   gional centres in an open

and distance learning (ODL) organisation, for exa mple? Why shouldn't the coordinator simply get started on the actual work instead of drawing charts? You may not have asked su ch questions as a past or present pr oject manager, but I am certain you have heard them fro m other managers or team members. Important stages for the project manager are to ensure that the team gets together; agrees on the project mission; structure the tasks.

The Project Mission

The question you need to answer is: How do we go about it? The first thing to have is the project scope state ment. This i s captured in the project mission statement an d the

project vision statement. Me mbers of the team, to ensure unity of pu rpose, must share these two. The project mission is a concise expression of purpose of operation and the desired end state that that serves as the initial impetus for planning purposes. A Mission Statement for the BOCODOL/ ZOU Project could r ead something like:

> To develop, adapt, contextualise and deliver by distance education the
> degree in Human Reso urces Management for academic and entrepreneurial
> empowerment of the students.

Jurgen Appelo (2009), talking ab out the characteristics of a project mission statement observes that it should tell you about the fundamental purpose of the project, and concentrates on the present. It defines t he customer and critical processes, and informs you of the desired level of performance. Revisit the mission statement cited above, and establish the ex tent to which it measures up to th e criteria spelt out by App elo. Having done that, I want you to spell out t he mission statement for the project you are either managing or intend to manage, then read on.

?? Activity

The Mission Statement for my project is:

The Project Structure

The WBS should be developed before the schedule, that is, it depicts the main parts of the project. As an example, in a distance ed ucation project where st udy materials have to be originated b y the organisation, the broader areas must be identified fir st. These are:

- Areas that are the responsibility of the sponsor such as the signin g of a memorandum of agreement if the project is done collaboratively with a partner.
- Areas to do with course development such as identification of writers, training of writers, editorial issues, etc.
- Areas that fall under the learner support section of the organisation such as preparing the tutorial cycle, identification of study centres, enrolment of learners, etc.
- Areas to do with project budget such as finan cial resources, remuneration of part-time staff, etc.

At this stage there is n o attempt to sequence t asks and activities. This is the roug h drawing of the project and should be agreed with stakeholders. As you will appreciate, the WBS is a good way to show the scope of the job. Participants begin to see re sponsibilities before getting into det ails, which are the main focus of t he schedule. Essentially, the WBS is a reflection of deliverables. It is not the activities or tasks, but what the customer will get at various stages.

Getting the Team together

The first step to creating the WBS is for the ODL project manager to get the tea m and the key stakeholder s together in one room. This is a vit al step because it is the team that p ossesses all the experti se (Look at the Respo nsibility column in Table 5A).

Team members have the experience and creative thinking that will be needed to ensure attainment of e ach deliverable. There are two thi ngs to be agreed upon, namely, the project t itle, and seco ndly, all the deliverables for the pr oject. Micah Mathis (2009) suggests the 100% rule, which states that t he WBS sh ould include 100% of all the work defined in the project management plan.

Once 100% of the work has been defined, you as project manager should go into the decomposition stage with the te am. **Decomposition** involves breaking dow n deliverables in smaller chunks of work (See Ta ble 5A). Decomposition ensures that the work breakdown is realistic and can be ac hieved within a given time framework . The team should be guided by an i mportant concept when decomposing the tasks. The concept is that so me activities depend u pon other activities being completed first. For example in a typical DE project, you cannot schedule the first tutorial before you have tutors in place. Let us look at a typi cal case of a WBS craft ed when two institutions signed an agreement to offer a degree programme jointly. The case study is as follows.

The Botswana College of Distance and Open learning (BOCODOL) proposed to offer the Bachelor of Co mmerce degree (Human Resources management a nd Industrial Relations) and approached differe nt institutions. The Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) offers this qualification, so the two ODL i nstitutions agreed on a joint offering. The implications were numerous. For example, BOCODOL had in place some study materials comparable to those in the shelves of ZOU, so the College did not need to acquire all the materials for the programme. BOCODOL established that some of the materials could be adopted as they were, while others needed adaptation. Adaptation involved contextualisation of cont ent so that it would r eflect human resources management circumstances in Botsw ana. For that to happen, writers and content editors would be needed. All other ste ps were to be taken so that the fir st tutorials, nationwide, would resume on a given date. Here is a wo rk breakdown structure towards that purpose.

Table 5A WBS for the B. Com. Degree

Task	Target Date	Responsibility
1. Finalise MoA with ZOU	25 March	CS, Directorate
2. Decide relevant material that are in place at BOCODOL	25 March	SOBS, Edit, LS, AR
3. Agree ZOU material for adoption	7 April	SOBS, Edit, LS, AR,
4. Agree ZOU material for adaptation	7 April	SOBS, Edit, LS, AR
5. Allocate materials to semesters	7 April	SOBS, Edit, LS, AR,
6. Formulate programme Regulations	17 April	SOBS, LS, AR
7. Identify course writers to adapt some modules	8 May	SOBS
8. Begin course adaptation	19 June	SOBS, MMS, Edit,
9. Acquire adopted study materials from ZOU	15 May	CS
10. Decide learner support model	8 May	SOBS, LS
11. Agree monitoring procedures	15 May	RD&P, SOBS
12. Decide study centres	15 May	LS
13. Determine fee structure	15 May	Fin, LS, SOBS
14. Determine tutor rates	15 May	Fin, LS, SOBS
15. Undertake course promotion	29 May	PR, LS, SOBS
16. Advertise course	29 May	PR
17. Decide tutorial cycle	29 May	LS, SOBS
18. Induct regional staff	19 June	LS, SOBS
19. Identify tutors	29 April	LS, SOBS
20. Induction of tutors	10 July	SOBS, LS, Edit
21. Formal appointment of tutors	17 July	HR
22. Allocation of tutors to centres	17 July	LS
23. Select learners	10 July	LS, AR
24. Enrol learners	17 July	LS, AR
25. Induction of learners	24 July	SOBS, LS, Edit, AR
26. Deliver study materials to regions	10 July	AR, LS
27. Conduct first tutorial	7 August	LS

CS = Corporate Services; SOBS = School of Business Studies; Edit = Editorial;

LS = Learner Support; AR = Academic Registry; MMS +Multimedia Services;

RD and P = Research Development and Publications; Public Relations;

HR=Human Resources

The resulting schedule is often referred to as the Gantt chart (cf. Cassidy, 2009). It assists the project manager in identifying the tasks, the sub tasks, the t arget dates, etc. to be taken into account. Milestones can also be organised in tabular form (alternative to Gantt Chart) as in Table 5A above. The Gantt Ch art lists the milestones in the first column; the target date in the second colu mn, and th e members responsible in the third co lumn. It should be note d that this is a simplifie d structure, which does not capture o ther issues such as risks and the cost for ea ch task. The point is that it answers some of th e questions raised earlier about th e justification of the WBS . For example, the project hinges on the memorandum of agreement (MoA) between the parties being put in place. It is only when it is in place

that the other tasks can be carried out against t arget dates. Equally important is the issue of who carries o ut the resp onsibility. In some cases, it is an individual, a department, or a group of individuals. All the tasks are synchronised to meet the target date, namely, 7August. Now, look at the WBS again and at tempt these questions before reading on.

?? Activity

1. Why was it necessary for the project manager to create and table this plan to the project steering committee?

2. Why are dates necessary when a breakdown is made?

3. Imagine you were the project coordinator for this particular project.
   - Which tasks would you exclude?
   - Which tasks would you include?
   - Why would you include or exclude some of the tasks?

4. Why is it necessary for the project manager t o present the WBS in a hierarchical order?

There can be no doubt that your insights from a close examination of the case study, and the responses you gave to the four questions, you now appreciate the purpose of the WBS. The following are some of the reasons for using it:
- It accurately and specifically define s and organises the sco pe of the project as a whole.
- It helps with the allocati on of responsibil ities, thus facilitating the monitoring and controlling of the project.
- It allows the team to estimate cost, risk, and time because the team can work from smaller tasks back up to the entire level of the macro project.
- It allows th e project manager to check the deliverables with stakeholders, thus ensuring that there is nothing missing or overlapping.

Sample Gantt Chart

Figure 5B Course writing progress after two months

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Writing	Review by PDC	Review by writer	Review by language editor	Review by content editor	DTP
Unit 1		▓				
Unit 2					▓	
Unit 3					▓	
Unit 4			▓			
Unit 5	▓					

The Gantt chart shows the status of each unit after a period of two months. Unit 1 is with the PDC; Units 2 and 3 are being reviewed by the content editor; Unit 4 is being reviewed by the writer; and Unit 5 has made no progress since it is still in the hands of the writer. None of the units has reached the DTP section as planned. What does this information tell you as manager?

Key Points to Remember

It is noteworthy that merely appreciating the purpose of the WBS is on its own not enough. Creation of the WBS is actually one of the more difficult activities that distance education project managers face. What is often most frustrating is that it is difficult to come up with a schedule that is as precise as the team would like. To reinforce the foregoing structuring of a schedule, here are some useful steps that can be followed.

Step 1: Define the tasks

The tasks should be placed in clusters so that those that go hand in hand are treated as a package. Activities to be carried out for each task should then be determined. For example in the chart developed above, tasks 7 and 8 would form a cluster.

Step 2: Sequence the activities

In this step we sequence the schedule activities in the order in which they need to happen.

Step 3: Estimation of resources

This step involves estimating what resources will be required to accomplish each task.

Step 4: Estimating duration

In this step the project manager and his/her team should analyse how long it will take to accomplish each of the tasks.

Step 5: Schedule the tasks

This step is the process where sequence of activities, re   sources needed for the tasks, and the duration of each activity are used to come up with the Gantt chart.

Step 6: Monitoring and controlling

This step is performed throughout the life of the project and ensures that the work results are in line with the schedule plan. Typically, schedule control requires the use of progress reporting and schedule change when necessary.

Chapter 6
The Project Team

Knowing yourself is the first step
To knowing others.
All people are motivated.
The question is: By what?
People are different.
Nothing is so unequal
As the equal treatment of unequals.

Learning Outcomes

After working through this chapter, you should be able to:

- show the link between teamwork and productive project management;
- explain the different ways and means of communication within a project team;
- apply team building skills to real distance education project management situations;
- explain the different models of team building;
- justify the need for the project manager to know individual team members and the differences among them;
- define conflict and its different manifestations;
- show a clear understanding of how conflicts can be managed in a given work environment; and
- illustrate the link between the task of project management and people's attitude to work.

Introduction

People who work together on the project are referred to as a team. The word 'teamwork' is probably not new to you. The same applies to the word 'production', I guess. However, in view of what we have already discussed in previous topics, it will be helpful to refresh our minds about the link between project management and teamwork.

What immediately comes to mind is the question: How is teamwork interrelated with the accomplishment of project tasks? Further, you may also ask yourself what it is you still have to learn about teamwork and production, which you do not already

know. These, and many other questions, can be aske d. By contributing to th e discussion that follows, most of your questions will be answered.

Ideas about teamwork and production to be discussed

In the present topic, prepare yourself to discuss :

- the link between teamwork and production:
- communicating in a team:
- building up a team: and
- Do people really enjoy work?

The link between teamwork and production

At any workplace there are goals and targets to be achieved. Achievement depends on the collective effort of top management, the project manager and members of the project team. Our starting point is the definition of key terms, and the following activity invites you to make your first contribution.

?? Activity

1. My definition of teamwork is:

2. My definition of production is:

3. The connection between teamwork and production is that

Teamwork refers to a group of people working togeth er in order to achieve a common goal. Production, on the o ther hand, refers to the results of teamwork. Fo r example, if the goal of a car asse mbly plant is to assemble four car s in a d ay, and only two are assembled, we say production is below target. Similarly, if a team at the border post of a country takes ten h ours to clea r travellers, where it normally takes four hours for a different team, we can say that team is not productive enough. The connection between teamwork and production is that where members o f a team pull together, they are more productive, whate ver type of business. Given this

observation, how productive is your team with reference to the project be ing undertaken?

Communicating in a team

For production to occur, let's remember that all depends on how team me mbers communicate. Communication is necessitated by the need to solve a given problem or to complete a task. In our case, the team leader is th e project manager. That person has a number of roles to play, and t hese should be clear to all proje ct stakeholders. So, for you what are your role s for the te am you lead? Make your contribution by responding to this activity.

?? Activity

List any five questions the project manager should ask regarding the purpose of communication, then work on questions 6 to 10 below.

It is believed that when the project managers want to communicate they ought to ask themselves some questions. Do you agree that they should ask:

6. why they want to communicate ☐ Yes ☐ No

7. what they want to communicate ☐ Yes ☐ No

8. Who they communicate with ☐ Yes ☐ No

9. Where communication should take place ☐ Yes ☐ No

10. When it is best to communicate ☐ Yes ☐ No

11. How best to communicate ☐ Yes ☐ No

Supervisors play many roles, e.g. giving instruc tions, passing on information, etc. A s for questions 6–11, I p ersonally found no place for the answer 'no'. T ry and justify your answers with collea gues. For example, for question 10, it might be better to let tempers cool down bef ore initiating any communication. Also for que stion 11, your choice of language is important if you are to exchange ideas more meaningfully.

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Building up a team

Building up a team takes a more conscious effort by the project manager. Teams do not come into being automatically. They require skill, knowledge, and tact on the part of the leader. Do you agree with this?

☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree

If you disagree, you are one of the few managers capable of creating a team without effort. Let us share more ideas on the matter.
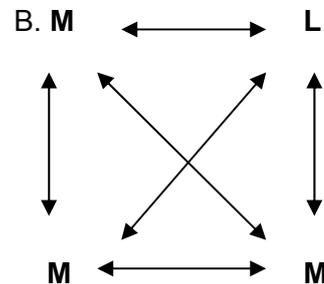
Your communication style

There are various styles used by leaders (L) when interacting with members (M) of the team. Share your ideas with us by working on this activity.

?? Activity

Here are two models you can follow to lead your team. Look at them closely and respond to the questions below.

A.

M   M

L

M   M
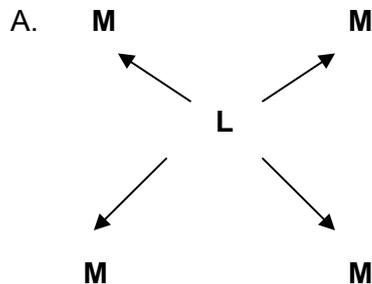
Communication happens through the leader

B. M ⟷ L

M ⟷ M

channels of communication are multiple

1. Which model of communication is more suitable for your situation?

☐ A   ☐ B

2. Suggest two reasons in support of the one you think is more suitable.

3. Suggest two reasons why you consider the other model not suitable.

In my opinion, model A is dominated by the leader, thus it offers limited opportunities for active participation by team members. Model B, on the other hand, seems to be more accommodating, because chances of participation are provided.

The tasks to be done

In project management, communication within a team is necessitated by the need to complete the several tasks identified for the distance education project (the job). Working together to complete a task is also known as problem-solving. Let us read the following more closely.

1. Study materials from another institution have to be evaluated before deciding whether to adopt or adapt them. There are four team members working with you, and the job has to be completed in two days.

2. You are in-charge of five groups of students who should attend tutorials on a Saturday. There are only four rooms and only three tutors instead of five (one for each group. You should work out a plan to ensure that each group receives attention on the same day.

The foregoing are tasks or problems to be solved, and present an opportunity for team building in a more practical way. What skills or techniques should you, as a capable project manager, demonstrate? Suggest any two that you can think of.

In addition, the following are important for solving any of the two problems. The leader should:

- identify the main problem;
- analyse the scope of the problem assisted by team members;
- determine time likely to be spent on each task;
- seek alternative solutions;
- agree on the best solution;
- allocate responsibilities;
- work on the job; and
- evaluate results as a team:

Remember what we said about the PCTS. Having examined those points, it is now your turn to contribute to the discussion

?? Activity

1. Choose any one of the two tasks cited above.

2. Apply points 3 – 7 and write brief notes on how you would prepare to solve the problem.

3. Discuss your views with colleagues

What I think is of param ount importance is that a task prov ides a useful chance to build up a team. Notabl y, the project manager encourages active participation. This leadership style makes members feel valued a nd respected. If that is the case, to what extent do you, as t eam leader, encourage members to contribute freely during problem solving? Where members are made to feel free to contr ibute ideas, production is likely to be enhanced.

Developing team culture

Culture refers to the wa y you make your tea m do things. The attitudes, interaction patterns, skills possessed by members, methods used to work on tasks, and individual contributions all contribute to tea m culture. That is why in the sa me company, one team may be different from the others in th e way it handles its ta sks. This may be because the project manager co nsciously follows certain guidelines towards the creation of a team culture. Exa mine each of t he following closely, and say whether you agree with it or not. As leader of a team you should:

- ensure that team members are committed to the mission of t he organisation;
- build trust among members by sharing information and person al experience;
- develop ground rules of running the team, e.g. celebrating team success;
- accept individual differences, as well as weaknesses and strengths of members;
- accept different points of view when solving a problem;
- encourage new ideas and alternative ways of doing things; and

- have a clear knowledge of project-related expertise possessed by team members.

Now, add any two more points of your own on developing team culture. To reflect on the points discussed so far, here is an activity.

?? Activity

> Give one reason why each of the following is important in developing team culture.
>
>   1. Members committing themselves to company goals.
>
>   2. Welcoming new members into the team.
>
>   3. Members sharing personal experience.
>
>   4. Accepting different views when working on a task.

Try and do the same with all the other points raised above. Without team culture, production can be slowed down. For example, a project manager who does not appreciate individual differences is not likely to understand why some members show certain attitudes. Also, the ethnic group to which a member belongs, or somebody's personality could have some influence on communication and working relations. You are, therefore, advised to understand every individual you interact with.

Getting to know the individual team member

After many years working with people, the head of a distance education institution has come to a number of conclusions. Indicate whether you agree or disagree with him.

1. No two people are the same ☐ agree ☐ disagree
2. People's personal interests come first ☐ agree ☐ disagree
3. People want to be recognised ☐ agree ☐ disagree

If you disagree, you probably have some interesting explanation you can share with colleagues. Generally speaking, as human beings, we are more concerned with personal progress, and if the institution we work for offers a climate which encourages that, all the better for us. Employees go on strike simply because one

way or the other, their personal interests have not been met. This is so even when they know that production is low and the company is not making any profit. The project manager should be aware of the following so that he or she will deal more tactfully with team members:

- People are, first and foremost, interested in themselves before they think of others. It is human nature to think that way.
- A member becomes part of the team when you take steps to make him / her feel accepted.
- The individual usually thinks he / she is better or knows better than others.
- The individual has a past and a present, which affects both work and relationships with other employees.
- The individual's personal problems can interfere with communication and teamwork.

Is there any other experience you have had with members of your team, which you can share with us? Note it down here as I have done above.

The differences among team members

If we agree that no two people think the same way, what influence does that have on solving problems or doing certain tasks? Naturally, people will think differently, therefore will give different suggestions. The communicative manager will know that there will always be different types of people, interacting differently. For example:

initiators who are good at making suggestions, and offering new ideas, but are unable to give solutions:

information givers who offer facts and opinions about a problem on the basis of their experience:

followers who go along with the group passively accepting the ideas of others. They serve as audience in the group:

harmonisers who mediate when there are differences between other members. They attempt to reconcile disagreements:

opinion seekers who ask for clarification about what the group is involved in:

critics who question id eas from team me mbers and never want to agree with others on anything: and

co-ordinators who clarify different ideas and pull them together. Co-ordinators are implementers of suggestions.

Do you have such people in your team? Let's hear your views as you respond to this activity.

?? Activity

1. As team leader, which of the 7 types above do you belong to?

2. If you are not just one type, which two or three types do you combine?

3. Why do you think that combination is suitable for team building?

4. How best do you deal with followers so that t   hey make a contribution to problem solving?

5. How would you deal with critics?

Your responses are likely to differ from what   colleagues say. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that to be an effective project manager you ought to combine two or more types. This will help yo u solve given problem s more efficiently as te am members interact under your leadership.

Managing conflicts

Wherever there is a team, there is b ound to be conflict of one form or the other. As a team member, you oug ht to be clear what we mean by 'conflict'. The re are word s commonly used when referring to it, and here are some of them:

A quarrel	a disagreement	a misunderstanding
Ill feelings	differences	angry with each other

Now, add any three of your own.

Your words, together with those I g ave, lead us towards a better understanding of what is me ant by confl ict. It is important to remember th   at most con flicts involve differences in information, opinion, beliefs, and ideas held by individual   members of the team. Conflicts arise during problem solving when team me mbers try to define a given problem and arrive at solutions. When me   mbers disagree, it is like ly that arguments will occur, t ensions will rise, and this might pull the team apart until an acceptable decision is reached. To come up with your   own ideas, work on this activity.

?? Activity

Put a tick to show whether you agree or disagree with each of these views.

1. Conflict is a normal fact of working life   ☐ agree   ☐ disagree

2. Conflict will not occur when communication is good   ☐ agree   ☐ disagree

3. Conflict can be constructive   ☐ agree   ☐ disagree

4. Conflict can be destructive   ☐ agree   ☐ disagree

When you have ticked, spend some time discussing each point with team members.

Research shows that conflict is inevitable, and can be either positive or negative. The good thing is that conflict can be managed provided the project manager is aware what type of conflict is b eing dealt with. Here are four types of conflict I want you to work on as an activity.

?? Activity

Below each conflict ty pe, briefly write an example from your expe   rience as a n illustration.
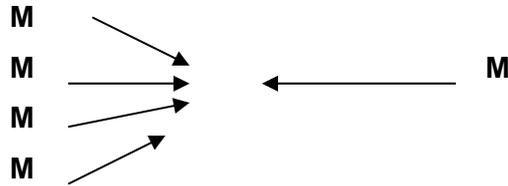
a. *Conflict within the individual*

The individual is in conflict with the self about an issue at work. This is referred to as inner conflict.
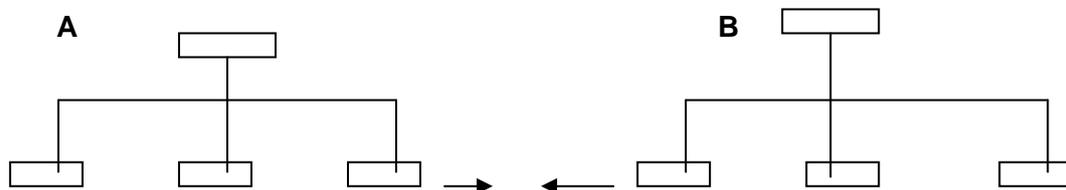
b. *Conflict between two members of the team*

M ⟶   ⟵ M

Two members are in disagreement with each other, and that affects their work performance.

c. Conflict between an individual and the whole team.

```
M
M  ────►
M  ────►          ◄────  M
M
```

A team member is in disagreement with members of the group.

d. Conflict between teams in the distance education institution

```
A  ┌──┐                              B  ┌──┐
   │  │                                 │  │
 ┌─┼──┼─┐                             ┌─┼──┼─┐
┌──┐ ┌──┐ ┌──┐ ──►  ◄── ┌──┐ ┌──┐ ┌──┐
```

There is a misunderstanding between two teams.

I am sure you came up with interesting practical examples. Spend time, sharing those examples with colleagues. The inevitable question likely to arise from your discussion is probably how each of the conflict situations you came up with can be resolved. Are there general ways of dealing with misunderstandings that can be applied to different situations? Let us examine this matter at two levels.

Level 1 : Preventing conflict

The old saying that prevention is better than cure, can be applied here. Here are my personal suggestions on how the team leader could prevent conflict.

- Ensure that channels of communication are clearly defined and understood by every team member.
- Put in place a plan of activities, which should be understood by all members.
- Avoid exaggerated forms of control such as constant policing of what individuals do.
- Avoid one-way communication that limits input from team members.
- Make available the resources necessary for team members to achieve their goals.

- Hold regular meetings in a business-like manner. Long meetings, which are not properly controlled can result in boredom and frustration.

Now, suggest any two more points of your own.

Level 2 : Resolving the conflict

Disagreements will often arise during the project, and the good team l eader will find better ways of handling them. No matter how careful you may be as project manager, conflicts are bound to occur.

When faced with a conf lict, what will you do as a team leader? Firstly, we should admit that no two conflicts are the same, hence, ways to resolve conflicts tend to differ. Generally, however, the following ideas could be of some use.

- Establish the cause of the conflict.
- Bring the conflicting parties together.
- Listen to either party's side of the story.
- If you are part of the conflict, in vite a third party who may not be emotionally involved.
- When trying to reconcile the two parties, make them see ho w the conflict affects their production.
- Ask the two for suggestions on how to resolve the conflict.
- After weighing both sides, help them arrive at a compromise, and once that happens, they can go back to work on the project.

Now, suggest any two points you have found personally useful in resolving conflicts.

The process of resolving conflicts is better known as **negotiation**, and participants in the negotiation are kn own as **negotiators.** Negotiation involves communicatio n during which choice of language is of paramount importance. To b e an effect ive negotiator, you need to develop your language and communication skills so that what you put across is clearly understood by all. You may well ask the que stion: Why do conflicts arise since peo ple may come to the project volunt arily, or because it is pa rt of their job description? To answer that, let us examine the next sub-topic.

Do people enjoy work?

A strange question, Isn't it? Anyway, le t's imagine you and I had enou gh money to send our children to schools of our choice; driv e the type of car we like; eat food of our choice; go on holiday as and wh en we like; and do whatever we like as long as it is within the law. In that situation, we would get up when we feel we want to, and do

our own things without interference. Would you go and work for somebody if you enjoyed this situation? If you would, why would you?

Work is not always a source of joy for most people. Do you agree with this?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Keep your answer in mind and read on. There are many people who are unwilling to work but still come to work, including you and me probably. The reason we talk of supervision, teamwork, production, and communication when working on a project is that we are dealing with human beings whose weaknesses and strengths need to be balanced for increased production. For the team leader, a clearer knowledge about the way people behave can be useful.

There was a person called McGregor who was interested in people at work. After years of observation, he came up with some ideas. He had two sets of ideas, which he called Theory X and Theory Y as follows.

Theory X	Theory Y
People are lazy	People look forward to work
People dislike and avoid work	People want to work and will look for it
People need to be forced or persuaded to work	People find their own satisfaction in work and respond to encouragement
Most people do not like responsibility and are not very good at it	Most people can take responsibility and look for opportunities to do so

Now, go over the points again before working on the next activity.

?? Activity

1. Spend five minutes reading the two theories quietly. Note down any points of interest to you.

2. Share what you noted down, and contrast the two theories. As you do that, cite examples from the project you are familiar with.

3. With the whole group, engage in a debate. Group A will debate in support of Theory X, and group B will support Theory Y,

What does the debate tell you as p roject manager about your task of team building and production? You will notice that communication is central in making the team co-operate. Through communication you are able to make things move, so to speak. An investigation of the two theories will have made you interact with collea gues, airing views and getting to know what othe rs think. Do you realise how much responsibility you, as a leader, have in order to achieve the goals of the company you work for?

The following are five rules the project manager could apply fo r developing commitment to a project team.

- Have team members interact frequently.
- Be sure that individual needs are being met through participation in the team.
- Let all members know why the project is important.
- Make sure all members share goals of the team. One bad apple can spoil the barrel.
- Keep competition within the team to a minimum. Competition and co-operation are opposites. Let members compete with people outside the team, not those within it.

We now briefly summarise the human resources issue s to be consciously an d carefully managed (cf. Lientz and Rea, 2001). These include:

i. Turnover of project team members.

This has a delaying effect on progress especially when th ose members who leav e had a crucial role to play.

ii. Lack of commitment

Negative attitudes and feelings can hinder the project progr ess, which may result in its failure.

iii. Lack of knowledge

Project managers may assume wrongly that c ertain team me mbers have specific levels of technical kno wledge, only to be surprised when they discover that s uch knowledge is lacking.

iv. Team members are inflexible

People, including professionals, have a psyc hological commitment to doing things in a certain w ay. This ha s an effe ct on the spe ed with which members of a pro ject accept its significance. This might lead to resistance and disagreements.

v. Members resist the project manager

A project manager they perceive t o be lackin g in managerial skills and technical knowledge puts off members who have an a ttitude problem, or tho se who are creative. It becomes more difficult to deal with complex issues.

vi. Members being unable to manage time

Some members keep on procrastinating even when there are deadlines. They work on tasks other than those prescribed by the project. Actual work on critical tasks will suffer.

vii. Overcommitted to equally important tasks

In addition to the project, members will have other regular responsibilities. Individuals with critical skills and knowledge are spread thinly.

viii. There is skills gap

This happens when in the middle of the project, the proje ct manager discovers th at some members lack certain skills, or that none of the team me mbers possesses some of the key skills.

ix. The quality of a team member's work is inadequate

This may mean the work has to be re-done or fails to meet expectations. This can be a drawback to progress.

?? Activity

Examine each of th e foregoing more closely, a nd with refe rence to yo ur situation, suggest:

- how each one occurs;
- the potential impact of each one;
- how you can prevent the problem; and how yo u can address the problem if it arises.

Key Points to Remember

You will have noted that there are many ideas about teamwork that the supervisor should be aware of so as to maximise production. In addition to those you listed above, the following were also covered.

- The link between production and teamwork.
- Communication in solving a problem as a team.
- The supervisor's role in team building.
- Communication style and team building.
- Accomplishing a task as a team.
- Moving towards a team culture.
- Getting to know the individual team member.
- Conflict management.

Chapter 7

Project Baseline and Aspects of Management

Scope and Time,

Cost and Performance,

Team and Communication,

Risk and procurement,

The management baseline

Learning Outcomes

After working through this chapter, you should be able to:

- define project baseline and justify its significance in project management;
- list the areas of knowledge associated with project management, and show how these areas are interrelated; and
- demonstrate an understanding of the different aspects of management – stakeholder, risk, cost, and change management – and illustrate how they intersect with project management in practice.

Introduction

In Chapter 6 we examined the issue of teamwork in project management, and demonstrated that a team is different from a group. A team has unity of purpose, and is consciously developed by the project manager. We now examine the idea of a project baseline in conjunction with aspects of management that the enterprising manager is expected to manage. These are: change, stakeholder, risk, and cost management. It is necessary to clarify what each involves if only to ensure that the ideas we have already shared, namely, the evolution of project management, the definition of a project, planning and scheduling the project are placed into clearer perspective.

Recapitulation

What are the highlights of what we have covered so far? Firstly, a project is distinguished from the routine operations of an organisation. Obviously, within the project are operations to be carried out, but they would be regarded not as projects per se, but as operations. Here is the distinction.

Organizations perform work either as operations or as projects. The shared characteristics of projects and operations are that both are:

- performed by people;
- constrained by limited resources; and
- planned, executed and controlled.

On the other hand operations and projects differ as follows:

- Operations are ongoing and repetitive.
- Projects are temporary and unique

"A project is a temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product or service."

It is temporary because it has a definite beginning and end. It is unique because it is different in some distinguishing characteristics.

Additionally, managing a given distance education project is faced with challenges. Meeting or exceeding stakeholder needs and expectations invariably involves balancing competing demands among which are:

- scope, time, cost, and quality;
- stakeholders with differing needs and expectations; and
- identified needs and unidentified expectations - client relations challenge.

The core of project management can, therefore, be summed up in Figure 7A thus

Figure 7A The Core of Project Management
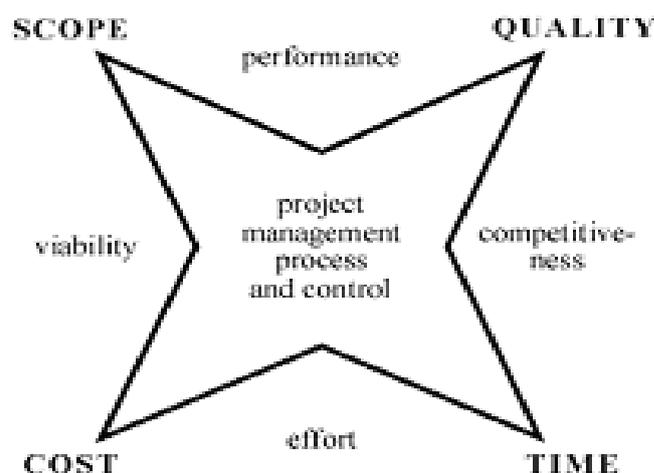
To reflect on the figure above, give your own views by doing this activity.

?? Activity

1. Why do you think what is reflecte d in this figure should be regarded as the core of project management in distance education?

2. How do you define competitiveness, effort and viability in the management of a distance education project?

Lewis (2002) has come up with the following project management knowledge areas:

- Scope Management
- Cost Management
- Communications Management
- Human Resources Management
- Time Management
- Quality Management
- Risk Management
- Procurement Management

These can be represented diagrammatically as shown below.

Figure 7B Areas of Knowledge in Project Management

Scope Management

↕

Time Management

↕

Cost Management

↕

Performance Management

Stakeholder Needs and Expectations ⟶ **Team Management** ⟶ **Project Success**

↕

Communication Management

↕

Risk Management

↕

Procurement Management
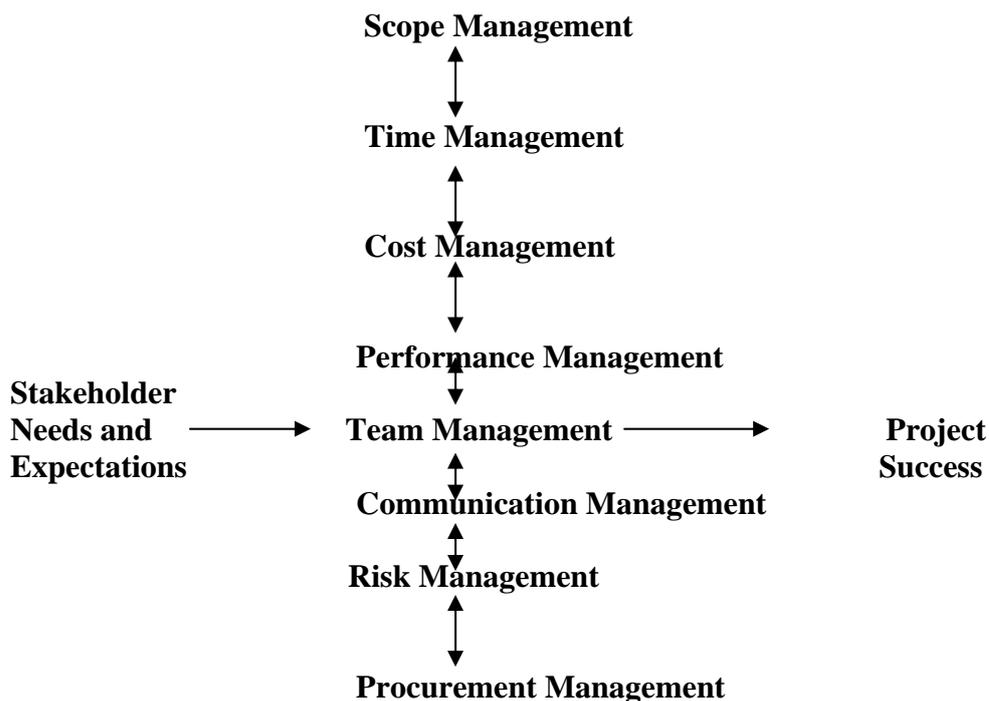
Let us now share ideas about the management of some of these areas of knowledge in project management, starting with project base lining.

The Project Baseline

When you have finished planning the project, and team members have agreed all the scheduled dates, it is n ecessary to store those values. According to L inda Russell (2009), a baseline is a set of stored values, and these will include:

- the agreed tasks;
- the scheduled start and finish dates for the tasks;
- the team members who will be responsible for scheduled tasks; and
- the planned or budgeted cost.

In addition to monitoring and control, one of the main benefits of the baseline is that it enables the project manager to assess p erformance and estimate the future progress with accuracy. If you know what the pla n is, you ar e in a better position to compare this with actua l milestones, and make a judgement on whether you are on track or n ot. It is not eworthy that when base lining, previous experience in a comparable project can improve yo u're the accuracy of yo ur estimating. Each time progress is reviewed, you must ask these questions:

- Where are we in terms of PTCS targets?
- When there is a deviation, what caused it?
- What should be done about the deviation?

We draw wisdom from Lewis (2002:103) regarding what actions can be taken when there is a deviation. These are:

- Cancel the project.
- Ignore the deviation.
- Take corrective action to get back onto the planned progress.
- Revise the plan to reflect a change in status that cannot be corrected.

The next activity encourages you to work on ideas we have already covered.

?? Activity

1. Examine each of the four actions suggested above and critically explain when each could be used to address typical deviation problems.

2. Table 7A gives a list of project milestones, target dates, and responsibilities. Identify any two milestones and critique them as baseline for the course development project.

Stakeholder Management

Duncan Haughey (2009) has defined a stakeholder a anyone who has an interest in your project or will be affected by its deliverables or output. It is important to understand the values and issues that stakeholders have in order to address them and keep everyone on board for the duration of the project.

To exemplify, let us consider a project in which United Nations Centre for Disease control requests your institution to develop a course for counselling couples on HIV and AIDS. the project team would be your obvious primary stakeholders. The Chief Executive will have signed a contract with the Centre, which provides the funding, and the government of your country will have given concession that the course be developed so that it can be used in the country. The Ministry of Health will be an interested party. Your stakeholders will, therefore be:

- The United Nations Centre for Disease Control (the sponsors or fund providers).
- The Head of your institution who is answerable to the development of the project.
- Officials of the Ministry of Health who ensure that the course is compliant with the situation on the ground.
- The targeted patients who are the beneficiaries of the course.

Add any other stakeholders that I may have left out. Project managers should note that there are two leading causes of project failure, namely:
- insufficient involvement of stakeholders; and

▪ infrequent communication with sponsors.

Do you agree with this?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

If yes, suggest any two other causes you are familiar with from managing a distance education project in an area of interest to you.

There are three ideas you can follow in order to engage stakeholders more meaningfully.

Setting clear project objectives

Ensure involvement of stakeholders when formulating objectives. These must be realistic and achievable. Experience has shown that engaging them at this early stage will help ensure success. They will definitely take keener interest if the objectives improve their personal interest.

Agree on the deliverables

All projects need a clear set of deliverables aimed at achieving the project goals and objectives. These should be communicated clearly to the stakeholders and efforts made to ensure that there is a clear understanding regarding the quality and composition of each deliverable. In order to achieve this, prototypes and samples can be prepared to avoid misunderstandings or disappointment later.

Communicating information

Once the project is on course, the two groups that need to be kept informed of progress are your project team and the stakeholders. Two most effective ways of doing that are progress reports sent via the electronic mail, and regular meetings.

?? Activity

1. How is the ability to manage stakeholders linked with the work you do with the project team?
2. To what extent can inefficient management of stakeholders affect your project schedule?
3. What advantages and disadvantages would you associate with communicating information to stakeholders by e-mail?

The following template can be used to capture information about stakeholders.

Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder	Their interest or requirement from the project	What the project needs from them	Perceived attitudes and risks	Actions to take
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				

Risk Management

Reference has already been made to the issue of risk previously. What exactly is a risk in everyday life? When somebody says wa lking alone at night in the squa tter camps is a risk, what does that person mean? Probably he/she means that there is a possibility of being mugged or robbed. In other words the word 'risk' r efers to the possibility that something unpleasant might happen by takin g a certain action. If we accommodate this rather simple definition, how does it fit int o the management of a DE project? For e xample, with reference to Table 4A, what risk does the manager have by investing money to hire part-time writers to develop study materials? Th e risk is that writers who sign in at the outset might fail to honour their commitment for a variety of reasons in the middle of the project. There is the risk of losing money and time having to advertise for new writers; pay for the new advertisement; lose out on time, necessitating shifting target dates.

On the basis of what we said above, look at the project you indicated that you are working on or one that you intend to start managing. What risks can you anticipate? In other words, what do you think could go wrong? Before you read on, work on this activity.

?? Activity

Let us suppose that the institution you work for intends to deliver a franchise course, developed in another country.

1. What steps would your institution take up to the point when it starts offering tutorials.

2. From the steps you have identified, what risks are there?

Clearly, project managers have to manage risks. Paul Bower (2009) argues that as a centralised activity must accomplish the following tasks:

- identify major concerns for each milestone:
- identify risks and risk owners;
- evaluate risks as to the likelihood and consequences;
- assess the options for accommodating the risks;
- prioritise the risk management efforts;
- develop risk management plans; and
- track the risk management efforts and manage accordingly.

In dealing with risks, the manager should be proactive and document what is likely to go wrong at different exit points. Paul Bower (2009:2) cites a number of risk management options, including avoidance, control, assumption, and risk transfer, which in my opinion are applicable to distance education scenarios.

Avoidance

Avoidance involves choice of an alternative approach that does not have the identified risk. However, there are times when it is not possible to avoid the identified risk, so the manager ends up taking up the high risk in expectation of high gains.

Control

Controlling risks involves the development of a risk reduction plan and then monitoring the plan.

Assumption

In this approach to risk management, the project manager simply accepts the risk and proceeds hoping that the risk will not occur.

Risk Transfer

Risk transfer simply means that the project manager causes another party to accept the risk e.g. by contracting someone outside thee DE organisation to handle an aspect of a project.

You will be reminded that risk is part and parcel of any project, while project management is an ongoing process. It is a combination of proactive management consciously planned activities within a project. These are intended to minimise the possibility of failures. Now work on this activity as a way of reflecting on the foregoing.

?? Activity

Closely examine each of the four risk management options described above.

1. With direct reference to a distance education project you have experienced, which two options were used?

2. How successful or unsuccessful were the options when they were applied?

3. Why were they either successful or unsuccessful?

It is possible to analyse risk and act on the information available using the following template.

Nature of risk	Likelihood High/medium/low	Impact High/medium/low	Action required. Who will take responsibility>

Project Cost Management

Regarding project cost in distance education organisations, two things usually happen. Firstly, the project manager is told by the chief executive officer to work on a certain project, and is told that there is a budget for it. The manager may or may not be informed how much the budget is. Alternatively, the project manager is requested to work out the budget of a particular project, which will be approved before the project can resume. One way or the other, some amount has to be spent to complete the project work. Technically, even those projects that use only the labour of full time employees, have funds attached to them. Someone, somewhere is paying for that labour. This state of affairs underscores the fact that cost management is a key responsibility for the project manager. What happens if the project is under funded is that your project will be doomed. What ideas are available to guide the project manager on how to estimate cost? Joseph Phillips (2009) suggests estimate types that project managers should rely on. Two of these are of particular interest to DE projects.

The Budget Estimate

This is also known as the top-down estimate, and is formulated fairly early in the project planning stage. The budget estimate is based on analogous estimating, taking budget lessons learned from a similar project (managed previously), and applying them to the current project. You start at the top and work your way into the project details. The budget estimate is considered to be quick but not very accurate. The range of variance is from: -10% to + 25%.

The Definitive Estimate

This is also known as the bottom-up estimate, and considered to be more accurate than the Budget Estimate type. The Definitive Estimate requires a work breakdown structure (WBS), a deliverables-oriented decomposition of the project scope. The WBS is needed in order to create a more definitive estimate that accounts for each deliverable. The main problem with this type of estimate is that it takes lots of time to create, but it is the most accurate estimate that can be provided for the project. The range of variance is relatively low: -5% to + 10%. Which of these have you used before? Try to apply the Definitive Estimate in the next activity.

?? Activity

It will be clear from our discussion that project cost management is central to you r role as manager of a project. My experience in one of the p rojects was that a part-time writer was writing a certain course. She was submitting individual units through the team member who was coordinating that course. She finished the writing and was paid fo r the job. L ater, internal editors discovered that the writer had copied whole chapters from a textbook, to the extent that the module could not be released for use because it had violated copyright issues. The writer was no lo nger willing to re-work the material, so the project manager was compelled to engage another writer and pay him/her the same amount.

You will notice that there probably were a number of weaknesses in the monitoring of the project by the proje ct manager. The lap se led to additional co sts that were no t budgeted for. This, I am sure shows why project budgets can be overrun.

Change Management

When the Ministry of Transport of your country carries out a project to bu ild a bridge, the objective is to brin g change in real t ime. It is tangib le change that involves construction of a structure where either there was no bridge at all and cars could not cross during the rain season, or t here was a structure t hat could n ot carry hea vy vehicles. Similarly, in distance education, any project within the several areas already listed is aim ed at bringing change of one form or the othe r. Change affects peop le and ushers in new ways of doing things. Naturally, therefore, people perceive change differently. Some welcome it, while others resist it. It is, therefore, imp ortant for the project manager to note that change management is an area for which the need fo r knowledge cannot be overemphasised. The stakeholders of the project and the project team will be striving to come to terms with change implications.

1. Do you concur that managing a project involves management of change?

☐ Yes ☐ No

2. Do you think that some people could resist change?

☐ Yes ☐ No

3. Have you experienced people resisting change in a project you took part in?

☐ Yes ☐ No

4. As manager do you think management of change should be planned for?

☐ Yes ☐ No

I think for all the four questions you came up with a 'Yes' answer. If you came up with a 'No' answer for some, it is OK, bu t see if the ideas discussed below will make yo u think differently.

Jonathan Palmer (2009) has obser ved that resistance to change in any project is inevitable and may be passive or active, overt or covert, individual or organised, aggressive or timid, an d on occa sion totally ju stified. Note Justified! In my opinion resistance is justified for a number of reasons such as:

- lack of information about the purpose of the project:
- people thinking that the intended change is not necessary;
- members seeing the project as interfering with their time;
- some team members might think th ere is noth ing of intere st to them in the project;
- there might be personality clashe s among te am members, or betwe en the project manager and some members; and
- some members may feel that they d o not have enough expertise to take part in bringing about change, though they may not acknowledge this openly.

For what other reasons do you think people might resist? Add any two of your own. It will be noted that an ef fective manager will pr epare how to manage change in th e early stages of project definition, project planning, and scheduling.

Jonathan Palmer notes that resista nce is a key element in why change fails. He points out that in a recent informal survey in the United K ingdom, 120 governme nt transformation programmes identified that due to resistance:

- only 15% achieved their project objectives;
- 20% failed to achieve t heir objectives, but were neverthel ess regarded as satisfactory; and

- 65% were unsatisfactory.

This amply demonstrates the powerful effect of resistance on management of change within a given project. What should the manager do to manage change? Make any two suggestions and add them to the following.

- The project manager should define the project clearly and agree with the team and stakeholders what change the project will bring.
- The project participants should be aware what risks are possible and agree how to act proactively.
- After careful planning together, the team must be mobilised into more action rather than talking. Too much talking gives resistance a better opportunity to focus.
- The team, the stakeholders and the project manager must agree on a change methodology that will be used to achieve intended results.
- There should be broader consultation during the planning stage to ensure that those involved own the project and will be better disposed to actively work for change.
- The Chief Executive of the organisation where the project takes place must prepare everyone for the change that is objectified by the project.

From the foregoing, the project manager should be clear that apart from managing risk, time, cost, stakeholders, and communication issues, change management is crucial. These three points are worth taking into account:

- Resistance can be creative and lead to a better understanding among the participants.
- Resistance that is unknown, unquantified and unaddressed will always be dangerous.
- A project that lacks definition, and implementation that is hurried because results are urgently required inevitably results in resistance.

As you work on the next activity, reflect on the ideas about change management that have been raised so far.

?? Activity

> 1. Explain what you understand by 'change' with regard to a given project.
>
> 2. In what ways are the several milestones of the proje ct stages o f change management?
>
> 3. How is change management linked with management of communication within a particular project?

A change control template can be used to help you manage the multifarious changes experienced during the project.

Change Control Form

Change requested
Originator of change
Items to be changed
Estimated time and cost to implement the change
Reasons for change
Impact on other deliverables

Key Points to Remember

The chapter started with a recapitulation of highlights from previous chapters. Th e objective was to refocus attention b efore looking at what we termed base lining an d some of the areas of management that the project manager should take into account. A distinction between a project and normal operations wit hin an organisation wa s

made to dispel the wrong notion that operations are synonymous with a proje ct. Thereafter, these areas were discussed with the support of exa mples from t ypical distance education projects.

- The core areas of kno wledge for project management that can be used as baseline were highlighted, and presented diagrammatically.
- Suggestions on what to do when there is a deviation from the schedule were raised for consideration by the project manager.
- There was a more det ailed discussion on sta keholder management, and a distinction was made between the project team and other stakeholders who may be outside the organisation where the project is located.
- Risk was defined, follo wed by wh at risk management en tails. A number of options that can be used to manage risk were discussed.
- Regarding cost management, two approach es to estimating cost were presented for consideration by the project manager.
- The chapter was concluded with focus on change management and it s links with other a reas of knowledge, which the pro ject manager is ob liged to be familiar with.

Chapter 8

Project Control and Evaluation

For effective control:

Regular meetings,

Regular reports,

Regular reviews,

Budgetary control.

Learning Outcomes

After working through this chapter, you should be able to:

- define project control , delegation, and evaluation;
- collect information more systematically for use in the evaluation of the project;
- demonstrate how the task, the indiv idual member of the team, and the tea m needs intersect for better performance;
- explain measures that can be used to rescue a project that is in danger of failing;
- specify the benefits of delegation and apply principles of d elegation to typical project management situations; and
- make use of the project evaluation form to cap ture relevant informatio n for decision-making.

Introduction

Every step we have taken in managing a given project up to this point is an aspect of control. Its purpose was to ensure that the stipulated tasks and mile stones were achieved at various poi nts. Control implies two things, namely, po wer over people and the de cision to make decisio ns. In this chapter we are going t o examine to examine some of the issues about project control that help us evaluate the succe ss or lack of success of a given project.

Control measures

The concept of 'control' has a power connotation. Control can be regarded as the act of comparing progress to the plan so that corre ctive action can be taken when there is deviation from the pla nned performance. This view of control presumes the use of **information** as its ingredient rather than **power**. That is why we talk of management information systems that can be used to achieve control in projects.

The critical issue in project control, however, is that every project te am member should be in control of his or her own allocated work. W e refer to t his as proje ct management at the micro level. A project manager can achieve control at the macro level only if it is a chieved at the micro level. In virtually every management situation there are three basic ele ments to be taken into account for control purp oses. These are:

- the needs of the **task**;
- the needs of the **team**; and
- the needs of the **individual.**

These needs are often in conflict, a nd sometimes the temp tation is to let short term needs of one element overshadow the others. This, inevitably, produces a backlash later, which disrupts all three elements. It is important for the manager to keep all three in mind at all t imes, especially when planning. The priorities for e ach situation should be assessed accordingly. For a fact t he needs o f the three elements will seldom coincide, so it is incumbent upon the manager to e nsure they overlap if th e project is to be a success. Figure 8A portrays the ideal scenario.

Figure 8A The three project needs.
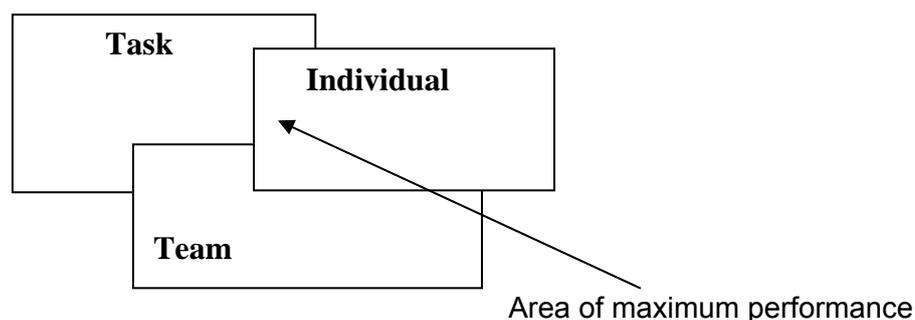
It is where t he needs overlap that we have the area of maximu m performance, and the successful manager needs to carry out acti vities in each of the thre e areas. The activities could be as follows.

Individual activities	Team activities	Task activities
Delegating	setting standards	defining the task
assessing skills	encouraging	making a plan
counselling	communicating	allocating work
recognising effort	consulting	allocating resources
training and guiding	quality control	following the plan
clarify targets	give sense of purpose	
reassuring	build team spirit	

Now work on this activit y in order to share your views about control as an aspect of management.

?? Activity

1. As manager of a given project, why do you think it is important to ensure that task, team and individual needs overlap?

2. Closely examine the activities under each of the above categories. Identify those you think are difficult to do on the part of the manager, and suggest ways of ensuring that they are done.

Delegation is one aspect of control that the manager should exercise. A key attribute of the project manager is the ability to delegate., and delegation is important for these reasons:

- to give the manager more time for more important activities;
- to develop and motivate the team members;
- to utilise other people's specialist skills;
- to ensure an even spread of work across the team; and
- to do things quicker by having activities taking place concurrently.

From your experience of running a project, why is it that sometimes managers do not delegate? Examine these and decide whether they are in agreement with what you came up with.

- unable or unwilling to let go;
- lack of faith in the member's abilities;
- lack of confidence in yourself as project manager;
- fear that a team member will perform better than you;
- believing that it is faster to do the task yourself;
- need to be liked by team members;
- creating the impression that you work harder;
- enjoying the job; and
- working with difficult subordinates.

Once you become aware why project managers do sometimes not delegate, it is important that you closely analyse each of the foregoing reasons, then try to how to overcome the constraints that hinder delegation. To ensure that delegation succeeds, try to follow these guidelines:

- Plan your delegation well in advance and delegate early.
- After deciding to whom you want to delegate a task, plan how you are going to delegate.
- Ensure that the team member to whom you are delegating a task understands exactly what you expect of them.
- Gain the person's agreement and commitment to the task to be delegated.
- Be prepared to invest time in the early stage to demonstrate and coach the person.

Do you agree with the five suggestions cited above?

▭ Yes ▭ No

Whether your answer is negative or positive, work on this activity.

?? Activity

It has been said that delegation crowns the process of developing people, and that it is the seal of recognition, respect, and trust. Suggest four reasons why you either agree or disagree with this observation. The foregoing ideas are supportive of project control, and being mindful of them and applying them more consciously will go a long way towards helping the project manager to establish the success level of a given project. One more word about delegation! Certain tasks should not be delegated, and these are:

- New tasks without guidance or training;
- Unpleasant tasks which are really your responsibility; and
- tasks for which accountability lies with you as manager.

Having in place control mechanisms facilitates project evaluation, an important step in project management.

Project Evaluation

Evaluation of the project is planne d for right from the ons et, and is ongoing as the different milestones are tackled. T he type of evaluation that goes o n during t he project has been referred to as **formative evaluation**. It is said to be formative because the project is in the process of being formed. This distinguishes it from the evaluation conducted at the end of t he project, commonly referred to as **summative evaluation**. It is said to be summative because the project is being su mmed up or closed.

To evaluate a project is to attempt to determine whether the overall status of th e work is acceptable in terms of intended value to the target customer once the job is finished. Project evaluation provides the basis for management decisions on how to proceed with the project, and appraises the progress and performa nce of a job compared to what was originally planned. It is through the project process review that evaluation is enabled. This is usua lly conducted at major milestones throughout the life of the pr oject. During the process review, lessons are learned about the proje ct. There are numerous reasons for conducting project evaluation perio dically, and these are some of them.

- ensuring informed management of the project;
- improving the performance of individual team members;
- revealing problems early so that co rrective measures can be taken in good time;
- identifying areas where future distance edu cation projects should be managed differently;
- keeping customers informed of the status of th e project at a given point in time; and
- reaffirming the project targets for the benefit of stakeholders.

You may want to add your own reasons from personal experience. Distan ce education practitioners who engage in project management have often asked how best to conduct project evaluation. For a fact, th ere are a number of ways to do that and one of them is to use a form that can readily be used to capture vital information.

The information will the n be analysed and decisions t aken on the basis of the data (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: project evaluation form

Item	Information obtained
1. Did we meet the target time scales?	
2. What did we learn about scheduli ng that will be helpful in the next project?	
3. Did we meet our budget targets?	
4. What did we learn about budgeting that will help us in the next project?	
5. Upon completion, did the project output meet client specifications without additional work?	
6. If additional work was required, what was it?	
7. What did we learn about writing specifications that will help us in our next project?	
8. What did we learn about allocating responsibilities that will help us in our next project?	
9. What did we le arn about monitoring performance that will help us in our next project?	
10. What did we learn about making changes and taking corrective action that will help us in our next project?	
11. What technology was used to make the project successful.	
12. What tools and tech niques were developed that will be useful in our next project?	
13. What recommenda tions do w e have for future research and development?	
14. What lessons did we learn from dealing with service providers and outside suppliers?	
15. If we ha d the oppor tunity to do the project again, what would we do differently?	
16. What did we lea rn about interpersonal relationships?	

?? Activity

Suggest five ways in which this form is a helpful instrument in project evaluation.

Rescuing ailing projects

There are two types of projects in any situation – those th at are getting better, and those that are dying. A project that stands still is dying because it is ai ling. The ailing state of a project is dependent on how it is managed.

Do you agree?

  ☐ Yes   ☐ No

Why do you agree or disagree? Answer that before reading on.

When we e xamine what makes distance educat ion projects fail or succeed, we are actually looking at a variety of succe ss measures that can keep our projects healt hy, or offer remedy when they start to ail. As a form of prevention, using these measures from the very beginning will make our projects considerably more successful. Such proactive measures will avert many potential snags stemming from mixed communication signals, ignored problems, and unrealistic expectations that can lead to the collapse of the project. Sharon Anderson has outlined some of th e characteristics of projects that are candidates for failure.

- The project scope may not be well defined, e.g. me mbers may not be clear what contribution the learner support dep artment should make in the development of a particular programme.
- The project might be lacking chang e management approaches, e.g. how to prepare stakeholders who are not convinced that a new study programme should be developed.
- The project fails to get buy-in from the right stakeholde rs, e.g. developing study materials that are too difficult for the target group.
- The project may not have the rig ht resources available, e.g. when a DE institution intends to offer a degre e course when there are no part -time professionals to serve as tutors.

- There is workplace politics that interferes with the management process, e.g. when members of the project team do not have the support of their supervisors.
- The project fails to plan for risks or develop contingency plans.

The question, however is: how do you as man ager, recognise a proje ct that is in trouble. There are red flags or mischiefs to watch for right f rom the outset. Some of these are:

- rampant schedule delays and missed commitments;
- the project is under-budgeted for;
- there is evidence of lo w morale and a lack o f teamwork that intermittently plagues the project members;
- there is no clear direction as to where the project is headed or when it will get there; and
- members have issues that they think are critical to their participation unresolved.

But the million-dollar question is: How do you rescue a troubled project? There are four vital success measures that you can take, but we want to share them in the form of an activity.

?? Activity

Four measures are liste d in the first column. In the se cond column, su ggest two specific actions you would take to ensure the success of each measure. The first one has been done for you.

| Measure	Action that can be taken
1. Investigate the current situation	- review project documentation -
2. Assess and re-plan the project	- verify and validate the project objectives -
3. Re-set everyone's expectations	- remove obstacles where possible -
4. Aim to deliver as per the new plan	- Do what you say you are going t o do -

It is presumed that by taking into consideration ideas raised presently, it is possible to rescue an ailing project and bring it back towards the route for success.

Project closure

You will re call that among the PCTS formula, time is of essence in project management. This means there is a definite end when the defined project outcome is delivered. At this point, the project needs to be brought to an end, or closed down. Its resources, both people and technology, need t o be released and reallocated. The project should be allowed to close, and a final meeting for the project team members ought to convene to formalise the closure. Ther eafter, if the project was to develop a learner support model, or to set up quality management systems, for example, subsequent activities o f monitoring should not be regarded as contin uation of th e project. Rather, it is it s monitoring. At the point of closur e, it is time for you to congratulate yourself as a manager, and the project team for having self-actualised!

To sum up, getting to the successful stage, you will have been following this cycle.

Figure 8A The project cycle
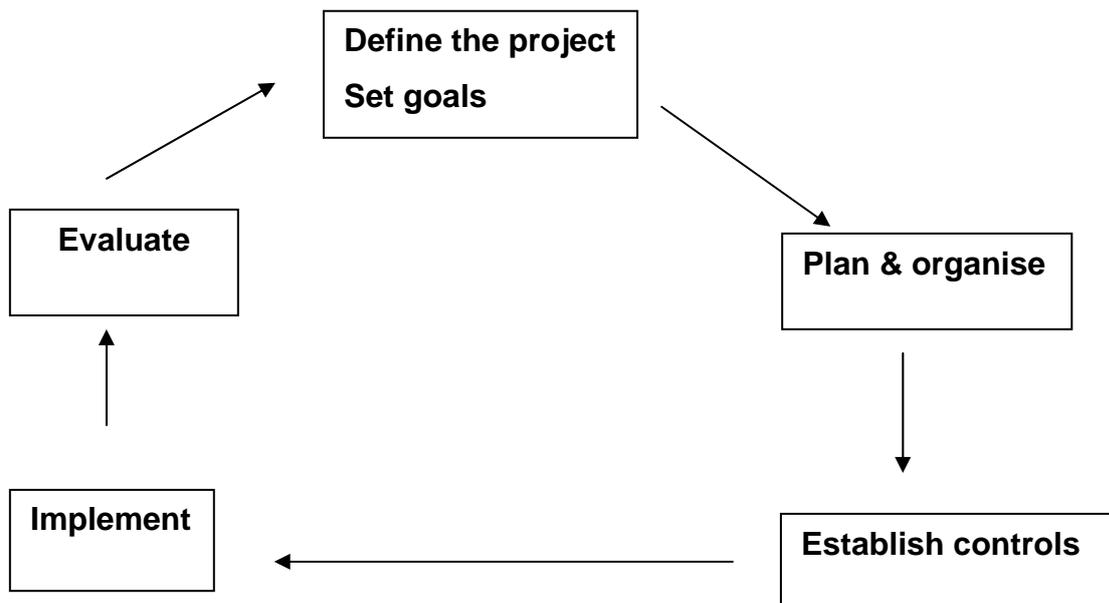
Before you move on to the last ch apter, in wh ich case studies are p resented for discussion, go through the following checklist that can be used to ensure compliance with key aspects of a given project.

1. Define the project	
2. Select a strategy	
3. Develop specifications	
4. Develop a schedule	
5. Develop a budget	
6. Organise the project team	
7. Assign duties and responsibilities	
8. Train new team members	
9. Monitor progress	
10. Take corrective action	
11. Provide feedback	
12. Test final outcome	
13. Deliver outcome to client	
14. Write operating manual	
15. Train client personnel	
16. Reassign project staff	
17. Dispose of surplus resources	
18. Release facilities	
19. Evaluate project performance	
20. Complete final audit	
21. Complete project report	
22. Review project with management	

Key points to remember

Too many projects fail because insufficient time is spent sorting things out initially. This leads to the project being inadequately defined, and so the goal is not crystal clear. If the team's goal is to reach a certain place by a certain time, but this destination is not clearly defined, each member, who will be starting from a different point, will arrive at a different place. Nor is it any good giving your team a grid reference if they cannot read the map. Equally important is the evaluation of the project for which the following main issues were discussed.

- Information can be collected and used for project control purposes.
- Control is achieved at the macro and micro levels.
- The three main project needs are: the task, the individual, and the team.
- Delegation is an important aspect of project management.

- Evaluation is planned at the outset, and is ongoing until project closure.
- The project evaluation form can be used as an instrument to capture information that can be used to improve the chances of success of a project.
- There are measures that can be taken to rescue an ailing project.
- At some point in time, the project must come to an end, that is, it must be formally closed.

Chapter 9
Managing Project Team Meetings
Meetings are either a pain in the neck,

Or a welcome opportunity

To explore group thinking and decision making

Learning outcomes

After working through this chapter you should be able to:

- prepare a project meeting by specifying objectives;
- chair and monitor a meeting;
- handle difficult people;
- solve problems as they arise; and
- define terms and jargon used in association with meetings.

Introduction

So far we have discussed issues that are specific to management o f the project. Interestingly enough, the running theme has be en communication at every turn. It i s, however, important to d evote a bit of our time on an aspe ct of communication th at that the pro ject manager cannot afford to ove rlook, namely, the meetings that are regularly held at the different stages of the project life. Meetings bring about a special type of interaction, an aspect we have already discussed in one of our chapters. Evans (1996) reminds us that me etings are important for a number of reason s, including:

- passing instructions;
- solving problems that arise during the project;
- making decisions on project related issues;
- explaining and seeking explanation on issues;
- trouble-shooting; and
- persuading team members to adopt a certain view

These are crucial aspects of any project and constitute the heart of productivity.

The issue of time

An observation has alre ady been made that team members already belong to their departments where the y have a f ull load of responsibilities. It is, therefore, not

surprising that project team meetings inevitably eat into their time. When you hold project meetings it is essential that the time factor be taken into account. Experience from projects that I have managed shows that members resent long meetings, especially those where they sit like passengers. To begin with, they will already be overburdened with other meetings, some of which will not be scheduled. They will be attending three types of meetings: regular ones in their departments, the regular ones for the project, and unplanned-for meetings called at short notice, which can be referred to as ad hoc meetings. It is not unusual to hear people saying, "my life in this organization is all about meetings". Clearly, they are saying meetings are a waste of time.

What it means to you as project manager is that calling a meeting stirs mixed feelings in the team members. Let us agree that time is one of the most important resources in an organization, and truly speaking it is horrifying how it is can be wasted in meetings, especially if they are unproductive. It is important at the outset for you to reflect on the time you spend on meetings every month. To do that, work on the exercise.

??Activity

Give an estimate of the number of hours you spend attending each of the following type of meetings in a month.

A.

Meeting type	Number of hours per month
Routine departmental meetings	
Project specific meetings	
Ad hoc meetings	
Other meetings e.g. social welfare etc.	
Total number of hours per month	

B. What is the total number of working hours per month (excluding Saturdays and Sundays)?

C. Express the number of hours you spend attending meetings as a percentage of the overall number of hours you work per month.

Referring to the South African situation, Mulvey and Knowles (2004) have observed that a business executive in South Africa spends between 30% and 60% of his/her time in meetings. They also argue that statistics from America suggest that the

average executive may spend as much as 75% of working time in meet ings. This is quite phenomenal. The number of hours you spend in meet ings may or ma y not be as high, but experience has shown that practitio ners who work in newly established DE institutions tend to spend a very high numbe r of hours attending meetings mainly because of personnel shortage.

Having worked out how much time you spend in meetings, try and calculate what those meetings are costing the institution in monetary terms. To get that, multiply the number of hours you spend in meet ings per month with the hourly rate that you are paid. It is noteworthy t hat it is a g ood thing that you spe nd those many hours i n meetings. Imagine if all the meetings at your institution were cancelled, probably you would find yourself une mployed or having to come to work for only one week in the month. This state of affairs is very instructive, and points to the fact that meetings are not bad. Meetings that a re well managed, start and finish on time, meetings that are well attended and achieve their objectives are important tools for you as manager, as well as to anyone who attends meetings as team member.

Planning the Project Meeting
The project manager does well to note that the success or failure of a meeting lies in how well planned it is. A meeting that is badly prepared is bound to fail. So what is it that should be done to ensure watertight preparation? The follo wing deserve consideration:

The need for a meeting
The term 'regular meeting' is all too familiar to many of us. However, it is also equally true to say regular meetings are well known for their gradual loss of direction, especially during the project when ever yone is aware what is happening. It is necessary for the man ager to reg ularly review the e xtent to which a meeting is necessary every week by checking whether:

- there is need for a weekly meeting;
- any project team member would be worse off if the meeting was cancelled;
- any serious objectives are achieved through a weekly or fortnightly meeting;
- it would not work better to circulate a brief weekly report instead of holding a meeting;

The meeting objectives
It is not eno ugh to call a meeting simply because we have to meet. T here must be firm objectives, which ar e measurable at the end. Even when objective s have been

determined, it is important to consider whether if a meeting is the best way to achieve them. There are times when the objectives could be more efficiently achieved in a one-to-one meeting wit the appropriate people, followed by a short memo to keep everyone abreast.

Time allocation

Time, as already observed, is an important resource that must not be wasted. Each objective should be considered, and reduced into agenda items. In turn, each agenda item should be allocated a reasonable amount of time for presentation of information and subsequent discussion. There is no point in calling a meeting, if you are not going to allow time for attendees to contribute. Conversely, it is pointless to allocate 30 minutes where 5 minutes would do. Look at these agenda items and decide how much time you would allocate and why.

?? Activity

> 1. Welcome remarks.
> 2. Matters arising.
> 3. Definition of a learner support model.
> 4. Justification of the need to develop a new learner support model.

You probably allocated the highest amount of time to agenda item 4 because there is some explanation to do, and after the explanation several questions might arise. Such questions would inevitably lead to some substantial discussion. Item 1 deserves least time because it is simply welcoming members present.

Attendees

The decision as to who should attend the meeting depends on the purpose of the meeting. However, for the project team meetings, those who have roles to play, and come from representative departments would be expected to attend whenever a meeting is convened. It is often just as bad to invite too many people as it is to invite too few. If there are too many people, the meeting will be overcrowded and difficult to control.

It is important to invite participants who are relevant to the project. Inviting those who are irrelevant will bore them to simply sit through discussion that does not concern them. The manager must beware of stand-ins. These are attendees sent by a regular

team member who may be away. Attendees may not have t he full authority to make decisions because they lack the full authority to make rulings on behalf of the person they represent. They may also not have full information about issues that have been on the table in previous meetings. If a stand-in is merely there to warm the chair, it is advisable to send him/her back to do some productive work.

Attendance by a senior management member of the institution can be a menace. His very presence can stifle discussion, as most attendees would wish to avoid disagreeing with the bo ss, or they would simply keep quie t. Worse still, the senior manager may pull rank and take over the meeting, thus demoralizing the project manager who had pre pared to ru n the meeting in a certain way. Notwithstanding that, there are circumstances when a director of the College ma y have to attend. If it is for something specific, he should be given his/her slot earlier in the meeting so that he has his say, then be excused so that the meeting can continue as planned.

Finally, it is also important to decide upon the v enue and its layout. A venue that is conducive to productive discussion is one where the seatin g arrangement does not confer higher status either implicitly or e xplicitly to some people. This may result in thwarting contributions by members.

The Agenda

The commonest reason for poor meetings is a poor agenda. The manager should treat this as the most important document at any meeting. Obviously, there are other important aspects of the meeting such as having someone to record the minutes and adequate space for participants. If the space is constrained, then the participants will not be able to participate freely. Le t us beg in with an activity in order the better t o focus on the concept.

?? Activity

Look at the following agenda and critically comment on the different se ctions. Give your views about the suitability of each, considering the manner of presentation.

Weekly Project Team Meeting

Date: Today
Time: 8:30 am
Place: Room B27
Distribution: Everybody
Items
1. Costing the required study materials
2. Suitably qualified tutors
3. Resources needed to deliver the course
4. Quality assurance
5. Any other business

In our opinion, if you produce agendas this way, you are promoting long , unproductive, and tedious meetings. Why should this be so? We shall examine ea ch item separately.

Date: Today

An agenda that is circulated on the day the meeting is going to be held is a recipe for failed meetings. Attendees need time to also prepare for the meeting, and normally should be invited to submit agenda items. It is advisable to produce and distribute the agenda, at least five days in advance.

Time: 8:30

The time at the top of t he agenda should specify the time the meeting will start as well as the finish time. This is because in the interest of individual planning, tea m members should be made aware what time the meeting will come to a close.

Distribution: Everybody

The term 'everybody' can be misleading. It is b est to list names of attendees so th at the individuals are aware they are e xpected to attend. There is the possible menace of people who have lost interest in meetings claiming that they did not receive the communication, especially when it is sent electronically.

Items

Items that are skeletal and do not give adequate information do not help participants in preparing for the meeting. All th e first four items in the agenda are inexplicit. For example, to simply say 'Suitably qualified tutors' does not communicate sufficiently. An informative item should have:

- Reasonable detail of what is to be discussed must be provided.
- The objective of the discussion should be stated.
- The name of the person responsible for that item must be reflected so that they can prepare in advance.
- The time allocated for the item, including comments from other participants should be reflected.

Here is an example:

9:00: Present to the meeting the qu alifications of tutors for the new programme, and propose how these will be sourced . Presenter: Moikabi (10 minutes). Discussion: 5 minutes.

It is advise d that the 'Any Other Busi ness' section should be avoide d because it makes meetings unnecessarily too long.

The following template can be handy when preparing the agenda:

Item	Presenter	Presentation time	Contributions time
Detailed course outline for the new course	F. Modise	10 minutes	10 minutes

?? Activity
Following the guidelines discussed above, prepare an agenda of your own with five items. Use the space provided.

Chairing The Meeting

Chairing of meetings requires skill, and the manager of a p roject should consciously cultivate the requisite skills because a successful meeting can only occur if controlled by a capable Chairperson. Just li ke most ma nagement skills, the ability to run a meeting has to be le arned because it is n ot instinctive. Chairing of meetings encapsulates knowledge and expe rtise in a variety of areas. Mulvey and Knowl es (2004:34) identify five c haracteristics expected in a person who chairs meeting. A Chairperson should be:

- informed as to the meeting's purpose and procedures;
- objective so that he/she can control without dominating participants;
- supportive of participants in order to encourage contributions;
- diplomatic in the treatment of participants; and
- firm in keeping the meeting on course and to time.

Timing

This is an important aspect of chairing. A meeting, which starts late, or runs over the scheduled time can be demoralizing to participants. As manager you are likely to find immediate improvement in the attitude of team members towards meetings, if they not only comply with the time limits, which were set in the agenda, but are concluded in an even shorter time than expected.

Introduction

After welcoming team members, the Chairperson must introduce the purpose of the meeting. It is the introduction that sets the tone for the meeting. However, the nature of the introduction will depend on the reason for which the meeting has been called. Most importantly, the introduction should enthuse the team members to want to participate actively. The project meetings should have ground rules that are acceptable to all.

Guiding the discussion

This refers to the actual control of the meeting as it proceeds. The function of the Chairperson is to assist the meeting to achieve its objectives. Among other things the chairperson should:
- be objective;
- ensure that attendees do not lose sight of the purpose of the meeting;
- control the meeting so that members do not get embroiled in an emotional exchange;
- ensure the meeting is focused on the agenda; and
- be sensitive to the characters and needs of the different team members, and create opportunities for everyone to contribute.

Handling Difficult People

At every meeting the manager will always find people who could ruin the gathering if given the opportunity. It is the responsibility of the Chairperson to deal with such people. The difficult characters fall into categories:

- **The Perennial latecomer.** This is the person who consistently comes late for meetings. This behaviour should not be justified, and as manager you should not delay commencement of the meeting until such persons arrive.

- **The talkative person.** This is the type of person who wants to monopolise talk even if what he/she says is not necessarily of great value to the meeting. You will have to find more tactful ways of interrupting this person.

- **The 'Joker'.** This is the person who tries to turn everything into a joke, distracting the other attendees and interfering with the progress of the meeting. Humour is welcome at any meeting because it relaxes the atmosphere, but if it is excessive it must be handled with tact.

- **'The Spoilsport'.** This is the type of person who opposes anything new which is discussed at the meeting. Typically, spoilsports are outspoken and critical of innovative ideas that may suggest change. As chairperson you should not ignore that type of person. Instead you may ask that person for solutions to which other members will respond.

- **The Aggressive Person.** This is the type of person who will launch personal attacks on other members in the meeting, causing an unpleasant atmosphere. Those who are attacked tend to retaliate, and if this is not controlled it can lead to exchange of abusive language.

Let us reflect on the foregoing by working on this activity.

?? Activity

Five types of difficult p eople have been described above. Suggest two wa ys of dealing with each one. These ways should be different from what has been suggested already.

Type of person	Two ways of dealing with him/her
The perennial latecomer	
The talkative person	
The 'Joker'	
'The Spoilsport'	
The aggressive Person	

Share your views with colleagues in a discussion, and see t o it that when you chair the next meeting you try and apply the new ideas.

The Language of Meetings

There are special terms (legal terms) you should be familiar with when runn ing meetings. Before discussing them, here is an extract from the introductory remarks of a chairperson.

> Ladies and gentlemen, it is my **prerogative** to declare this meeting **duly constituted**. The **convener** circulated the agenda for your perusal. When the vote is taken, I do not e xpect anyone to **abstain**. Should that happen, I shall call for **adjournment** since we will not have reached any **consensus**. Members not voted for in the two **ad hoc** committees will be **co-opted**. I expect all ideas about **the motion** to be reflected in the **minutes**. I also notice that we form **a quorum**, and those absent should have **sought proxy.** I take it that we are all **unanimous** on this resolu tion. Finally, the Secre tary is advised not to record what is said **verbatim**.

By referring to the extract, now work on this activity.

?? Activity

There are words written in bold (in the extract cited above). Below are meanings of these words. Match th e meaning (first column) with the word(s) in the se cond column.

Meaning	The word(s)
Power vested in somebody.	
Appointment of a member who has not been voted for.	
One who calls a meeting.	
Something done in accordance with the rules.	
Topics for discussion at a meeting.	
Decision not to participate in a ballot.	
Closing the meeting before all topics are covered.	
Committees formed for a task and dissolved after the task has been completed.	
A proposal put before a meeting.	
Record of the proceedings of a meeting.	
Authorization to vote on behalf of somebody.	
The minimum number of people required to declare the meeting valid.	
A decision taken	
Citing word for word.	

If you have any difficulties, use the Dictionary and then share with a colleague. This will ensure that you have a full understanding of the legal words.

It is noteworthy that the ideas discussed in this short chapter are neither definitive nor are they prescriptive on the subject of managing meetings. Rather, they provide the basic information that most people who chair or attend meetings most of the time need most. We believe you are one such person. The truth is that meetings are either good or bad, and the responsibility for this rests entirely with the Chairperson.

Key Points to Remember

In this short chapter we focused on the running of meetings, and discussed the following issues:

- how best to plan meetings;
- the issue of time;
- formulating the agenda;
- chairing meetings;
- handling difficult people; and

- the language of meetings.

Chapter 10

Case Studies

Learning outcomes

After working through each case study, you should be able to:

- interpret the project correctly;
- relate the project to the distance education situation at your institution;
- apply ideas about project management in a creative man ner to the cases presented;
- share your views about each case studies with colleagues; and
- create your own case studies and share them with colleagues.

Introduction

Case studies are simulations of reality, and in the present in stance they are not to be taken as events that happened. The whole idea is to relate ideas of what you studied in the foregoing chapters to life-like situations, that is situations like ly to arise in distance education circumstances. The discourse you have been usin g should now be brought to bear on the issues r aised. A co nscious attempt has been made to show commonalities in problems that lead to projects and project management in SADC countries. This p oints to the need to come up with strategic alliances among distance education institutions towards commo n solutions for common challenges. One way to derive maxi mum benefit from the case studie s is to share your insights with colleagues. It is wh en you interact with others that you learn how you think as well as how others think, thereby broadening your perception of project management in open and distance le arning. At the end of each case study, some guide points are listed so that you can use them to discuss systematically. The p oints are n ot exhaustive, and you are at liberty to draw from any of t he ideas th at you found interesting when you studied the fo regoing chapters. Why distance ed ucation? The following are some of the motivations to pursue TVET through the DE mode:

- ➢ The learner does not h ave to leave the job (losing a salary) in order to do studies
- ➢ What the learner studie s has a dire ct bearing on career prospects, and that makes the study more meaningful and holistic
- ➢ There is no worry about failing to get a vacancy as happens in conventional schools. Normally there is no question of classes being full
- ➢ It is not necessary to stick to specific hours of study
- ➢ When studying at home the learner gets the support of family members
- ➢ Distance education fees are comparatively lower.

Case Study A

Two lecturers from the School of Education at the Open University (UK) go to Lesotho on a study visit. They are mainly interested in teacher education, and make arrangements to observe actual lessons in high school. During classroom visits, they observe that although teachers speak highly of the importance of oral interaction, it turns out that in practice, the opportunities afforded learners to engage in dialogue are minimal. Teachers dominate classroom discourse while learners sit passively and listen most of the time. The visiting lecturers come to the conclusion that where teachers dominate the interaction, there is little initiative on the part of learners. The lack of initiative also reflects limited learner participation when it should be the opposite. In their opinion, some intervention is necessary to ensure that teachers are exposed to ideas about effective interaction. They discuss their observations with teachers and officials from the Ministry of Education before returning to the UK.

Back in the UK, they identify an in-service course on classroom interaction used to train UK teachers. The in-service programme takes two years to complete, leading to the award of a diploma qualification. The curriculum is made up of six study modules, designed for the UK education context. Delivery of the programme is through distance education mode. The lecturers recommend that the course be offered to teachers in Lesotho.

Contacts are made with the Ministry officials, and the Ministry agrees that the course be offered. A non-governmental organization (NGO), Rotary Club International (England), undertakes to fund the project collaboratively with one of the institutions that provides distance education in Lesotho. Funding would include contextualization of the study materials in the first instance. When contextualization is complete, an appropriate learner support model would be determined before delivery of the programme can take place.

Suppose you are chosen by your institution to manage the project. Discuss how you would go about the management task. To guide discussion, take into account these questions.

- What would be your starting and closing point of the project?
- What key logistical issues would you take into account?
- How would you ensure accommodation of the PCTS in your management?
- How would you break down the tasks?

- What risks and changes do you anticipate?
- How do you propose to manage them?

Case Study B

A distance education institution in Zambia offers school equivalency courses to out-of-school youth and adults. Statistics over the past five years show a high non-completion rate. This high percentage of dropouts is cause for concern to the institution.

In order to pay its staff, the institution mainly depends on the fees paid by learners. As the situation is getting worse, prospects to retrench staff are fast becoming a reality. Departments engage in intelligent discussion to try and identify causes of this state of affairs, but there is no consensus about the causes and how best to circumvent them. Some of the numerous guesses for the problem cited by staff members include poor customer service by the institution; unaffordable fees charged for the courses offered; a general depression in the economy of the country; poorly qualified tutors; failure by learners to attend tutorials; social problems faced by learners; study materials that are poorly written; and so forth.

The head of the institution recommends that a project aimed at establishing the causes of non-completion and the high dropout rate be carried out. On grounds that you have recently completed a course in project management, you are requested to manage the project. One of the points made to you is that there is limited funding, but at the same time you are supposed to come up with a comprehensive report in two months' time. Your report will be used to address the identified problems, thereby reducing the dropout rate.

Specify how you would manage the project taking into account the following issues as well as any others you consider pertinent.
- the starting point and closing point of the project;
- the people you will include in the project team;
- challenges you are likely to face at the beginning and during the project;
- the project milestones;
- stakeholder management; and
- control measures.

Case Study C

Two distance education institutions, one in Namibia and one in Malawi sign a memorandum of understanding, which among other t hings requires that th ey collaborate in the qualit y assurance of their organizations. Both offer comparable programmes, and they agree to peer review ea ch other. In order for that to be don e professionally, it is necessary to have in place a policy on joint quality assurance as well as procedures on how quality assurance is going to be conducted.

Prior to the proposed ar rangement, neither institution had in place a policy on quality management. When the two heads of the institutions meet at executive level, the y agree that peer review can only work when a po licy instrument is in place. The major constraint is the cost involved.

Each institution is able to fund and work out procedures at institutional level, but beyond that, it become s a problem. Fortunat ely, the Co mmonwealth of Learning (COL) offers funds to e nsure that a common p olicy is formulated. The international organization sees this a s a good development that will serve as an example of how distance organizations in Southern Africa can collaborate towards raising educational standards through open and dista nce learning. COL req uests that e ach institution identifies a project manager.

The identified professional would manage the situation at his/her workplace. This will involve putting togethe r a team that w ill systematically gather information on programmes offered, organizational structure, how learners are support ed, issues of decentralization, resources available, challenges faced by th e organization, currently used quality assurance procedures, etc. Th e project managers from the two institutions would then come together to draft the policy to be followed.

You are chosen to manage the project at your institution in either Namibia or Mala wi after being briefed about the scope of the project and the role of the COL. You have to come up with the final joint policy document after three mon ths, and th e organization you work fo r has confidence in you as project manager for a number o f reasons. One such re ason is th at you have completed a course in project management. Suppose you have already chos en a project team, and you address the members in the first meeting. What would you communicate to them about:

- the rationale of the project;
- the change that the project will bring;

- the paradigm shift that is expected of team members;
- the need for more purposeful interaction;
- the project structure;
- challenges likely to arise while working on the project;
- the work breakdown structure; and
- time management.

Case Study D

For the past ten years o r so, Zimbabwe has been going through a period of turmoi l regarding the political, economic and social issues. There is an attempt to brin g some sense of stabilit y in the co untry, and towards that end there is effort fro m different quarters. Some of the ar eas receiving attention are health , education, housing, public relations, rule of law, entrepreneurship, food security, to name a few. This is a period of post conflict reconstruction.

An international NGO, in its bid for post conflict reconcilia tion establishes that the relationship between civil society an d the police is very poor. Civil society fears the police and is mistrustful of the wa y the police enforce the law. In particular, they find the police as being partisan, serving the interest of the ruling party and applying rules selectively. The civil society is also concerned a bout corruption and bribery. It is said that those who commit c rimes are allowed to go untried as long as they pay bribes. Further, the police extort bribes by findi ng fault where there is none, knowing that those they victimize have a limited knowledge of the law. Particular insta nces include trends observed at roadblocks wher e cases are created to make sure the accused feel guilty before pumping out ridiculous sums of money to be allowed to go free.

The new generation of police officers, young and money h ungry use foul languag e that intimidates civilians. Harassment is o f common occurrence, but w orst of all the officers have serious co mmunication limitations when it comes to statement writing, interrogation, translation from one language to a nother and report-writing. The NGO has gone on to report that the police officers have limited knowledge of cross-cultural etiquette. This, the NGO alleges, is evident in the manner the police deal with visitors and tourists who come and go out of the country. The net eff ect is that the behaviour of these law enforcement agents impacts negatively on human rights and the tourism and hospitality industry, which is a source of much-needed revenue.

The NGO recommends re-education of the police officers on the job. In particular, it is recommended that a course in communication skills and public relations be developed for the police officers in the rank of constables and sergeants. Officers in these two ranks are largely in constant touch with civilians. For most of the time, they are in the field, and on patrol all over the country. The Commissioner of Police evaluates the report, and approaches a distance education institution to advise on the most appropriate intervention.

By coincidence, you happen to work for the organization that is approached to come up with recommendations. At the executive management meeting, the head of your distance education institution and his team decide that the College should design a certificate programme on communication. It should be targeted at the police, who are expected to do the course at a distance with occasional face-to-face tutorials. Both the curriculum and the study materials have to be designed and developed from scratch since there is no comparable course in place. The course should be developed in close consultation with the police force.

You are appointed to manage the project, which is funded jointly by your institution and the office of the Police Commissioner. You are given exactly six months to develop the study materials before delivery can take place. Explain how you are going to go about the task with special focus on:

- the resumption and closure of the project;
- the major operations that you think will be involved;
- how you are going to manage stakeholders;
- issues that will make the project difficult to manage;
- how you propose to avoid project failure;
- the communication issues at the centre of the project;
- schedule of the key operational tasks; and
- evaluation whether the course is fit for purpose before delivery.

Case Study E

There are nomadic populations in Africa. For example, we have the Fulani in Nigeria, the Masai in Kenya, the San and the Basarwa in Namibia and Botswana. Nomads are populations whose children are in a plight regarding accessing of education because they are constantly on the move, with no fixed homes. Tahir (2006) observes that movement for nomadic communities is necessitated by culture and economic demands. Nomads in 20 African countries constitute 6% of total

population. Nomadism is char acterized by: constant migration, geographical isolation, restricted social interaction with the larger societ y, language and cultural differences.

The Ministries of Education for the different countries where there are nomads have come to t he realization that th e nomadic population s in the ir countries are disadvantaged in terms of access to basic education. Basic education normally refers to primary school educa tion. The problems associated with facilitating learning for nomadic children is that they are constantly on the move, which means it is out of the question to build permanent structu res commonly referred to as classrooms. The other accompanying problem is the attitude of nomadic parents to education. Simply because they pursue economic a ctivities where the value of education is not a priority (e.g. pastoralism, hunting and gathering), they are not like ly to place a ny importance on school e ducation. Further, nomads have a language problem. They may have their own language, e.g. Sarwa (in Bot swana), which is not sp oken and is little known by the larger society who speak Tswana. For purposes of Education, English would be the language for accessing the curriculum.

What complicates t he issue is that f or nomadic children they have to cope with th e language of the wider social community (their second lang uage), before they learn English, the language of Education (their third language). Notwithstanding this state of affairs, governments with noma dic populations are determined to provide basic education, thereby facilitating access to such populations as a right. Against this background, UNESCO has funds t o help the governments find ways of developing basic education curricula that would be in kee ping with nomadism. After consulting with the Mi nister of Education, an agreement i s reached that a distance mode of learning would be more suitable for the situation under discussion.

Let us suppose that you belong to one of those countries where there is a nomadic population, and fortunately you are an employee of the distance education institution approached to carry o ut a survey to establish the situation on the ground in th e nomadic communities. To be more specific, th e institution is supposed to find how the children receive education presently; who teaches them and how they are taught; what issues surround t he language question; the extent to which parents and children value education; constraints in providing education to such populations; and the role of NGOs. Above all, the institution should come up with a recommende d curriculum for basic education, which will guide provision of education.

The head of your institution decides to appoint you to manage t his fascinating distance education project. You fe el it is challenging, but you decide to take it u p. Before you embark on it, there are several questions you are asked by th e UNESCO representative as specified below. What answers will you give?

- What would be your starting point for the project?
- How do you think distance is going to affect your operations?
- What key responsibilities are you going to allocate to your key team members?
- Who do you think are the main stakeholders?
- How do you propose to manage the stakeholders?
- What risks do you anticipate in managing the project?
- What communication challenges do you anticip ate considering that En glish, the language of instruction, is a third language for nomadic populations?
- What is your understanding of basic education?
- Why do you think dist ance education will be more appropriate for this situation than conventional education?
- What project management body of knowledge is cru cial as the base line for this particular project?

Case Study F

The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) h as conducted a survey in five SADC countries. After the survey, experts from t he five countries d evelop a curriculum and study material for a six-month course on small-scale farming. This course is meant to develop farming skills f or out-of-school youth in a range of farming activities e. g. market gardening, pou ltry, piggery, fishing, rearing of go ats, bee ke eping, and floriculture. The course will be done through distance educa tion mode with face-to-face tutorials once every month. Successful completion of the course will lead to th e award of a certificate, and those who complet e the co urse will be eligible to get a start-up loan so that they can set up small farming businesses of their own.

Distance Education institutions in t he five countries are requested to access the course under open ed ucation resources (OER), and use the material to tea ch the skills. Your institution has evaluated the course a nd decides to offer it through its five regional offices countrywide. Howe ver, there is still one problem, namely, that the re is no learner support model prescribed b y the course developers because circumstances vary from one SADC count ry to another. The executive managemen t

of the institution where you are employed conclude that a two month project to work out a delivery strategy should be undertaken before the course can be offered.

You are appointed manager for the project. Representatives from different departments of the organization are appointed to constitute the project team. You are provided with terms of reference. At your first meeting, you spell out the terms of reference, and request the team to suggest issues to consider when undertaking the project. A number of issues are raised, and these include: study centres where the course will be offered; the number of learners per study centre; availability of tutors; fees payable; registration procedures and enrolment; government support if any; assessment procedures; course evaluation and monitoring.

On the basis of this information, which was raised at the first meeting, you have to come up with guidance on the following issues pertaining to management of the project.

- What problem will offering this course solve?
- Who are the main stakeholders of this project?
- What are the key responsibilities for team members?
- What do you need to know about the potential learners before they are enrolled?
- What do you need to know about farming in the different communities?
- How does emotional intelligence come into the management of this project?
- What milestones do you take into account as you work on the project?
- What challenges do you anticipate when running the project?
- What monitoring tools will you put in place to ensure successful delivery of the new course?

Case Study G

At an international conference on technical and vocational education and training (TVET), it is confirmed that conventional systems of offering TVET are failing to cope with the demand to train as many people as possible in survival skills in a world where formal employment is becoming more and more scarce. There is a strong recommendation to countries attending the conference that they should try distance education to develop vocational skills for citizens. The following are some of the motivations raised at the conference to pursue TVET through the DE mode:

- The learner does not have to leave the job (losing a salary) in order to do studies.
- What the learner studies has a direct bearing on career prospects, and that makes the study more meaningful and holistic.
- There is no worry about failing to get a vacancy as happens in conventional schools. Normally there is no question of classes being full.
- It is not necessary to stick to specific hours of study.
- When studying at home the learner gets the support of family members.
- Distance education fees are comparatively lower.

The head of your institution who attended the conference comes back inspired by the idea. For some time the distance education institution you work for has been receiving requests to offer courses in security management, tourism and hospitality, beauty therapy, management of a lodge, and cell phone repair. The institution has not been able to respond to the requests because there are no practical workshops and equipment to enable those doing the course to do practical work.

The head calls a meeting to brainstorm ways of offering technical subjects by distance. You are among the employees who suggest that it is possible to get experts to write the theory of the proposed courses and cast it in DE format. This idea is very welcome, but it does not solve the issue of practical work. One member observes that in the community, and in the different towns in any SADC country there are security companies, hotels, lodges, hair and beauty salons, cell phone repair shops that do practical work. She goes on to suggest that the College could develop strategic alliances by forming partnerships with those companies to get attachment vacancies for those who would be enrolled in the courses. There is instant buy-in to the suggestions.

Two days later, the head of the institution invites you to his office and appoints you to manage the project. He specifically wants you to establish: the popularity of the courses discussed earlier; the extent to which companies are prepared to take learners who have done theory to do attachment with them; and find out whether there are people in the community who are qualified to write study materials in the areas identified. You should recommend a team and work out a budget for this project to be completed in three months before the major decision of developing the courses is made.

Explain what you would do regarding the following:

- the main tasks that make up the project;
- the budget needed to carry out the study;
- justification of the project;
- how you are going to manage the stakeholders;
- the tools you will use to collect information;
- the possible challenges you anticipate and how you are going to address them when they arise;
- how you are going to structure and schedule the project; and
- project closure.

Conclusion

The case studies discussed above will guide you as manager to be more proactive rather than being reactive in project management.

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