INFLUENCE OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION CHANNELS ON EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC PROGRAMS: A CASE OF AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY, KENYA

BY

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DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been submitted to any other college or university for any award.

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This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as a university supervisor;

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my dear parents Mr. and Mrs. Kamanda for their unwavering support towards my education and constant encouragement in my career path. To my siblings (Waithera, Karanja, Nyambura, Njeri, Nyokabi and Kamau) whose trust has given me the motivation to always strive for the best. I thank them all.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMYS

AKU-N   Aga Khan University Nairobi

ANS   Advanced Nursing Studies

Email   Electronic mail

CMC   Computer-Mediated Communication

FAS   Faculty of Arts and Sciences

FHS   Faculty of Health Services

ICT   Information and Communication Technologies

SWOT   Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

UNESCO   United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate influence of internal communication channels on effective management of University's academic programs with specific focus to Aga Khan University. The study investigated whether face to face communication, telephone communication, written communication and computer mediated communication improves effective management. The target population was 284 staff where Krejcie and Morgan's theory was employed in coming up with a sample size of 162. The study relied mostly on primary data sources where computer software SurveyMonkey was used to send out a web link hosting the questionnaire to the targeted respondents. Data collected was quantitative and qualitative which was analyzed using descriptive statistics and content analysis. A total of 106 staff participated giving a response rate of 65.43%. After data cleaning, 20.75% of the responses were incomplete which left 84 accurately completed ones for analysis; a true response rate of 51.85%. Demographically, 70.24% of the respondents were aged between 26 to 40 years, 54.76% were male, 48.81% were educated to a postgraduate level and most 75% worked at the Medical College. Of the Internal communication channels available at AKU-N majority showed a preference to receive information through Computer Mediated Media 90.48%, while use of written communication seemed almost obsolete at 13.10%. The study established that AKU-N handled its communication with staff by utilizing formal communication channels that allowed for information to be exchanged from top management to lower level staff and across departments that were necessary for any organization to function. In conclusion, the study showed that there is no one channel that AKU-N used as a wholesome solution for achieving effective management and that there is continuous feedback from management to ensure the organization coordinated and adjusted activities to maintain balance and promote effective management. The study recommends that AKU-N' s management considers formulating strategies to enhance retaining of its young well educated workforce and also capitalize on its employee's preference for computer mediated commination channels by promoting modern technological modes of communication like social media, in addition to clearly laid out communication policy that will enlighten staff on the access and use of corporate information thus promoting employee awareness and growth, requisite components for effective management. For further research a study on the influence of Computer Mediated Channels on conflict resolution within an institution of higher learning is a relevant topic of study.

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

All over the world, business today are facing very challenging environment. To stay profitable in the highly challenging and competitive global market economy, all factors of production, men, machine and materials, should be wisely managed (Harris and Nelson, 2008). Among the factors of production, the human resource constitutes the biggest challenge because unlike other inputs, employee management demands skillful handling of thoughts, feelings and emotions to secure highest productivity. Organizational communication plays an important role in this challenge. Managers have traditionally spent the majority of their time communicating in one form or another (meetings, face to face discussions, memos, letters, e-mails, reports).

Today, however, it has become an indispensable part of their work. An effective management of production processes requires greater collaboration and teamwork among workers in different functional groups. Hence, to manage the existing performance of the employees and to motivate them for better performance, efficient communication practices have become more important in all organizations. In modern days, communication is considered as one of the most dominant and important activities in organizations (Harris and Nelson, 2008). Fundamentally, relationships grow out of communication, and the functioning and survival of organizations is based on effective relationships among individuals and groups. In addition, organizational capabilities are developed and enacted through "intensely social and communicative processes" (Jones, 2004). Communication helps individuals and groups coordinate activities to achieve goals, and it's vital in socialization, decision-making, problem-solving and change-management processes.

Communication is generally regarded as an essential part of the inner workings of an organization, as it involve the flow of information between the organization and its external and internal publics. This information may be disseminated through multiple channels and may be dependent upon a myriad of tools and practices used to convey various messages to the receiver.

The need for communicating information to an organization's internal public-its employees has become of utmost importance in the last 10-15 years, as the changing nature of the workplace has had an impact on employee attitudes and employee morale. Consequently, today's employees have more questions about their roles within their organizations than ever before and have a need for more information from their employers than has traditionally been provided by these employers (Turner, 2004)

Internal communication also provides employees with important information about their jobs, organization, environment and each other. Communication can help motivate, build trust, create shared identity and spur engagement; it provides a way for individuals to express emotions, share hopes and ambitions and celebrate and remember accomplishments. Communication is the basis for individuals and groups to make sense of their organization, what it is and what it means (Lukazewski, 2006). Internal communication plays a very vital role in implementation of all these ideal motivational practices in the organization. It is this making people understand the bigger picture, is an important and complex job that demands attention from practicing managers. Indeed, the 'manager who suffers from poor communication skills is likely to feel frustrated most of the time.

Effective communication begins with the acknowledgment of the important role internal communications plays as a vital method for advancing information sharing across all directions of an organization: upward, downward and horizontally. According to study carried out by Moorcroft (2003) he pointed that by giving employees insight into the strategy and business development plans, they become more engaged as they understand how their unique role plays an integral part in the organization's success. Internal communication has been recognized as a strategic focus for business communication, second only to leadership concerns (Barnfield, 2003). Numerous studies have linked internal communication and the degree to which employees are informed to job satisfaction and performance (Gray and Laidlaw, 2002; Bartoo and Sias, 2004; Rosenfeld, Richman and May, 2004; Zucker, 2002).

The competitive advantage of internal communication comes not only from the obvious benefits of employee satisfaction and productivity, but also from the positive contributions that well-informed employees can make to a company's external public relations efforts and the achievement of the organization goal. Employees can be an organization's best ambassadors or loudest critics, depending whether and how they get information (Dawkins, 2004). Effective internal communication enhances corporate reputation and credibility, since employees are viewed as particularly credible sources by external stakeholders (Hannegan, 2004). Put simply, employees are the face of an organization and have a powerful influence on organizational success. It is widely acknowledged that the executives in any organization set the tone for internal communication (Tourish and Robson, 2003).

The leader of an organization is automatically the designated chief communication officer, and successful internal communication is impossible without CEO support, since successful companies lead through effective top-down communication (Van Nostran, 2004). Haas (2006) found the greatest desire from employees in a variety of types of organizations was for more information from top management through clear channel and most employees believe face-to-face communication with supervisors is the most desirable channel. Jo and Shim (2005) found a strong relationship between management's interpersonal communication and employees forming trusting attitudes. Cameron and McCollum (1993) also found that employees preferred interpersonal communication with management over mediated communication. In short, employees want to see and talk to their leaders directly.

Welch and Jackson (2007) summarize internal communication as the strategic management of interactions and relationships between stakeholders at all levels within an organization. Moreover, Smidts et al (2001) defines internal communication as employee relations with supervisors and colleagues, mission statement and organizational development. Alongside Smidts definition of internal communication, Miller (2006) describes internal communication content as information about employees' roles, organizational issues (goals, objectives, new developments, activities and achievements) and personal contributions.

Internal communications as defined by Cornelissen (2008) takes a comprehensive perspective by focusing on the channels used by a firm such as internal newsletter, intranet to communicate with its employees. Cornelissen definition of internal communication highlights the need to consider the communication channels and by implication, message content involved in internal

communication. The above definitions of internal communication treat employees as the main subjects. What's more, Argenti (2009) argues that no other corporate communication sub function (media relations, investor relations, government relations) offers more of an opportunity for research than employee communication.

Today, more and more employees find that an important part of their work is communication, especially now that service workers outnumber production workers and research as well as production processes emphasize greater collaboration and teamwork among workers in different functional groups. Moreover, a change in communication technologies has contributed to the transformation of both work and organizational structure (Tucker, 2006). For these reasons, communication practices and technologies have become more important in all organizations, but they are perhaps most important in knowledge-intensive organizations and sectors and, as such, are of great significance to organizations effectiveness to their set goals and to public science management.

Organizational communication in today's organizations has not only become far more complex and varied but more important to overall organizational functioning and success. While research used to focus on understanding how organizational communication varied by organizational type and structure, the emphasis has increasingly turned to understanding how new communication technologies and capabilities can help bring about new and more effective organizational forms and processes (Desanctis and Fulk 2009). According to von Krogh (2000) communication is not only an essential aspect of these recent organizational changes, but effective communication can be seen as the foundation of modern organizations.

Desanctis and Fulk (2009) radically new communication-enabled organizational forms are possible and are now emerging. On a less grandiose scale, new communication technologies can enable almost every aspect of organizational management and effectiveness, including change management, knowledge management, participative management, innovation and organizational partnerships and alliances. The most notable advances in communication technology are groupware or computer facilitated group communication technologies. Johansen (2004) distinguishes groupware in terms of temporal (synchronous/asynchronous) and spatial (distributed/co-located) contexts.

While universities are unique organizations, they have commonalities with other large and diverse organizations. The similarities to other complex organizations are greater than the differences, making the findings applicable to a variety of types of large organizations. An important role of strategic internal communication is to generate "buy-in" for an organization's goals and strategies. No matter how brilliant the business strategy, it must reach and win employees to achieve optimum effectiveness. Employees want to know where their organization is headed and how they contribute to achieving the vision (Moorcroft, 2003). Employees need a "core story" that consistently puts strategy into the context of the mission and values of the organization (Sanchez, 2004).

University education plays an essential role in national development. A report on National Education Support Strategy revealed the rapid expansion of universities in Kenya since 2003 (UNESCO, 2011). According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) report there are several reasons for the growth of Kenyan universities among them is Kenya's Vision 2030.

Vision 2030 recognizes the need for a literate citizenry, thus it places great emphasis on the link between education and the labor market (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2005). However, research on the influence of internal communication channels on effective management of university academic programmes has not been extensively studied.According to Cornelissen (2008), organizational information flows through formal and informal communication channels. Nonetheless, this study will focus on formal internal communication channels of the AKU-N. The motivation behind studying AKU-N stemmed from a scan of related literature revealing that internal communication is regarded as a key aspect in the successful planning of new programmes within organizations such as universities. This is because communicating to employee's acts as a tool for announcing, explaining and preparing employees for organizational change (Kitchen and Daly, 2002).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The successful business depends heavily on effective communication within an organization. Most of organizations realize that they will be able to achieve positive perception from customers by improving internal communication. According to Barret (2008) many organizations mainly focus on external communication strategy building, forgetting about having effective internal communication not only for passage of information, but also for achievement of company goals. The value of internal communication and its relationship to organizational growth and success, staff motivation and commitment has been widely recognized (Hamilton, 2008) suggested that communication channels are rather neglected management instruments in internal communication.

Despite their importance, communication channels are not given much consideration by management when communicating corporate affairs. As new universities are coming up in Kenya, established universities are losing their skilled employees to these new universities. Furthermore, crises such as high turnover, is generally charged to poor internal communication. Hargie et al., (2000) advice that managers need to know how well their communication channels are currently functioning in support of the organizational success. The author adds that some accountability is needed for the flow of organizational communication meaning that if vital information is not reaching its target audiences then the blockages in the communication channels need to be identified and dealt with. Yet, organizations such as universities overlook the relevance of channels during the process of internal communication. Foulger (2004) states that management need to identify and prioritize operative channels since channels have different technological features that can add meaning or distort the purpose of the message.

AKU-N is one of Kenya's universities that are expanding their programmes by planning new faculties. A communication framework (AKU, 2009) and communication proposal (Oyier, 2010) outlined a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis of AKU and concluded that communication does not appear to be given organizational priority.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate influence of internal communication channels on effective management of University's academic programs with distinct focus to Aga Khan University, Kenya.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

This study was guided by the following objectives;

i. To establish how use of face-to-face communication influences effective management of university academic programs.

ii. To determine the extent to which use of the telephone communication influences effective management of University's academic programs.

iii. To determine how use of written communication influences effective management of university academic programs.

iv. To assess how use of computer mediated communication influences effective management of university academic programs.

1.5 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions;

i. How does use of face to face communication influence effective management of university academic programs?

ii. To what extent does use of the telephone communication influence effective management of university academic programs?

iii. How do use of written communication influence effective management of university academic programs?

iv. How do use of computer mediated communication influence effective management of university academic programs?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study was aimed at highlighting the internal communication channels that support AKU-N academic programmes; subsequently, the findings may be beneficial in directing the university's communication effort to reflect the changing nature of the institution and be proactive in targeting necessary audiences. AKU-N's management may also find the findings of this study useful in informing whether to sustain or adapt other forms of internal communication channels.

Moreover, executives from other academic institutions may also benefit from the findings in building effective internal communication channels for effective management of university academic programmes. A study on internal communications channels with focus on effective management of academic programmes in the Kenyan academic institution is limited. By and large, finding of this study may fill this knowledge gap and identify areas for further research.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

The survey focused on influence of internal communication channels on effective management of University's academic programs with distinct focus to Aga Khan University. The study interviewed employees based at the Nairobi campus. Questionnaires were used as the main data instrument source where it was distributed electronically to the sampled respondents. The data for analysis was collected from the population of 284 university employees who work in the following faculties: Medical College, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Faculty of Arts and Sciences and Graduate Professional Schools.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The researcher in carrying out the study faced various limitations mainly relating to information access. During the pilot study, it was noted that most respondents were unwilling to complete the hardcopy questionnaires voicing fears of victimization incase the opinions intoned were traced back to them. To mitigate this, the researcher altered the mode of questionnaire delivery from hard copy hand delivery to electronic transmission using computer software SurveyMonkey to send out a web link hosting the questionnaire to the targeted respondents; this ensured confidentiality.

A dummy run was done in the net using the link to ensure the SurveyMonkey was easy to use. In order to ensure at least 50% of the sample size was met, the researcher send out Email reminders to respondents. Finally, the researcher financed the project from own resources hence the challenges of finances when carrying out the research.

1.9 Basic assumptions of the Study

This study was based on the assumption that internal communication channels at institutions of higher learning are geared towards effective management of academic programmes and that the employees are aware of this notion. The researcher also assumed that the respondent's answered the questions correctly, truthfully and diligently.

1.10 Definition of significant terms used in the study

These are operational terms used in this study. The benefit of describing the terms is to maintain consistency in the meaning implied. Below are some of the definitions:

Communication Channel - was used to mean the various organizational media and techniques used as a means through which information is carried from the sender to the receiver mainly face to face interactions, telephone, written communication and computer mediated channels.

Computer mediated communication - Communication involving a sender and receiver conveying and retrieving information through the use of two or more networked computers such as such as e-mail, bulletin board, discussion list and computer conferencing, both text- and video-based.

Effective management – for purposes of this study, effective management was defined as the use of upward communication, downward communication and horizontal Communication to achieve given targets while making the best use of all relevant resources through creative problem solving, conflict management, negotiation, self-awareness and improvement.

Face to face communication - Communication involving a sender and receiver conveying and retrieving information through direct interaction i.e. no communication devices such as phones, letters or CMCs are used.

Internal communication a channel - means the various organizational media and techniques used to carry the university messages. For this study, the term internal communication was used in reference four specific organizational channels, i.e.

Telephone - Communication involving a sender and a receiver conveying and retrieving information through a device that uses a copper cables/ microwaves to convert voice communication/written text into electrical signals that can be transferred to other telephones and be heard/read. This will include three basic phones in use today, the classic corded telephone, which could be rotary dial like or have buttons, the cordless or wireless phone, and the cell phone.

University Academic Programmes - a university was defined as a community of people whose aim is the discovery, teaching, preservation and dissemination of important knowledge in a variety of fields. For this study, an academic program was used to mean a course of study specifically graduate master's by the eight departments that constitute the Aga Khan University Faculty of Health Sciences.

Written communication - Communication involving a sender and receiver conveying and retrieving information through written word; including letters, emails, and manuals

1.11 Organization of the study

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one, which is the introductory part, contains the background of the study, the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, delimitation of the study, limitation of the study, basic assumptions, definition of significant terms and organization of the study. In chapter two, literature review is given. Chapter three encompasses the research methodology under which, research design, target population, sampling procedure, research instrument in data collection, validity and reliability of the instruments, data collection procedures and data analysis techniques are discussed. Chapter four presents the data analysis and interpretation. Lastly chapter five presents the summary of findings, discussions, conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter covers contributions from other scholars on the influence of internal communication channels on effective management of University's academic programs with special focus to Aga Khan University. The chapter is structured into theoretical review and empirical review, conceptual framework, critique of literature and finally summary and research gaps that the study aims to bridge.

2.2 Concept of Internal Communication Channels in Organizations

In the past, the employee publication was the primary tool used executives to communicate with their employees. The employee publication generally took the form of a newsletter, newspaper, or magazine that was produced at regularly-established intervals and distributed to all those who worked for a particular organization . Other channels used for communicating information to employees have included staff meetings, formal memos, one-on-one meetings with supervisors, and, less formally, the internal "grapevine." With the development of new technologies and their application to the workplace in recent years, employee communications programs have been expanded to include the use of electronic mail (email), voice mail, teleconferencing, and internal websites.According to Richmond and McCroskey (2009) a communication channel is a means by which messages are carried from one person to another and may take the form of mediated systems such as; telephone conversations, internal letters or memos, face to face meetings, electronic mail, internal newsletter, intranet.

Since employee communication is carried through channels deciding on the most appropriate one can be a difficult task given that there are innumerable options of channels available (Pokumensah, 2011). Good communication channel is the glue that can bind an organization together in its quest to be the best. Good communication is the fiber optics cables that shines critical light   throughout the organization and lets everyone know how the battle is going. Good communication prepares and helps employees change.

Good communication helps employees buy into the new business reality with trust, loyalty and enthusiasm. Lindo (2005) urged employers to think of employee communications as a total communications effort designed to inform your various served internal publics. Lindo (2005) suggested that a strong internal public relations program will help employers establish positive working relationships with employees; strengthen employee support for organizational objectives; and assist employers in gaining employee acceptance for company policies and procedures.

Internal communication is vital to organizational growth and success. Employees (Faculty, resident doctors and staff) desire and appreciate being informed about organizational goals and objectives. Furthermore, employees need clear communication from management to understand how their own roles fit within the vision of the organization (Welch, 2009). According to Austin and Pinkleton (2006) employees play important roles in an organization because not only are they human resources providing services for the company but are also shareholders, customers and marketers of the organization.

Leaders and managers in private and public sectors across the globe have also recognized that internal communication is a fundamental element affecting organizational effectiveness, innovation and competitiveness (Goodman, 1994). Frandsen and Johansen (2011) pointed that it is necessary to increase the internal communication frequency since employees usually have a high demand for updated information as well as the desire to provide continuous feedback; whenever possible internal communication should precede external communication (Frandsen, 2011).

It is for this reason that supervisors have begun to appreciate the role employees play in achieving organizational goals hence the need to communicate effectively and efficiently with staff. Internal communication is indeed the lifeblood of any organization whether in the public or private sector. This is because effective internal communication provides organizational direction and employee motivation (Barret, 2008). Where internal communication is poor, the outcomes tend to be inter alia to lower staff commitment, great absenteeism and higher turnover (Hargie, Tourish, and Wilson, 2000). Research shows that internal communication is vital to inform staff, to communicate with them, to convince them of something and to improve their job satisfaction (LinkeandZerfass, 2011).

Despite the diverse channels available for employee communication, the effectiveness and efficiency of a channel will depend on a number of factors. Among the factors to consider when choosing suitable channels of communication is the size of the organization. Large organizations such as AKU will need to adopt channels that address employee communication needs considering their numbers. Other factors to consider are the purpose of the message as well as the communication structures or networks of the university (Baskin et al., 1997).

But irrespective of the channel used, the underlying principle is that it must create understanding in a participative two-way (Smith, 1992; Miller, 2006). To confirm whether AKU channels promote two-way communication, it is essential to study the direction of message flows. This study will focus on the formal information flows of four channels i.e. face to face, computer mediated communication (email and intranet), telephone/phone, and written communication.

Richmond and McCroskey (2009) have defined formal communication networks as the communication that follows the hierarchical structure within an organization. In other words it follows a hierarchical order of the organization. Braedyn (2010) states, in order to have effective communication in the workplace, staff must understand the communication structure and how it facilitates internal communication. A communication structure can also be described as a network or system of pathways through which messages flow. Hamilton (2008) describes three types of formal message flow namely; downward, upward and horizontally. In downward communication, formal messages flow from managers and supervisors to subordinates. Ideally, downward communication from managers should include; job instructions, job rationale, policy and procedures, employee performance appraisals, and motivational appeals (Mounter, 2003). AKU managers can use downward message flow to inform employees about job related matters such as how their jobs contribute to the vision of the university and the benefits of the kind of work they do. Such information is needed to prevent employee dissatisfaction which is a barrier to effective management of the university's academic programs. Formal messages also flow upward from subordinates to supervisors and managers. These involve reports of employee work, achievements, and progress.

AKU employees can outline work problems that need to be solved, suggestions for improvements within the department and how they think and feel about their jobs and the university in general. This kind of two way communication is important for effective internal communication especially when appropriate channels are used to avoid controversy. Unfortunately, many subordinates tend to mask upward communication to make it more suitable to superior for fear of inspection and also to protect themselves (Richmond and McCroskey, 2009).

In horizontal or lateral communication, messages flow across departments between employees of the same rank. Horizontal communication is important for coordinating tasks with employees, solving problems, sharing information, and resolving conflicts (Mounter, 2003). AKUN internal channels need to accommodate these communication flows interchangeably so as to sustain effective management of their academic programmes as well as improve on employee welfare. In the past, managers directed communication efforts toward external stakeholders such as customers, suppliers and neglected the communication needs of its employees (Argenti, 2009). Management scholars suggest that employee communications was a rather neglected management instrument (Cornelissen, 2008) and Barrett (2008) observed that very little attention was paid to employee communication by public relations scholars although it was viewed as part of an organization's strategic communication function.Conversely, organizations are becoming more focused on retaining happy and effective workforce (Kitchen and Daly, 2002). Managers have begun to think more now, than in the past, about how they communicate with employees.

The shift in focus, from external communication to employee communication, is as a result of the realization of employees' contribution to the growth and success of an organization. Meng and Berger (2012) state that continuous research efforts of communication have led to the agreement that effective employee communication has been one of the leading indicators of company growth. Moreover, the authors add that an improvement in effective employee communication in an organization is associated with a higher level of employee engagement hence increase in market value leading to expansion programs and growth.

2.3 Face to face Communication on Effective management of Academic Programs

The face-to-face (f2f) communication is the personal mode of communication in which the participants can directly respond to signals of the counterpart (mimic and gesture). Such back couplings (feedback) between the communication partners in terms of queries and alternating conversation lead to immediate comprehension opportunities with a high flexibility. Berko (2007) define Face-to-face communication as a form of interpersonal communication (being part of human communication) that takes place between two or more persons who establish a communicative relationship. A rather technical explanation is given by Tubbs and Moss (2003) who pointed that Face-to-face communication is a multichannel experience. Simultaneously, we receive and make use of information from a number of different channels. The channels of Face-to-face communication are the sensory organs."

In today's practice the Face-to-face communication has to confront many technological tools that facilitate distance communication and improve speed and efficiency. However the personal contact captures a significant role within workplace

communication and provides something that other channels lack. In his article Ramachandran (2006) explores how Face-to-face communication helps at work and explains why it's still valued. One of the best ways to give feedback and show appreciation to colleagues is to talk to them in person. By that, the degree of motivation raises as high as in no other channel. Congratulations or commendations over an E-mail are far away from having the same effect as it also has to do with respect. This completely underlines the attitude of the respondents. They emphasize repeatedly that they always prefer face-to-face in these cases and that they value the motivation that they receive in turn from their employees. Giving positive and negative feedback over an E-mail for instance can imply the risk of being misunderstood as the reader tends to focus only on the negative aspects of the mail.

The nonverbal communication in face-to-face increases the understanding of a tasks and is usually the most impactful way, not least concerning time. The absolute best way of resolving conflicts with employees or clients is to meet and discuss them f2f. According to Ramachandran (2006) any other way only worsens the situation. Judging from their experiences any other way than face-to-face triggers unnecessary misunderstandings and results in long discussions back and forth without reaching a common sense in the end. In order to create and maintain trustworthy relationships certain situations, especially conflicts, should only be handled by means of a personal communication.The immediate comprehension in the Face-to-face communication enables a higher influence in comparison to mass communication (Koten 2011). This type of communication enables a person to hear and see the non-verbal communication conveyed by the sender and respond with feedback straightaway.

Face-to-face discussion also facilitates immediate feedback, contains visual and audio cues, act as a personal source and uses natural body languages. The most effective internal communication channel used in most organizations including institutions of higher learning is Face-to-face communication (Frandsen, 2011). According to Mutula (2002), dialogue in private universities is continuous among administrators and teaching faculty and this has helped avert employee unrest and created opportunities for effective management of academic programmes. Begley (2004) insists that that Face-to-face communication remains the most powerful human interaction, never replace intimacy and immediacy of people conversing in the same room.According to a British survey conducted by the journal IRS Employment Review (2005) found that many employers value Face-to-face communication for certain situations in their companies, especially for keeping the staff informed about organizational changes. But also the encouragement of employee involvement and performance can be best incorporated in team meetings and focus groups. The specialist journal also concluded that it is all about the effectiveness of communication and choosing the appropriate channel for the particular situation.

Another work connected to Face-to-face communication is Susan RoAne's "Face to Face: How to reclaim the personal touch in a Digital World" (2008) in which she explains how a person should conduct in Face-to-face situations such as interviews, presentations or business launches and how to make the right use of technology in order to enhance and not dominate our personal and professional life. She further contrasts the channels email, phone and Face-to-face with each other and also relates them to the handling of office politics.

However one issue still and more than ever remains interesting for a deeper research and that is the importance and use that HR Managers connect with these communication channels in the framework of their employee and client interaction. Face-to-face communication is therefore as available as mediated communication, but may have a different importance in comparison.In his article "How face-to-face communication helps at work" Sunder Ramachandran (2006) illustrates different occasions where a Face-to-face communication is vital as this channel provides warmth and emotion that telephones and computers lack. In appreciating colleagues, giving feedback, supporting conflict resolution and assigning responsibilities the personal contact can make an important difference in the effectiveness of the respective communication. Beyond his illustrations the comparison of the different characteristics of communication channels used at a certain work place appears attractive and necessary to study further. Especially the aspect of a deeper insight in the motives and minds of decision makers based on their personal work experiences can complement the current knowledge in this field.

Having a Face-to-face conversation can have many advantages compared to mediated communication. Arvey (2009) explained different motives and reasons for choosing the personal communication channel in certain situations and highlight several factors that make this way of communication so unique. Most important is the fact that it creates trust and energy on each side and that there is another truth in Face-to-face communication because of non-verbal and not openly expressed issues and people can perceive who the other person is when meeting f2f. It offers a greater possibility of influencing people and changing their way of thinking as well as it allows getting ideas and closer to the truth and to each other.

This results in a better understanding of questions and expectations. The respondents describe Face-to-face as a more rewarding, natural and relaxed conversation in which it is easier to navigate and, if preferable, to be more ambiguous. In addition to that it is inspiring to meet people. Compared to E-mail a Face-to-face dialogue usually offers more fun and energy and should always be the chosen way for selling an idea and convincing people.

According to Van der Meijden and Veenman (2005) Face to face communication also supports the creativity, interactivity, clarity and vividness and improves teamwork and mutual help. In few cases and probably less obvious the personal laziness can be an influencing factor to choose Face-to-face instead of writing long texts for example. Like no other approach the Face-to-face communication enables the highest degree of small talk and the freedom to start a conversation more informal which creates serenity and openness for the following course of action. In days of lacking time a personal talk with nearby colleagues can bring faster results than talking over the phone or E-mail. A good motivation is always the goal to be successful in the delivery of candidates and to achieve a higher quality of the delivered work. Curiosity and interest in people give further inducement. Generally this way of communication facilitates the whole work of a human resource Manager but the choice also depends on the matter and purpose.

All of these methods, old and new, foster the flow of information from the top down, but have limitations because they do not provide an opportunity for information to travel up to top-level management. In response, many organizations have found success with using internal message boards as a medium for the exchange of information.

The ideal internal communications plan employs a combination of targeted traditional, electronic and face-to face methods. Face-to-face meetings are faster when jobs are low complexity and for electronic communication are efficient for task completion (Gerardine and Peter, 2008). Even though E-mail, blogs and intranet are easy and inexpensive way to spread information, those should not be used a singular instead of face-to-face communication (Janet and Melissa, 2009). Frandsen, et al. (2011), argues that communication between supervisors and their direct subordinates remains a decisive tool in facilitating effective employee communication. They further state that engaging in an honest dialogue with as many employees as possible also fosters better understanding and employee support; an indication that effective management of a university's academic programs can be influenced by the institutions choice of the mode to internally communicate.

Frick's (2006) research reported that Face-to-face communication is faster, easier and more convenient than computer-mediated communication in the educational context. Face-to-face communication represents a high social presence i.e. a quality of a medium to convey the presence of a sender (Kaushik, David, Kline and Oaks, 2000). Besides, Barkhi, Jacob and Pirkul (1999) claimed that Face-to-face communication is an efficient method of communicating in organizations as Face-to-face manner resulted in better overall performance. It uses verbal communication, enriched by facial cues to convey information and relay quick feedback to other parties (Barkhi, Jacob and Pirkul, 1999). Frick (2006) further claimed that Face-to-face communication is best used for communicating ambiguous tasks, making decision and completing complex tasks.

Used appropriately, technology can be an extremely effective tool for internal communications. E-mail, blogs and intranets are easy, inexpensive ways to disseminate information, but should not be used as a singular substitute for Face-to-face communication.Van der Meijden and Veenman (2005) in their study reveals that students were more satisfied with using Face-to-face communication as compare to computer-mediated communication in a primary school setting. Group processes and outcomes (like academic programs) that require coordination, consensus, timing, persuasion of others, etc. are less effectively accomplished using computer mediated communication modalities (Arvey, 2009). Indeed, according to Arvey, the type of communication medium is likely to affect outcomes "when there is a need for the expression of emotions, when tasks require coordination and timing among members' activities, when one is attempting to persuade others, or with task require consensus on issues that are affected by attitudes or values of the group members. Under these circumstances, Face-to-facecommunications are likely to be more effective compared to computer mediated devices (Arvey, 2009).

The respondents reflect about many ordinary meetings, reviews and regular personnel meetings that are conditioned by the conversation about the work progress and news such as forwarding information from the top management. Those meetings create a platform for employees to give feedback concerning their projects and responsibilities and for a group decision making using the ARL (Action-Reflection-Learning) method. Other types of Face-to-face meetings are salary negotiation meetings, job introduction meetings and client and candidate introduction meetings.

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2.4 Telephone Influence on Effective management of Academic Programs

According to Winger (2005) in comparison to Face-to-face communication there are many other ways of communicating internally and externally and various situations for using those ways. Telephone is one of the communication channel which the respondents nowadays use when E-mail does not work or when they do not get a response. Advancements in telecommunications and technology have greatly transformed communication since the patent of the telephone in 1876 (Public Broadcasting Service). While the telephone is still a commonly used communication channel today, the number of mobile phone subscribers has increased exponentially since 2000. In the early inception of mobile technology development, mobile phones were elite devices primarily used by middle and upper class people (Lacohee, Wakeford, and Pearson, 2003).

Compared to old-fashion landline phones, mobile phones of today are free from the constraints of location specificity, apart from the basic capability of communication (Lacohee, Wakeford, and Pearson, 2003). Mobile phones optimize voice and data communication with services and features supporting email, messaging, video, gaming, etc. With these innovative services and features, education is becoming increasingly "mobile" and portable by enabling students to speak with faculty as well as download pre-recorded videos/podcasts and text lectures, respond to emails, and participate in synchronous "live" classes - just using a mobile phone (Berko, 2007). Sending text messages via SMS function is used in order to get short messages through without thinking of disturbing a person and for practical reasons to simply get it off.

Complicated matters that can be misunderstood may be easier explained on the phone than in an E-mail so that assumptions about long discussions via E-mail and a possible misunderstanding among sender and receiver may very likely lead to the continuation over phone (RoAne, 2008). That is in some cases the only way to communicate since people are often outside their offices. Nevertheless it can be hard to reach them when they are away. According to the respondents a phone call also supports the interaction with colleagues and clients which they have not met and worked with for a longer time. Some of them spend five or six hours a day on the phone having phone conferences between two offices in different cities. Another situation for which an E-mail may be as good is the end of a delivery with a client, provided that they have already met Face-to-face before (Treadwell, 2011). Global companies also have the problem to call at an inconvenient time especially when having colleagues in different time zones. Many choose the phone for comfort reasons, interaction purposes and to get a quicker answer. Whenever they need to talk they can send an SMS over the phone and ask for a callback. Phone is also the second choice in order to avoid travelling again, to deal with negative subjects and to have a better possibility of changing the course during a conversation. Morgan (2004) pointed that another option is chat for instant replies and the characteristic that somebody always gets back to you regardless the context of this person. Chat is furthermore viewed as the most efficient channels besides Face-to-face talk to people and ways more efficient than sending E-mails back and forth.

Various researchers have identified the importance of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in education. It has been found that ICT can promote students' intellectual qualities through higher order thinking, problem

solving, improved communication skills and deep understanding of the learning tool and the concepts to be taught (Aladejana and Idowu, 2006; Sutton, 2006). Mobile phone is one of the major forms of ICT in use, and integration of ICT generally into education can lower the cost of education, augment quality and provide a model for sharing ideas, experiences and knowledge of teachers and students. It has been found that given the right conditions mobile technologies can significantly enhance teacher professional learning and practice (Sankale, 2007).

Liu and Hwang, 2010 indicate that mobile- learning or M-learning is learning using wireless devices that can be used wherever the learner's device can receive unbroken transmission signals. The mobile devices include not only smart phones but also devices like mobile tablets and personal digital aids (PDAs). The definition for m-learning contains three key components mobility of technology, mobility of learners, and mobility of learning processes. Mobility of technology refers to the mobile nature of installed hardware and software that enable constant wireless Internet connection. Mobility of learners means learners are no longer physically attached to one or several learning sites and they can be mobile and learn at the same time as long as the mobile devices are around. Finally, mobility of learning is the result of mobility of both the technology and learners (El-Hussein and Cronje, 2010).

Unfortunately, phones with their many existing features and future potential uses are not currently widely accepted nor utilized in colleges/universities. One reason is that the technology and applications are not fully ripe yet. Researcher Motiwalla (Wang, Wu and Wang, 2009) claims that learning on mobile smart phones can never replace classroom or conventional e-learning methods, and learning with

mobile could only be complementary to traditional learning and e-learning. In Siau, Lim and Shen's research (as cited in Wang, Wu, and Wang, 2009), they collectively conclude some mobile devices' current technological limitations for leaning include small screens and small multifunction key pads, less computational power, limited memory and disk capacity, shorter batter life, complicated text input mechanisms, higher risk of data storage and transaction errors, lower display resolution, less surfability, unfriendly user- interfaces, and graphical limitations.

Today's younger generation has grown up with electronics and technologies surrounding them and has significant exposure to digital devices such as smart phones, while many professors do not. Michael Evan (2009) points out in his paper that this younger generation of students is referred to as digital natives by Prensky, which contrasts with their teachers and parents who are referred to as digital immigrants. It is understood that educators are working with students that have far greater experience, expertise, and comfort levels with mobile, wireless technologies and new digital media. Even though it may be impossible for professors/educators in older generations to catch up with the younger generation with regard to experience with new technologies and digital devices, they must still strive to embrace them as powerful new learning tools.

Until now, smart phones have been seen more as a distraction in the classroom rather than a learning tool. If students have phones with them in class, more often than not, they are asked to put them away or turn them off. The idea that many features of these phones were designed for entertainment and pleasure purposes early on has still not faded away either. Overall, research shows that educators do not have very positive attitudes towards mobile phones as tools for

learning in higher education to date. It is true, however, that students' attention in class needs to be managed. Williams and Pence (2011) bring up a good idea to manage students' attention in the long run. They encourage professors and educators to design some portions of classes as ‒ technology on and other portions as ‒ technology off (Williams and Pence, 2011).

In an online education course body language in the traditional sense disappears over the telephone, mobile phone, and "lives" synchronous classes unless there is access to video. Therefore, it is critical that administrators and faculty at the Aga Khan University understand the breakdown of communication when incorporating voice options into program development, course design, and instruction. Moreover, training and professional development is needed so that faculty and students can optimize course management system tools that support engagement and foster human communication

2.5 Computer Mediated Communication on effective management of university academic programs

In today's fast developing society people have numerous opportunities to get in contact and to communicate with each other. Especially the popularity of channels that are based on digital technology has increased tremendously so that people cannot imagine living without them anymore. Digital devices such as mobile phones, blackberries and iPads facilitate our lives and connect us wherever we are. Other tools like the intranet, telephone and e-mails have become a self-evident part of any office communication. Many companies have even implemented Social Media tools as wikis and blogs for their employees and are constantly enlarging their Social Networks with purposive strategies and features (Berko, 2007).

In light of all these possible channels one may wonder about the significance of Face-to-face communication in people's interaction.The channel communication with probably the highest amount of traffic is computer mediated communication such as E-mail. The content can be anything from extracting contracts or salaries until informing and giving or getting instructions and orders, for instance informing the right office about made changes in salaries and sending short messages about tasks and contact requests. Because of the distributed structure of many institutions it is very convenient and saves time. Another advantage of Email is that it is very clear and the words do not change. Winger (2005) in his study found that it is appreciated and necessary to get material such as the structure, figures and strategy reports via E-mail before a meeting and to have an agenda for better preparation and clear purpose.

There are many other tools to use for a mediated communication. All booking of meetings runs through Outlook. Some have two-way dialogues within a blog, discussion forum or a chat function to get their colleagues' views (instead of spamming their mail boxes) or use a share point solution to place staff information, product and technology news and thus make it available for everybody. RoAne (2008) found that Blogs in many environments are unfortunately still used for a one-way communication which does not conform to its intention but this is a matter of changing the user behavior.

Moreover it is an interesting challenge for many employees that use Social Media outside their offices but have to rely on only E-mails inside the office. There are big differences in the incorporation of modern behavior between companies today (Miller, 2009). Another challenge is the difference between Senior Management on

the one hand and the generation growing up with internet technologies on the other hand and the association of both. Because of the growing generation shift companies need to have very good and modern tools to be appealing for the next generation. Most of the organizations have an extended regional and global network with offices and employees all over the world.

This distributed work structure makes great demands on the communication behavior and channel choice. Executives need to decide for the right way to make the communication as effective and successful as possible for the task at hand. In order to perform all these tasks in their daily work they use many different channels when communicating with their employees. In his study Lodge (2010) found that people use communication technologies to send out quick messages and fasten their communication but simultaneously they need to take more time for personal connections instead of connecting through a phone call or sending a brief E-mail on a hectic pace. So in other words: people need to find the right balance and adjust their communication choice according to the situation and purpose at hand. Since mediated communication such as E-Mail lacks of a personal touch and emotional expressions. Morgan (2004) demonstrates that it is not surprising that people have developed emoticons for adding a certain understanding and transmission of emotions to an electronic message.

New communication technologies should not be viewed as a wholesome solution for achieving good communication. Tolsma (1997) emphasized that communication and support systems should accommodate different instructional objectives, strategies, and outcomes. Stakeholders in an institution will select different communication methods depending on their needs and support the system's structure.

Online communication provides users with less visual and audio cues than Face-to-face communication. However, Cornelius and Boos (2003) suggested that, given appropriate training, participants in a computer-mediated communication environment (CMC) can perform as well as they would in face-to-face communication.

In some companies today Social Media and Networking tools constitute one form of collaboration between employees. The supporters of this communication structure assert that the power of innovation and collaboration is improved and this will lead to higher work productivity (Allwood, 2008). But, more importantly, they help dispersed individuals work as a team. The development of collaborators, designed to help dispersed scientists conduct collaborative research and development as if they were co-located in a laboratory, may be one of the most exciting applications of the new communication technologies and computer-enabled environments. By capitalizing on new communication technologies, an organization should be able to realize a competitive advantage in its performance and in the marketplace.

In view of the broad technological world, of information and communication technologies (ICT) in education has changed teaching and learning substantially and can also influence the effectiveness and efficiency of distributing information in an institution. Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) is a form of human communication using computer and internet network and this Internet-based communication takes place on global collection of networks that uses the Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) suite for data exchange (Thurlow, Lengel and Tomic, 2004).

The computer-mediated communication technologies include computer conferencing, e-mail, online chat, database utilities, multimedia and Web-based environments. These technologies are used for strategic planning, assessment, product evaluation and project coordination (Adams and Galanes, 2009) as well as for people to easily communicate directly with one another across time and space

Since the mid-1990s, the fast-growing popularity and ubiquity of personal computers has caused CMC to become very attractive to scholarly attention (Thurlow et al.2004). It is a type of communication which allows people to combine numerous media in a single message when conversing. CMC is an interactive channel which allows users to be active and engage in a two-way communication, herein, it is an inexpensive way of information seeking for increasing efficiency and productivity (Miller, 2009). The mediated nature of computer-mediated communication allows greater manipulation and more careful construction of personal information; the delayed nature gives participants the opportunity to review, revise or cancel their communications before the information are sent (Heisler and Crabill, 2006).

As economic and demographic factors continue to drive current and future online and blended program enrollments (Betts, 2009), higher education administrators must develop online communication strategies that foster human interaction and connect online students as well as online full-time/part-time faculty and all staff to programs and the institution. Consequently, CMC provides extensive communication channels in online education for interaction through written communication, including email, IM (instant messaging), text messaging, bulletin

boards, chat rooms, discussion boards, social networking, blogging, etc. Jonanssen and Kwon (2001) add that computer-mediated communication appears to support problem solving by eliciting more focused, on-task and purposive communication. Besides, CMC has the advantages of eliminating problems created by barriers of time and space; cost- effective; fairly easy to use; as well as the potential of being more personal and customizable.

Welsh and Metcalf (2003) in their study findings derived four variables affecting institutional effectiveness: perceived motivation, perceived depth of implementation, perceived definition of quality, and level of involvement. To improve institutional effectiveness, employees need to get involved and become familiar with internal interests (students' needs). To make substantial changes, faculty must know how to implement activities, and how to achieve desired outcomes. In addition, faculty also needs to involve themselves in the development of institutional activities. If any activity is to be successful, staff members have to receive meaningful information for their work. Good communication can enhance their commitment to an organization and is a core element of good management at all levels.

Additionally, Friedland (2001) argued that, democratic groups are more likely to form in communities that are integrated through communication .It is critical for members of a democratic community to discuss and formulate issues and concerns that are important to them. CMC provides an institution with new methods for communicating and processing information. Moreover, effective communication channels play an important role in shaping a successful and democratic community in an academic environment.

Researchers of ICT in education explored the relationships among communication channels, learning results, and attitude changes. For example, Yu and Yu (2002) investigated the effectiveness of electronic telecommunications (e.g., E-mail) in fostering interpersonal relationships among students and between students and instructors. Bonebrake (2002) explored the relationships that people develop with others online through different communication methods provided via the Internet (e.g., E-mail, group mailing forums, interactive games). Yu and Yu (2002) advocated using E-mail to improve learning outcomes. Several aspects of Internet media make online interactions different from offline interactions. Developing effective communication depends upon media type, task arrangement, and the characteristics of other participants.

Kruger et al. (2005) indicates that notably, e-mail has become one of the most commonly used formats in computer-mediated communication. However, communicating effectively by email is not as easy as "type and send." In the article "Egocentrism over E-mail: Can We Communicate as Well as We Think," Kruger et al. (2005) investigate the difficulty of conveying emotion and tone via email without the "benefit of paralinguistic cues". They conducted five studies to examine overconfidence over email by comparing the perceived and actual ability of participants to communicate via email. The results of the five studies indicated that participants who sent emails overestimated their *ability to communicate* by e-mail and that participants who received emails overestimated their *ability to interpret* e-mail. Furthermore, participants who sent emails predicted about 78% of the time their partners would correctly interpret the tone. However, the data revealed that only 56% of the time the receiver correctly interpreted the tone (Kruger et al., 2005; Winerman,

2006). As further noted by Winerman, the receivers in the study "guessed that they had correctly interpreted the message's tone 90% of the time" (2006, p. 16).

2.6 Written Communication on Effective management of University Academic Programs

Written communication is an integral component of human communication. Senner (1991) purported that writing is relatively new to man. This is in contrast to spoken languages which Senner states have "evolved over tens of thousands of years and left few traces of their beginnings. The written word is the only possibility to express ideas in texting. The results show that the respondents use this way of communication only for sending out brief comments or information to colleagues where emotion and conflict issues do not matter. The main idea is to get this information off to people without thinking about disturbing them at the time. They barely use texting for a two-way communication as it does not provide a good basis for a discussion.

Through advancements in media and technology, correspondence education served as a foundation for the emergence of distance education in the early 1970s (Holmberg, 1995). Distance education, which encompasses multiple modes of delivery including online education, has grown exponentially over the past 40 years. While technology and the Internet enable and support innovative channels for communication, written communication is and will continue to be a fundamental component of higher education.

Written communication, unlike face-to-face, telephone/mobile phone, or computer-mediated communication, does not have the benefit of voice cues or vocalizations (Guadagno and Cialdini, 2002). Consequently interpretation or

misinterpretation is based on lexicon (words of a language), semantics (meaning of words), and syntax (how words and symbols are put together). Furthermore, the way in which messages are constructed using lexicon, semantics, and syntax can greatly affect the interpretation/misinterpretation of tone in writing.

According to Ober (2005), "Tone in writing refers to the writer's attitude toward the reader and the subject of the message. The overall tone of a written message affects the reader just as one's tone of voice affects the listener in everyday exchanges". In "Setting the Tone" Miller (2009) stated that "Just as the pitch and volume of one's voice carries attitude and tone at parties and meetings, the choice of words and the way we put our sentences together convey a sense of attitude and tone in our writing". Miller further states "Tone is attitude, whether you want to be subtle or bold, tone is conveyed through word choice, sentence structure and even font". Writing that is complex, ambiguous or indirect may lead to misinterpretation of the intended message. Selecting all caps or bold may be interpreted as shouting, screaming, or aggression. Changes in font size, style, or color may create confusion or misinterpretation since the receiver may not understand the meaning or intention behind the changes.

Research indicates that nonverbal cues are commonly used online to convey tone and volume (Hancock and Dunham, 2001 and Jacobson, 1999, as cited in Tubbs and Moss, 2006). Tubbs and Moss (2006) state that when individuals "want to create an impression or express feelings, or convey variations in tone or volume, they use capital and lowercase letters differently, typing errors, exclamation points, and other punctuation marks and emoticons (sometimes called smileys) along with their verbal message" (p. 136). In fact, email etiquette (netiquette) publications provide extensive

tips and strategies to minimize misinterpretation of email messages (avoid shouting by not using ALL capital letters, reply in a timely manner/within 24 hours; layout message for readability; keep message concise) (Steele, 2006).

In university education, written communication is a primary form of communication between the institution and students as well as faculty and the students. Consequently, it is important for administrators and faculty to be cognizant of "tone" in writing so the message being sent is not misinterpreted or lost in translation.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework explains observable facts or phenomena and attempts to clarify why things are the way they are based on theories (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). In this study stakeholder theory and systems theory was applied to evaluate the relevance of employee communication channels to effective management of University Academic programs. In order to provide a theoretical and conceptual understanding of the influence of AKUN's employee communication channels on effective management of academic programmes, two theories of communication were referred to while Tabb and Moss (2006) model of communication was used to inform the study.

Stakeholder theory addresses the principals and values in managing an organization (Argenti, 2009). It also describes the characteristics and behavior of stakeholders involved in a system and how an organization interacts with its stakeholders. Stakeholder approach identifies employees as one of the major stakeholder groups of an organization (Cornelissen, 2008). While scholars have made attempts to define communication, Littlejohn and Foss (2005) note that "establishing

a single definition has proved impossible". Recognizing the inherent challenge presented by identifying a single definition for communication that is universally accepted, this paper will build upon human communication research and communication as a "process." Tubbs and Moss (2006) stated that since human communication is an intangible, ever-changing process, many people find it helpful to use a tangible model to describe that process. Stakeholder's theory was developed by Freeman in 1984 (Cornelissen, 2008). Cornelissen quotes Freeman who defined stakeholders as persons who can influence or be affected by the realization of the organization's objective. According to stakeholder theory, internal stakeholders and effective communication channels of an organization need to be identified and prioritized. Organizations in different sectors have different employee groupings depending on their particular purpose. Smidts et al., (2001) categorizes internal stakeholders by definition of internal communication. That is to say, internal communication relates to employee relations (day to day managers), mission statements (strategic managers) and organizational development (project managers). Subsequently, stakeholder theory was used to identify Aga Khan University internal stakeholder groupings with different stakes in the university.

Stakeholder theory was used to identify effective employee channels for effective management of university academic programs. Stakeholder theory views the aspect of employee communication channels to include the direction of communication flow between internal stakeholders. The three communication flows in stakeholder communication include: one way symmetrical, two-way symmetrical and two-way asymmetrical communication flow (Grunig et al., 2002). In one way symmetrical, communication involves an informational strategy of simply informing

internal stakeholders of a particular occasion. In two-way asymmetrical, communication flow uses persuasive strategy to change internal stakeholder's attitude, behavior and knowledge towards a particular event. In two-way symmetrical, communication is dialogue strategy between the corporate and internal stakeholders mutually engaging in an exchange of ideas and opinions. Cornelissen (2008) advocates that each of these strategies requires different communication channels to communicate to the relevant internal stakeholders. To promote effective management of university academic programs, AKU managers need to identify channels that encourage feedback from employees.

On the other hand, Systems theory states that all organizations exist in a system and the core of all system approaches is its interdependence nature (DaintonandZelley, 2005). Systems theory by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1936) and further developed other scholars focuses on the arrangement of and relations between the parts which connect them into a whole. The system concept is defined by Skyttner (1996) as a set of interacting units or elements that form a combined whole planned to perform a role. In other words a system is a structure that exhibits order, pattern and purpose. This in turn implies some constancy over time. According to McNamara (2007) a system consists of objects, attributes, internal relationships and the environment in which it exists. Hence systems are integrated and work towards a unified goal. Alternate names for systems theory are: General systems theory, open systems theory and systemic theory (McNamara, 2007).Systems theories are used to explain organizational communication. In other words, all organizations exist in a system and the core of all system approaches is its interdependence nature (DaintonandZelley, 2005).

System theory emphasizes that real systems are open to and interact with their environments. According to Grunig (1992) the systems theory represents the functional approach to an organization's communication. The system theory also focuses on the relationship between an organization and its publics. Baskin, Aronoffand Lattimore, (1997) assert that the success of an organization depends on how well the organization is able to maintain a mutual relationship with its employees. It can therefore be argued that parts of an organization exist in relationship with one another hence the actions of one part affect the others.

Systems theory was used in this study to test whether AKU employee channels cultivate good relationship with its staff. That is to say, there is constant two-way communication within the organization. AKU employee communication channels should enhance two-way communication so as to motivate employees to work towards organizational goals. According to systems theory, communication should not just be top-down, but should run across all employees of different organizational levels. Grunig and Hunt (1984) recommend communication which allows and puts feedback into consideration. The researcher combined these two theories in the study to decipher influence of internal communication channels on effective management of university academic programs at AKU-N.

2.8 Conceptual Framework

In order to decipher the influence of AKU-N's internal communication channels on effective management of university academic programmes (dependent variable), the researcher focused on four specific independent variables as shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

Independent Variables

Face-to-Face communication
– Immediate feedback
– Conflict resolving
– Maintain trustworthy
– Enhance discussion

Moderating Variables
- Technology advancement
- Management style

Dependent Variable

Telephone communication
– Provide a brief message
– More interactive(staff)
– Quick response
- Mobility of learning processes

Effective management of University academic programs
Evidence of;
- Upward communication
- Downward Communication
- Horizontal Communication

Written communication
– Timely
– Clear explanation
– Words of a language
– Minimize misinterpretation

Computer Mediated communication
– Convenient and saves time
– Project coordination
– Digitalization of objectives
– Support strategies

Intervening Variable

- Institutional Communication Policy

The independent variables face to face communication, telephone communication, written communication and computer mediated communication were examined in relation to how they related to the effective management of the university academic programmes at AKU-N. In addition, technological advancements and management style were taken into account as moderating variables while Institutional communication policy was noted as a key Intervening variable.

2.9 Knowledge Gap

The need for effective internal communication channels is imperative especially when organizations such as universities are operating in a dynamic environment (Steyn, 2003). For this to happen, it is important to have clearly defined channels of communication through which staff receive information that is meaningful to their work and their commitment to the organization. As with any activity, successful and effective internal communication needs to be planned, constructed and managed (Wood, 1999). The author notes that employees listen to communication to decipher what management is really saying. The above literature review revels that consequently, the channel through which the message reaches them will determine how staff decodes all communication they receive. Hence what management need is a range of channels that can be used depending on the circumstance.

Conversely, these studies focused on organizational communication as a whole and did not pay close attention to the university's internal communication channels. For that reason, the problem to be addressed in this study is the influence of internal communication channels (specifically; face-to-face communication, telephone/phone, computer mediated communication and written communication) on effective management of University academic programs at the Aga Khan University. Donald Smith (1992) in his book Creating Understanding illustrates the process of internal communication. Basically, the source sends out a message which travels through a communication channel to be interpreted by the receiver who provides feedback.

Miscommunication occurs when the message while reaching the final destination gets distorted. Consequently, the sender's intended meaning is misinterpreted by the receiver resulting to undesired feedback and results (Smith, 1992). Misunderstanding in communication could be as a result of using ineffective channels of communication. The range of communication channels are wide and growing fast with the new age of technology. According to Sleeand Harwood (2004), internal communication works better when it travels on familiar paths.

This is because signals are more readily accepted when messages appear in a memorable context. On the other hand, the effectiveness of the different channels varies depending on the circumstance and the characteristics of the communication (Wood, 1999). In view of the fact that AKU-N is expanding its programmes and planning new faculties (AKU, 2012), it is fundamental for the university to prioritize its internal communication channels so as to have effective communication and avoid negative consequences such as high turnover, low staff motivation and absenteeism. This study aimed to make a contribution to the field of internal communication by studying the employee communication channels of Aga Khan University Nairobi (AKU-N) and their relevance to effective management of university academic programs. .

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology. It includes research design, target population studied, details of the sample size and sampling procedure, research instrument used, measures of validity and reliability, data collection procedure, data analysis technique and ethical consideration.

3.2 Research design

According to Chandran (2004) a research design is a means to achieve the research objectives through practical evidence that is acquired efficiently. To conclusively describe the current existing employee communication channels available at the institution, the researcher required a research design that enabled her to objectively collect quantifiable information from the sample by asking questions from the respondents.

In view of this, the study used a survey research design. This quantitative research design best suited the researcher's objectives and as Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) indicate, a survey research is a self-report study which requires the collection of quantifiable information from the sample. In addition, Kasomo (2007) argues that a survey research encompasses any measurement procedures that involve asking questions of respondents and obtaining objective data. Moreover, survey research seeks to obtain information that describes existing phenomena hence survey research is a type of descriptive research.

Even though using a quantitative approach enabled the researcher determine the communication channels available at the institution, this would not adequately enable the researcher to clearly understand whether there is impact on effectiveness of communication on the management of the academic programs considering that this cannot be observed directly.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005) indicate that human phenomena that cannot be examined by direct observation (such as effectiveness) are best studied using the qualitative method. The researcher used open ended questions where necessary to gain further insight. Combining both methods was advantageous as both methods supplement each other. This is to say, the researcher used quantitative methods to generate hard data in numerical form needed to achieve the set objectives in addition to using qualitative methods generate data in word from providing in-depth explanations.

3.3 Target Population

Population refers to an entire group of individuals having a common observable trait (Kasomo, 2007). Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) classifies population into target and accessible population. Target population is the universal or absolute population to which the researcher wants to generalize the results of the study where as accessible population is the reachable or available populace.

Aga Khan University is one of Kenya's private universities. It received its Interim letter in 2002 when it's Advanced Nursing Studies (ANS) begun. Thereafter, in 2005, the university expanded its programmes to include Post Graduate Medical Education (AKU, 2012). Statistics obtained from The Aga Khan Nairobi Human resource portal reports that as of August 2013, there are a total of 2,485 employees of

both the Aga Khan Hospital and Aga Khan University. However, the focus of this study was the Aga Khan University which comprises of 284 staff in the following programmes: Medical College formerly known as Post Graduate Medical Education, School of Nursing and Midwifery formerly known as Advanced Nursing Studies, Graduate Professional Studies and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (AKU, 2013) as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Target Population

Staff Categories	Numbers
Medical Teaching Faculty	
Senior Level Management (Foundation Deans, Provosts	7
Middle Level Management (Department Chairs, Program Directors)	14
Professors, Associate and Assistant Professors	29
Honorary Faculty	58
Instructors and Lecturers	110
Non Faculty Administrative Staff	
Academic Advisors and Specialists	8
Middle Level Management (Managers and coordinators)	17
Research coordinators and Assistants	18
Administrative assistants and Academic Assistants	23
Total	**284**

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

This section presents the methods and techniques that were used for sampling, the procedure of sampling and eventually how the final study sample was reached from the target population and the details of how data it was obtained, processed and analyzed.

3.4.1 Sample size

A sample is a lesser group to be studied from the accessible population (Kothari, 2004). Kothari continues to state that the sample should be selected in a way that findings based on it match up to those that would be obtained if the absolute population were to be studied. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), the sample is drawn from the accessible population. The scholars quote Gay's opinion noted in his book, Educational Research: Competencies for analysis and application, that 10% of the accessible population is sufficient to represent the main distinctiveness of the target population.

Therefore, the study sampled 162 participants from the sample population of 284 so as to avoid sampling error. Sampling error is the discrepancy between the sample characteristic and the population characteristic. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) also emphasize that to minimize the standard error of any statistic in research, it is necessary to take as large a sample as possible since small samples tend to have large standard errors.

3.4.2 Sampling Procedure

The sampling procedure describes the list of all population units from which the sample will be selected (Cooper and Schindler, 2003). The technique is applied so as to obtain a representative sample when the population does not constitute a homogeneous group. The university employee groupings were identified using stratified random sampling technique. The population was made up of strata these include medical teaching faculty and non faculty administrative staff as shown in Table 3:2.

Table 3:2: Sample Size

Staff Category	Target Population	Sample Size
Medical Teaching Faculty		
Senior Level Management (Foundation Deans, Provosts	7	4
Middle Level Management (Department Chairs, Program Directors)	14	8
Professors	29	17
Honorary Faculty	58	33
Instructors and Lecturers	110	63
Non Faculty Administrative Staff		
Academic Advisors and Specialists	8	5
Middle Level Management (Managers and coordinators)	17	10
Research coordinators and Assistants	18	10
Administrative assistants and Academic Assistants	23	13
Total	**284**	**162**

Based on the Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for determining sample size for a population of 284, a maximum sample size of 162 respondents would be appropriate to adequately represent a cross-section of the population at 95% confidence level; which is 57% of the total population. The researcher based on this knowledge calculated 57% of the total population in each stratum to come up with a precise sample size of 162 respondents.

3.5 Research Instruments

The study used a questionnaire to collect primary data. The questionnaire was used to collect data from the sampled staffs in the selected departments within the University. Questionnaires are appropriate for studies since they collect information that is not directly observable as they inquire about feelings, motivations, attitudes,

accomplishments as well as experiences of individuals (Mellenbergh, 2008). The questionnaire comprised of both open and close-ended questions. Saunders (2003) stated that a questionnaire is useful in obtaining objective data because participants are not manipulated in any way by the study. According to Saunders (2003) questionnaires have the added advantage of being less costly and using less time as instruments of data collection. The data instrument addressed the four research objectives. It was sub-divided into two sections; the first section of the questionnaire enquired general information about the respondents, while the second section answered the four objectives.

3.5.1 Pilot testing

Pilot testing was done before data collection began. The questionnaires was reviewed by the researcher's professional peers and the research supervisor and then tested on a small pilot sample of respondents with similar characteristics as the study respondents. The pilot was carried out between 19th to 26th May, 2014, aimed at testing the data collection instrument and the process. The pilot sample consisted of 7 staffs from AKU-N who were selected randomly. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) suggest that the piloting sample should be 1 to 10% of study sample depending on the study sample size. Piloting helped in revealing questions that were vague which allowed for their review until they convey the same meaning to all the subjects (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003).

This provided the researcher with the opportunity to understand and make corrections on SurveyMonkey and edit the questionnaire for clarity in accordance with the views of the pilot study participants. The arrangement of the questions was changed with some questions being combined. Some participants expressed discomfort

in putting down their actual age, and suggested a range options to be put from which they could choose from. Other questions were revised to make them shorter, clearer and easier to understand. Besides, the researcher learned that the order of likert scales for question three and five score could produce incorrect calculations if the order was from higher to low because of the way SurveyMonkey assigned scores. This was changed and the scores ranking was altered from low to higher which gave the required calculations when examining the raw data derived from SurveyMonkey. Once the initial pilot was concluded, another pilot was conducted with a separate group of volunteers to ensure the collection tool functioned well before the principal data collection phase was started.

3.5.2 Validity of Instrument

Validity is the quality of a data gathering instrument that enables it to measure what it is supposed to measure. Creswell (2008) notes that validity is about whether one can draw meaningful and useful inferences from scores on the instrument. To ensure content validity, the instruments was reviewed by the research supervisors and other research experts. Content validity yields a logical judgment as to whether the instrument covers what it is supposed to cover. Content validity ensures that all respondents understand the items on the questionnaire similarly to avoid misunderstanding. Response options were provided for most of the questions to ensure that the answers given are in line with the research questions they are meant to measure.

3.5.3 Reliability of Instrument

Reliability is "the consistency with which a measuring instrument yields certain results when the entity being measured has not changed" (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005). Reliability answers the question "Are scores stable over time when the instrument is administered a second time (Creswell, 2003).

To test reliability, a pilot study was conducted before the actual study to check on the reliability of the questionnaires in collecting the data. The researcher selected a pilot group of 7 respondents, from the target population and used split-half technique to calculate correlation using the Spearman-Brown formula. The questionnaire was split into odd items and the even items then scoring two-halves of the tests separately was done, with the aim of attempting to match the measures that were being compared in terms of content, test design (i.e., difficulty) and participant demands. Internal consistency between the two sets of scores was calculated as shown in Table 3.3 using excel spreadsheet formulae;

$$reliability = \frac{2 \times r_{half-test}}{1 + r_{half-test}}$$

Pearson Product Moment Correlation =*PEARSON (B2:B51,C2:C51)*
Reliability =*2*E2/(1+E2)*

A reliability of 0.79 was demonstrated showing a strong relationship between the scores; which was within the recommended reliability coefficient of 0.7-1 (Nachmias and Nachmias 1996).

Table 3:3: Reliability of Data collection Instrument

Pilot Participant No	score 1st half (X)	score 2nd half (Y)		
			Pearson Product	
1	6	8	Moment Correlation	0.660529
2	7	7	Reliability	0.795564
3	5	6		
4	8	7		
5	6	7		
6	9	8		
7	9	8		

3.6 Data Collection Methods

Data collection was conducted from 05th to 18th June 2014. After consent was given by the University of Nairobi to collect data, the researcher coordinated data collection process after seeking permission from the AKU-N Research and Ethics Committees (see Appendix C: Data Collection Authorization AKU-N).

The researcher used computer software SurveyMonkey to send out a web link hosting the questionnaire to the targeted respondents circulated in the intranet through individual and departmental email addresses. An introductory note together with the information sheet (See Appendix A: Study Participant Consent Form) was the principal communication with potential respondents through email. The link circulated was https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/J5HCB6S.

When sending out emails, a blind carbon copy (bcc) was used to further protect the identity of the recipients and increase confidentiality. The researchers contact details were given in case any further explanation or information was needed regarding participation in the study. Some participants called and requested further explanations from the researcher and replies were satisfactorily and promptly given.

During the data collection period, a polite reminder messages were sent out via email on 10th June, 2014 to remind potential participants to take part in the study as per the attachments in Appendix D: Email Communication.

3.7 Data analysis techniques

Data was imported from SurveyMonkey in the intranet into a Microsoft Excel 2010 Workbook. The downloaded data was automatically coded by the SurveyMonkey software by allocating a number for each response as per the choice of the respondent. Using a coding book and a template created in the Microsoft Excel 2010 Workbook, the responses for each question were recorded and checked for inconsistencies. This was done by checking completion of responses in each question and incomplete data was removed from the excel sheet before analysis was commenced.

The researcher used a counting function in the Microsoft Excel 2010 Workbook Computer program to detect where there was any missing entry by checking column by column against the total responses. Where the number did not match, a close look was taken to find missing entries and once detected, they were deleted. In making sense of the data, interpretation, the researcher sought the assistance of other experienced researchers. This involved data processing relating to editing, classification, coding and tabulation of collected data so that they are amenable to analysis (Kothari, 2007). Data analysis involved computation of measures (frequencies, percentages and weighted averages) along with searching for patterns of relationships that existed between the dependent variable and independent variables. The data was analyzed according to variables and objectives of the study. Descriptive statistics was used to present the findings.

Out of 162 sample population, a total of 106 staff participated in the study giving response rate of 65.43%. After data cleaning, 22 (20.75%) of the responses were incomplete which left 84 accurately completed ones for analysis. The Microsoft Excel 2010 Workbook Computer program was used for analysis of frequencies, percentages and weighted averages.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethics has been defined as that branch of philosophy that deals with one's conduct and serves as a guide to one's actions (Kasomo, 2007). Ethical considerations have to be taken into account when conducting research (Kothari, 2004). The following ethical considerations were borrowed from Chandran (2004) recommendations and were observed in this study. To begin with, the researcher obtained permission from the AKU-N's Research and Ethics Committee, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) accredited by the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) before undertaking the research (see Appendix C: Data Collection Authorization AKU-N)

Thereafter, the researcher obtained informed consent from the respondents to voluntarily participate in the research before providing the online link to the data collection instrument (see Appendix A: Study Participant Consent Form). The purpose of the study was well articulated to motivate participation in the research. Further, SurveyMonkey allocates random numbers which the researcher is not able to associate with individual respondents. Names or any other identification details were not required in the questionnaire. This promoted the avoidance of infringement on personal privacy which is in line with the proposed Data Protection Bill of 2012

(Republic of Kenya, 2012). This was also observed in the hope of encouraging the respondents to give their honest opinions when responding to the questions.

The computer with Microsoft Excel 2010 Workbook was secured and only through a secure password. Data handled by the researcher was stored in a secure folder in the researcher's personal laptop and could only be accessed using a personal password. Data backup was achieved by storing data in a personal removable device (memory stick) which was also securely locked in the researcher's filing cabinet when not in use. All the questionnaires and consent forms used will be stored safely for five years in line with AKU-N's quality assurance and research policies.Lastly, the researcher has reported all findings without being biased or prejudiced. Hence, the researcher has not plagiarized information as part of research findings.

3.9 Operational definition of variables

A variable as defined by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) is a measurable attribute that assumes different assessments among the subject matter. The authors continue to report that obtaining these different assessments for each subject matter on a particular variable is operational definition of the variable. An independent variable is a characteristic that the researcher can manipulate to determine its relevance on another variable. The dependent variable points out the total influence arising from the impact of the independent variable (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). In this study "AKU employee communication channel" is the independent variable whilst "effective management of academic programmes" is the dependent variable. The following variables have been operationalized as shown in Table 3.4;

Table 3:4: Operational Definition of Variables

Objective	Variable	Indicators	measurement	Measurement scale	Tools of analysis	Type of data analysis
To establish how use of face-to-face communication influence effective management of university academic programs.	Independent variable Face-to-Face communication	- Immediate response/feedback that contains visual and audio cues - Represents a high social presence i.e. quality of a medium to convey the presence of a sender - Clear understanding , Conflict resolving , Maintain trustworthy, Enhance discussion and Employee involvement	Likert scale	Nominal Ordinal	Mean Percentage	Descriptive
To determine the extent to which use of telephone/ phone influence effective management of University's academic programs.	Telephone/ phone	- Mobility of technology, Mobility of learners and Mobility of learning processes i.e. -Provide a brief message - More interactive(staff) - Quick response - Enhance e-learning - Sharing of idea	Likert scale	Nominal Ordinal	Mean Percentage	Descriptive
To determine how use of written communication influence effective management of university academic programs.	Written communication	- Reply is done in a timely manner/within 24 hours - message layout for readability and concise i.e. - Clear explanation - Words of a language - Create an impression - Minimize misinterpretation - Client interaction	Likert scale	Nominal Ordinal	Mean Percentage	Descriptive

Objective	Variable	Indicators	measurement	Measurement scale	Tools of analysis	Type of data analysis
To assess how use of computer mediated communication influence effective management of university academic programs.	Computer mediated communication	- Staff use computers and internet network to communicate/exchange data via conferencing, e-mail, online chat, database utilities, multimedia and Web-based environments -Staff can easily communicate directly with one another across time and space - Digitalization of for strategic planning, assessment, product evaluation and project coordination i.e; - Social networking - Convenient and saves time - Project coordination - Digitalization of objectives - Support strategies - Enhance performance	Likert scale	Nominal Ordinal	Mean Percentage	Descriptive
	Dependent variable -Effective management of university academic Programs	- Upward communication - Downward Communication - Horizontal Communication	Likert scale	Nominal Ordinal	Mean Percentage	Descriptive

CHAPTER FOUR:DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION & INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study findings which has been analyzed and discussed based on study objectives in line with the following themes and sub thematic areas; questionnaire return rate, demographic information, internal communication channels available at the institution, influence of internal communication channels on effective management of university academic programs and importance of communication channels.

4.1.1 Questionnaire Return Rate

This research study had a sample size of 162 respondents who were staff in various departments of the Aga Khan University Nairobi Campus. Out of the total respondents, 56 (34.57%) did not complete the online questionnaires, this was acknowledged not to have affected the statistical analysis and conclusions drawn since the sample had been randomly drawn and was large enough to allow for good point estimates. Further, 106 respondents completed the online questionnaires giving a response rate of 65.43%; which was adequate for analysis and conforms to Babbie (2002) stipulation that any response of 50% and above is adequate for analysis.

Further, data from 22 (20.75%) of the participants were incomplete and therefore could not be considered for inclusion in the analysis, leaving only 84 responses that could be analyzed; a true response rate of 51.85%.

4.2 Demographic Information

Demographic characteristics was collected in relation to age, gender, education level, school they worked in and number of years worked; variables that segmented the population in a manner such that the different segments had different needs and/or feelings about the organization. This enabled the researcher determine how closely the sample replicates the known population.

4.2.1 Distribution of Respondents by Age

This study sought to find out the distribution of the respondents by age as shown in Table 4.1. How old a person is has been identified as a factor in relation to experience, expertise, and comfort levels of different generations in using various channels of communication, more so, those based on the electronic platform (Michael Evan, 2009).

Table 4.1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
25 & below	0	0.00
26-40	59	70.24
41-60	23	27.38
61 & Above	2	2.38
Total	**84**	**100.00**

The findings presented in Table 4.1, show that the largest group 59 (70.24%) were aged between 26 to 40 years followed by 23 (27.38%) of respondents aged between 41 to 60 years, while only 2 (2.38%) were aged over 61 years. Thus, this indicates that the relative majority of AKU-N employees are younger generations who have been described by Michael Evan, 2009 as 'digital natives', due to their ease and comfort in using electronic based internal communication channels.

4.2.2 Distribution of Respondents by Gender

For purposes of demographic comparison only, the study sought information on the gender of the respondents as shown in Table 4.2. Gender was relevant so as to describe the totality of the population.

Table 4.2: Gender Distribution

Gender of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Male	46	54.76
Female	38	45.24
Total	**84**	**100.0**

Table 4.2 shows the gender of the respondents, majority of whom were male as indicated by 46 (54.76%) while 38 (45.24 %) were female. Even though the majority were male, the female representation was within the acceptable 1/3 majority an indication that the conclusions from the study can be generalizable to an entity with either of the genders as the majority of the employees.

4.2.3 Distribution of Respondents by Academic Qualification

The study sought to establish the level of education of the respondents as shown in Table 4.3. The level of education was important in the study because it showed whether the respondents have adequate level of education to understand the concept and the language of the study.

Table 4.3: Level of Education

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
Secondary Education	0	0.00
Diploma	2	2.38
Higher Diploma	11	13.10
Bachelor's degree	30	35.71
Post graduate degree	41	48.81
Total	**84**	**100.00**

Table 4.3, indicates the level of education of the respondents. From the findings, there was no respondent whose highest education was secondary education, 2 (2.38%) of the respondents had a Diploma level education, 11(13.10%) had higher diploma level education, 30 (35.71%) had a degree, while 41 (48.81%) of the respondents had a postgraduate level as the highest level of education. This shows that majority of the respondents were learned and well equipped with the required skills to execute their respective duties.

4.2.4 Distribution of Respondents by Schools

AKU-N has four different schools, hence respondents were asked to indicate the school they work in as shown in Table 4.4. Data on the distribution of the respondents by school was relevant to obtain a representative sample since the population did not constitute a homogeneous group. It included medical teaching faculty and non faculty administrative staff.

Table 4.4: Schools where the Respondents Work

School of Respondent	Frequency	Percentage
Faculty of Arts and Sciences	2	2.38
Medical College	63	75.00
School of Nursing and Midwifery	17	20.24
Graduate Professional School	2	2.38
Total	**84**	**100.00**

Out of the 84 respondents who participated in the study 63 (75% were from the Medical School, 17(20.24%) were from the School of Nursing and Midwifery, 2(2.38%) were from Faculty of Arts and Sciences and 2(2.38%) were from the Graduate Professional School. Notably, Staff from the Medical College and School of Nursing and Midwifery accounted for more than any other cadre

of staff who participated. This can be attributed to the fact that these are the key programs in the institution with majority of the staff having been on campus at the time of the survey. The other two schools are both upcoming programs with limited number of staff who were already onboard at the time of the survey.

4.2.5 Distribution of Respondents by Duration of employment

The study sort to establish the number of years the respondents have been employed at AKU-N as shown in Table 4.5. The number of years of employment played a role in determining whether the respondents have been with the institution long enough to give accurate information for the study.

Table 4.5: Number of Years worked at AKU-N

Number of years worked	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 2 years	10	11.90
2-6 years	54	64.29
7 - 11 years	16	19.05
More than 12 years	4	4.76
Total	**84**	**100.00**

Out of the 84 respondents who took part in the study, 10 (11.90%) had been in the organization for less than two years, 54 (64.29%) had been in the organization between 2-6 years, 16 (19.05%) had been in the organization between 7-11 years, while 4 (4.76%) had been in the organization for more than 12 years. From the analyzed data it can be concluded that majority of the staff have worked in AKU-N for more than 2 years which is a sufficient time to provide reliable data for the study.

4.3 Internal Communication Channels available at the institution

The study sought to establish the current internal communication channels available at the institution and the frequency which the employees used them. This information was relevant for purposes of establishing the status of internal communication channels at the institution in relation to whether the researcher's questionnaire adequately captured all the available modes of commination used in the institution.

By providing an alternative for 'others (specify)' this enabled the researcher determine all possible channels used for internal communication needs. Further, in determining the types of channels available at the institutions, respondents were tasked to select at least two communication channels through which they received information relating to the University's academic programs. The researcher chose the option of 'at least two' as opposed to 'all' so as to focus on channels that were prioritized the most.

Table 4.6: Available internal communication Channels at AKU-N

Internal Communication Channel	Frequency	Percentage
Face-to-Face communication	31	36.90
Computer mediated communication	76	90.48
Telephone Communication	31	36.90
Written Communication	11	13.10
Other (specify)	2	2.38

In order of priority, Table 4.6 shows that majority; 76 (90.48%) received information through Computer Mediated channels like email, 31 (36.90%) received information through Face-to-Face and telephone channels, while only a few; 11 (13.10%) received information through Written communication. Only 2 (2.38%) respondents indicated that they received information through other means specifically

"rumors" and "during 'meetings". Thus, this indicates that AKUN has four major formal channels of internal communication. On the other hand, informal channels are also used mainly through the grapevine. Further, participants rated the frequency of their using each of the channels as indicated in Table 4.6 and in addition gave reasons to their choices.

Table 4.7: Frequency of using available channels at AKU-N

Scale	Never 1	Hardly 2	Often 3	Sometimes 4	Most of the time 5	Weighted Average
Face-to-Face communication	5	24	15	29	11	3.20
Computer mediated communication	0	0	10	6	68	4.69
Telephone Communication	24	10	6	36	8	2.93
Written Communication	19	31	15	11	8	2.50

From Table 4.7, the respondents indicated that most of the time they used Computer Mediated communication to execute their tasks and also often used face to face communication and telephone communication. Written communication on the other hand was hardly used as a means of communication. In order to further understand Table 4.6 and 4.7 the study also expounded by using open ended questions where the participants clarified on their choice in relation to frequency of using a given channel.

4.3.1 Qualitative analysis of Internal Communication Channels available at the institution

In order of priority, 76 (90.48%) indicated that they received information through Computer Mediated Channels and the same channel was used most of the time (see Table 4.6). Respondents indicated that they found it easy, convenient and affordable to use. Also, they indicated that Email is the preferred mode of official communication at AKU-N since Computer platforms and internet access is ubiquitous. In addition easier access, convenience when communicating official agendas was noted as a catalyst for preference by most respondents. The institutional culture seems to also play a role in the choice of a communication channel. Some indicated that "… most of the communication is done through the email" and "…preferred mode by senders…" Another stated that "…computer is the media used for work in the university…". Respondents highlighted that it is most appropriate way of reaching people, people tended to respond faster, is ideal as they are able to get most of the information and makes it easier for them to follow through. A need for filing and documentation also contributes to choice of computer mediated channels as a means of communication. It was cited that '…provides future reference for sensitive and important information…". They also stated that it was an effective way when students are out of campus, as they can be reached through Email. In addition it was indicated that it saves time instead of walking to others' offices.

Secondly, respondents indicated that they often used Face-to-face communication, with 31 (36.90%) indicating that they received information using the same mode. They elaborated that the nature of work done at AKU-N was some of the

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reasons to using Face-to-face communication. Some participants highlighted that "…due to working in a clinical area, face to face communication is a daily requirement during ward rounds, Consultations with patients are done face to face…" and "…Most effective way of communication in my job…". Some indicated that Face-to-face communication was preferred when they wanted to target a particular group who do not have a group email account and that it is at times better than emails or telephone calls. Others indicated that it's the easiest way of communicating as well as getting undistorted information and is appropriate for informal communication. In relation to body cues one respondent indicated that "… I prefer personal contact as I can broaden the discussion especially if it is a sensitive issue, "… I can observe the non-verbal communication too…" while another noted that "… I get immediate feedback most of the time even if I do not get immediate feedback the body language points to it…". The physical structure of the institution was also noted as a precursor of choosing Face-to-face communication where some respondents indicated that "…offices are far people are many…" and "…proximity with the entity head…" .Further, others indicated that it's a personalized approach that guarantees a response, whether desired or not, and was used in formal sessions for non-major issues, when there are meetings and forums where information is shared. Indeed, other scholars have asserted that Face-to-face remains the most powerful human interaction, never replace intimacy and immediacy of people conversing in the same room. This completely underlines the attitude of the respondents, and the aspect of provision of warmth and emotion that telephones and computers lack.

Thirdly, in relation to using Telephone mediated channels, 31 (36.90%) indicated that they received information using this channel which was also often used (see Table 4.6). The respondents indicated in the open ended questions that telephone

communication was often used and that Phone consultations with colleagues was a common occurrence within the institution. Other reasons attributed to choosing telephone communication in executing their work included, cases where substantial distance is involved, where the subject matter for discussion is brief such that it warrants a phone call, in terms of time and cost saving, accessibility and availability. Telephone communication choice was also attributed to being used for urgent matters especially when out of station, when they needed clarification and immediate feedback. Others indicated that they used telephone communication "…for urgent information when I can't reach some one for face to face it is the easiest way to get immediate responses …"

Lastly, only 2 (2.38%) respondents indicated that they received information through written communication. Relating to written communication, in executing their duties, respondents indicated that they hardly used written communication. This was attributed to factors like cost where there are better and cheaper and easier means to communicate. They attributed use of written communication to situations where communication is individualized, where there were confidential documents that needed to be filed, for bulk documents that needed attention and follow up, formal /documented information warranting written approval. The nature of and business of the institution was also associated with written communication being hardly used. Respondents directed that they used written communication "…when giving exam feedback it is the most appropriate.." and "…it is not a common practice in AKU - ANS except for student related information's like timetables and schedules .." In addition, written communication in form of letters mentioned to as being limited to communications mainly from Finance and Human Resources (HR) departments,

usually like twice a year. Other factors mentioned included conserving the environment and lack of a personal secretary.

4.4 Influence Of Internal Communication Channels On Effective Management Of University Academic Programs.

In order to determine the extent to which internal communication channels influence management of academic programs at the Aga Khan University in Nairobi, respondents were asked to indicate the channel which they receive information on various tasks as shown in Table 4.6. In addition, they were asked to highlight other activities they felt the University needed to communicate to them in order to improve their work out put.

Further, they rated the level to which each channel made them feel connected as an employee to the University Academic programs making it easier for them to execute their tasks as shown in Table 4.9. Finally, respondents were asked to suggest channels they would prefer to receive information that would improve their work. In the management of academic programs at the Aga Khan University Nairobi, Table 4.6 indicates that there is no one channel that can be used as a wholesome solution for achieving good communication.

Table 4.8: Extent to Which Internal Communication Channels Influence Management of Academic Programs

	Statement	Face to face		Computer Mediated		Telephone		Written	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
	DOWNWARD COMMUNICATION								
1	My supervisor adequately spells out what is expected of my role through	52	61.90	30	35.71	0	0.00	2	2.38
2	My supervisor usually updates me on the changes/direction the university is taking using	42	50.00	40	47.62%	2	2.38%	0	0.00
3	There is prompt feedback from managers when concerns are raised communicated to staff through	31	36.90	49	58.33	2	2.38	2	2.38
4	I obtained information regarding the overall goal of the university through	6	7.14	49	58.33	0	0.00	29	34.52
	UPWARD COMMUNICATION								
5	There is an open door policy where I can easily consult with my supervisor usually through	40	47.62	29	34.52	11	13.10	4	4.76
6	Channels are in place to gather staff suggestions through	48	57.14	25	29.76	0	0.00	11	13.10
	HORIZONTAL COMMUNICATION								
7	I obtain information on what my colleagues in the department are working on through	36	42.86	44	52.38	2	2.38	2	2.38
8	Internal issues affecting departments are raised through	38	45.24	43	51.19	3	3.57	0	0.00
9	Two-way communication is encouraged between employees and management usually through	40	47.62	42	50.00	2	2.38	0	0.00

Based on the   description of the three dimensioned communication flow which includes downward communication from managers to subordinates, upward communication from subordinates to managers and horizontal communication that is to say across departments and within colleagues; In AKU-N tasks that mainly involved instructional objectives, strategies, and outcome were mostly communicated through computer mediated channels. These tasks included obtaining information regarding the overall goal of the university at 49 (58.33%), interdepartmental tasks coordination at 44 (52.38%), a two-way communication between employees and management at 42 (50.00 %). This is in line with Welch, 2009 findings that employees need clear communication from management to understand how their own roles fit within the vision of the organization.

On the other hand personalized communication at Aga Khan University Nairobi as indicated in Table 4.8 were communicated through face to face channels. This included tasks like supervisors adequately spelling out roles of what was expected of their supervisee at 52 (61.90%), updating them on the changes/direction the university was taking at 42 (50.00%), promoting an open door policy where they can easily consult with supervisors at 40 (62%) and finally as preferred channel of gathering staff suggestions at 48 (57.14%). Conflict resolution at AKU-N seems to be mitigated through Computer Mediated Channels like interdepartmental conflict moderation at (51.19%), institutional conflict control at 49 (58.33%).

Telephone conversations and written communication do not seem to be the preferred channels when communicating tasks relating to job execution at both personal and institutional level and indication that choice of a communication channel is all about the effectiveness of communication   and   choosing   the appropriate channel for the particular situation to enhance effective management of

the academic programs. This is further strengthened by an observation made when the respondents were asked to mention other activities other than the ones mentioned in Table 4.8, which they opined the University ought to communicate to them. A suggestion was made that decision making needs to be less authoritarian and more democratic while an observation was made that "… the only improvement is in the process as at times some urgent things are delayed. Other times some people are left out in important information..". Other propositions included academic objectives, achievement strategies, online Continuous Medical Education trainings (CME) and tutorials.

As shown in Table 4.9, in relation to how the various channels contributed to creating an enabling environment that made the employees feel connected to the University Academic programs making it easier for them to execute their tasks, Face-to-face meetings on various academic activities did not make them feel connected while telephone calls on updates/changes on program schedules made them feel connected. Conversely, periodic written periodicals on university programs made the employees feel very connected to the University. The channel communication with probably the highest amount of traffic is computer mediated communication.

Table 4.9: Level to Which Each Channel Makes Employees Feel Connected

Responses	Scale	Very connected 4	Connected 3	Neutral 2	Not Connected 1	Weighted Average
Face-to-face meetings on various academic activities		27	31	8	18	1.12
Computer notifications on academic program schedules		21	48	9	6	2.12
Telephone calls on updates/changes on program schedules			31	29	24	3.12
Periodic written periodicals on university programs		4	30	32	18	4.12

In addition, when asked to list channels which they would prefer to receive information that would likely improve their work out put computer notifications mainly through emails was widely mentioned. Respondents also highlighted that so far communication has been fairly good. It would however be advisable to have a comprehensive faculty handbook with all what a faculty needs to know about the entity and university policies and program activities, also, a University prospectus with clear academic calendar for all university entities would be desirable.

4.5 Importance of communication channels

The respondents were asked to indicate the importance of communication channels in addressing issues relating to your work within the University as shown in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10: Importance of communication channels

		Not at all important	Somewhat important	A little important	Very important
	Scale	1	2	3	4
Frequency		0	0	0	84

Of the 84 respondents sampled, when asked to indicate their view on importance of communication channels in addressing issues relating to their work within the University, 84 (100%) agreed that it was very important. Some further highlighted that communication is the life line of the university and the employees and that further written communication is critical; it makes one feel safe and confident. More of written communication should be encouraged. Further, respondents were asked to agree or disagree with statements relating to the overall satisfaction of the available channels as indicated in Table 4.11.

Table 4:11: Overall Satisfaction of the Channels

Responses	True	%	False	%
The current communication channels make it easy to converse with my supervisor when there is a problem	74	88.10%	10	11.90%
The communication channels make me aware of what my colleagues in the departments are working on	51	60.71%	33	39.29%
I am satisfied with the current communication channels used by the Institution	43	51.19%	41	48.81%
I am aware of the campus recent academic activities of expanding its programmes and planning new faculties.	61	72.68%	23	27.38%

Table 4.11 indicates that overall, the current communication channels satisfy the communication needs of the employees where 43 (51.19%) affirmed that they were satisfied with the current communication channels used by the Institution. Specifically horizontal where 51(60.71%) stated that the communication channels made them aware of what their colleagues in the departments are working on and upward communication where 74(88.10%) confirmed that the current communication channels made it easy to converse with their supervisor when there is a problem . Additionally 61 (72.62%) indicated that they were aware of the University's recent academic activities of expanding its programmers and planning new faculties and indication of relevance of downward internal communication channels in communicating institutional change.

This is because employee communication is used as a tool for announcing, explaining and preparing employees for organizational change. Of the 23 (27.38%) who were unaware of the campus growth plans, they indicated that their mode of preference to receive the information would preferably be through Computer Mediated Communication 15 (65.21%) and through face to face communication 8 (34.78%).

CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presented the discussion of key data findings, conclusion drawn from the findings and recommendations made. The conclusions and recommendations drawn were focused on addressing the purpose of this study which was to assess the influence of internal communication channels on effective management of University of academic programs; a case of the Aga Khan University in Kenya.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

Scholars have highlighted the importance of internal communication as a catalyst if not the key to organizational success and effectiveness. Effective management of a University's academic programs has been looked at in this study in relation to the use of upward communication, downward communication and horizontal Communication to achieve given targets while making the best use of all relevant resources through creative problem solving, conflict management, negotiation, self-awareness and improvement.

Demographically, this study has highlighted that majority of staff working at AKU-N are young individuals mostly aged between 26 to 40 years (70.24%), most of whom are male (54.76%) and educated to postgraduate levels at (48.81%). Additionally 64.29% have worked at AKU-N between 2 to 6 years.

Of the Internal communication channels available at AKU-N majority showed a preference to receive information through Computer Mediated Media 76 (90.48%), while use of written communication seems almost obsolete at 11 (13.10%). Conversely, in the management of academic programs, the study shows that there is no one channel that AKU-N uses as a wholesome solution for achieving good communication. There is a preference for face to face communication for tasks relating to downward communication like role definition, institutional change while overall conflict mitigation and institution scope/goal definition is generally done through computer mediated channels. Upward communication on the other hand is mainly through face to face communication while horizontal communication is mostly achieved through computer mediated channels.

The Internal communication channel with probably the highest amount of traffic is computer mediated communication. All the sampled employees are in consensus that effective management of a University's academic programs can be achieved through proper utilization of available internal communication channels and that Staff desired and appreciated being informed about organizational goals and objective which is in line with findings from other scholars.

5.3 Discussions of key findings

The study sought to look at effective management of University academic programs using AKU-N as a case study while analyzing four internal communication channels; face-to-face communication, telephone communication, written communication and computer mediated communication.

In today's fast developing society people have numerous opportunities to get in contact and to communicate with each other. The study noted that, in order of

preference, AKU-N employees received information through Computer Mediated Communication Channels 76(90.48%) and in terms of frequency, it was most used channel with a weighted average of 4.69. In relation to Hamilton's (2008) description of the three dimensioned communication flow, Computer Mediated Channels of communication at AKU-N were used to promote effective management of the University academic programs in that complex tasks like feedback from managers, articulation of institutional goals (Downward communication). On the other hand, interdepartmental collaboration (horizontal communication) like colleagues task cooperation across departments, internal issues affecting departments and two-way communication was encouraged between employees and management.

AKU-N preference to use of Computer Mediated Channels may be attributed to the popularity of channels that are based on digital technology which has tremendously increased so that people cannot imagine living without them anymore (Thurlow et al.2004; Kruger et al. 2005; Berko, 2007). Other factors may be the age distribution of its employees most of whom are aged 26-40; a generation whom Michael Evan (2009) in his paper refers to them as 'digital natives' i.e. a generation which has grown up with electronics and technologies surrounding them and has significant exposure to digital devices. This generation of young employees at AKU-N also are well educated with 30 (35.71%) having a degree, 41 (48.81%) a postgraduate, while the least educated had a diploma at 2(2.38%). Cornelius and Boos (2003) suggested that, given appropriate training, participants in a computer-mediated working environment can perform as well as they would in face-to-face communication.

Respondents in the open ended questions indicated that they found it easy, convenient and affordable to use Computer Mediated Communication Channels. Also, they indicated that Email is the preferred mode of official communication at AKU-N since Computer platforms and internet access is ubiquitous. In addition easier access, convenience when communicating official agendas was noted as a catalyst for preference by most respondents. This preference may be attributed to AKU-N extended regional and global network with offices and employees all over the world. The institutional culture seems to also play a role in the choice of a communication channel. Some indicated that "… most of the communication is done through the email" and "…preferred mode by senders…" Another stated that "…computer is the media used for work in the university…". Respondents highlighted that it is most appropriate way of reaching people, people tended to respond faster, is ideal as they are able to get most of the information and makes it easier for them to follow through. A need for filing and documentation also contributes to choice of computer mediated channels as a means of communication. It was cited that '…provides future reference for sensitive and important information…". They also stated that it was an effective way when students are out of campus, as they can be reached through Email. In addition it was indicated that it saves time instead of walking to others' offices. Computer -In essence, AKU-N technologies are used for strategic planning, assessment, product evaluation and project coordination as well as for people to easily communicate directly with one another across time and space a notion that is also supported by Adams and Galanes (2009).

Based on order of preference, Face-to-face commination was the second most

used channel through which AKU-N staff received information relating to the University's academic programs at 36.90% and was often used. In the advent of a global technological world, Face-to-face communication continues to still be a chosen mode of communication to give feedback, show appreciation, dialogue, avert unrest, resolve conflict, and keeping the staff informed about organizational changes (Mutula,2002; Begley 2004; Berko, 2007; Ramachandran ,2006; Koten 2011; Frandsen, 2011). In the open ended questions, AKU-N staff concur by emphasizing that the nature of work done at AKU-N was some of the reasons to choice Face-to-face communication where some participants indicated that "…due to working in a clinical area, face to face communication is a daily requirement during ward rounds, Consultations with patients are done face to face…" and "…most effective way of communication in my job…". Some indicated that Face-to-face communication was preferred when they wanted to target a particular group who do not have a group email account and that it is at times better than emails or telephone calls. Others indicated that it's the easiest way of communicating as well as getting undistorted information and is appropriate for informal communication.

According to Mutula (2002), dialogue in private universities is continuous among administrators and teaching faculty and this has helped avert employee unrest and created opportunities for effective management of academic programmes. The same hold true for AKU-N where 61.90% affirmed that their supervisors adequately spelled out what is expected of their role (downward communication) while upward communication was upheld through activities like open door policy where staff could easily consult with their supervisor (57.14%) and that channels are in place to gather staff suggestions through Face-to-face communications (47.62%). In relation to body cues one respondent indicated that "… I prefer personal contact as I can broaden the discussion

especially if it is a sensitive issue, "… I can observe the non-verbal communication too…" while another noted that "… I get immediate feedback most of the time even if I do not get immediate feedback the body language points to it…"

The physical structure of the institution was also noted as a precursor of choosing Face-to-face communication where some respondents indicated that "…offices are far people are many…" and "…proximity with the entity head…".Further, others indicated that it's a personalized approach that guarantees a response, whether desired or not, and was used in formal sessions for non-major issues, when there are meetings and forums where information is shared. Indeed, Begley (2004) asserts that Face-to-face remains the most powerful human interaction, never replace intimacy and immediacy of people conversing in the same room. This completely underlines the attitude of the respondents, and the aspect of provision of warmth and emotion that telephones and computers lack. The absolute best way of resolving conflicts with employees or clients is to meet and discuss them Face-to-face (Ramachandran , 2006; Arvey, 2009). They insinuate that any other way only worsens the situation. At AKU-N, conflict resolution however seems to be mostly channeled through computer mediated channels. Further in relation to how the various channels contributed to creating an enabling environment that made the employees feel connected to the University Academic programs making it easier for them to execute their tasks, Face-to-face meetings on various academic activities did not make the staff feel connected to the institution at all.

Therefore, even though Face-to-face was among the channels of choice for raising work issues, it is essential for AKU-N management to continuously hold the

face-to-face meetings so that employees can use the forums as a platform to discuss matters of mutual interest with the university. Various researchers have identified the importance of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in education (Aladejana and Idowu, 2006; Sutton, 2006). Telephone Communication is one of the major forms of ICT in use, and integration of ICT generally into education can lower the cost of education, augment quality and provide a model for sharing ideas, experiences and knowledge of teachers and students. It has been found that given the right conditions mobile technologies can significantly enhance teacher professional learning and practice (Sankale, 2007).At AKU-N, 36.90% of the respondents indicated that they received information relating to their work through telephone communication. The respondents indicated telephone communication was often used and that phone consultations with colleagues was a common occurrence within the institution. Other reasons attributed to choosing telephone communication in executing their work included, cases where substantial distance is involved, where the subject matter for discussion is brief such that it warrants a phone call, in terms of time and cost saving, accessibility and availability. Telephone communication choice was also attributed to being used for urgent matters especially when out of station, when they needed clarification and immediate feedback. Others indicated that they used telephone communication "…for urgent information when I can't reach some one for face to face it is the easiest way to get immediate responses …" Indeed RoAnne (2008), in his study also found out that that is in some cases the only way to communicate since people are often outside their offices.

Further, as much as telephone communication does not appear to be most proffered mode of receiving information relating to work execution on a day to day

basis, AKU-N employees still found it relevant in receiving updates/changes on program schedules. In retrospect, complicated matters that can be misunderstood may be easier explained on the phone than in an E-mail so that assumptions about long discussions via E-mail and a possible misunderstanding among sender and receiver may very likely lead to the continuation over phone (RoAnne, 2008).

Lastly, Written Communication at AKU-N appears to be almost obsolete with only 13.10% acknowledging that they received information relating to their work through this channel. This was attributed to factors like cost where there are better and cheaper and easier means to communicate. They attributed use of written communication to situations where communication is individualized, where there were confidential documents that needed to be filed, for bulk documents that needed attention and follow up, formal /documented information warranting written approval. The nature of and business of the institution was also associated with written communication being hardly used. Respondents directed that they used written communication "…when giving exam feedback it is the most appropriate.." and "…it is not a common practice in AKU except for student related information's like timetables and schedules .." In addition, written communication in form of letters mentioned to as being limited to communications mainly from Finance and Human Resources (HR) departments, usually like twice a year. Other factors mentioned included conserving the environment and lack of a personal secretary. However, respondents acknowledged that it still played an integral part of the University through periodic written periodicals on university programs which made them feel very connected to the institution.

5.4 Conclusions

This study sought to establish how internal communication channels influences effective management of university academic programs. The systems approach emphasizes continuous feedback from management to ensure organizations coordinate and adjust activities to maintain balance and promote growth. Belasen, (2008) states that feedback must constantly flow from the bottom to the top and be acted upon for the sake of stability of system organization

The study established that AKU-N handled its communication with staff by utilizing formal communication channels that allowed for information to be exchanged from top management to lower level staff and across departments that were necessary for any organization to function. Although the environment had been created for employees to communicate information, through statements of disagreements, AKU-N staff expressed their need for feedback from supervisors, the introduction of channels that encouraged their input such as suggestion boxes and official out-of-office activities to build teamwork and encourage employee engagement. The need for making communication a priority in the university by developing a communication policy was also emphasized. AKU-N management through timely feedback would be able to address employee needs and avert harsh consequences such as staff strike that would hinder effective management of its academic programmes. Furthermore, most of the communication problems in relation to effective management could be averted by clear communication policy guidelines.

The university channels were highly valued when it came to addressing employee concerns and facilitating access to supervisors, where 88.10% of staff gave their overall consent to the satisfaction of the channels. Subsequently, the channel proved relevant to upholding effective management of its academic programs as employees frequently received updates thus creating awareness. This information was important so as to get employee buy-in on the direction the university is taking. Computer Mediated Channels of commutation was among the channels of choice for raising work issues thus it is essential for AKU-N management to continuously provide avenues so that employees can use the forums as a platform to discuss matters of mutual interest with the university.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations were made from the study.

1. Although AKU-N has been in existence for over 10 years, majority (64.29%) of the respondents had only worked for the institution on average for four years. This could be explained as a challenge of managing young professionals (26-40 years) who in AKUN were the majority (70.24%). There is therefore a need for AKU-N management to formulate strategies to enhance retaining of its young well educated workforce.

2. Stakeholder and systems theory as applied in this study works on the basis that management clearly outlines its communication policy recognizing that all employees are important stakeholders of the corporate. Some respondents proposed that decision making process needs to be less authoritarian and more democratic while another observation was made that "… the only

improvement is in the process as at times some urgent things are delayed. Other times some people are left out in important information..." Other propositions in terms of what the institution needs to pay attention relating to internal communication included academic objectives, achievement strategies, online Continuous Medical Education trainings (CME) and tutorials. It was also proposed that it's advisable to have a comprehensive faculty handbook with all what a faculty needs to know about the entity and university policies and program activities, also, a University prospectus with clear academic calendar for all university entities would be desirable.

3. In terms of internal communication channels influence on the management academic programs, there is a preference for Computer Mediated Channels. In recognizing that communication is a key ingredient to becoming a high performing institution, AKU-N may capitalize on this by promoting modern technological modes of communication like social media: Tweeter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. However, so as not to lose the human touch, AKU-N may consider encouraging team building activities not only within departments but also with other divisions so as to promote employee engagement. When employees are engaged, they are better able to execute their roles effectively which is important for effective management.

4. The findings of this study are relevant to university management across the globe as it highlights the significance of applying effective channels of employee communication for effective management of its academic programs. University management can use the findings of this research formulate strategies to enhance retaining of its young well educated workforce. Finally and perhaps most importantly, is the significance of a

clearly laid out communication policy that will enlighten staff on the access and use of corporate information thus promoting employee awareness and growth.

5.5 Suggestions for further studies

This study focused on AKU-N internal communication channels and their influence on effective management of academic programs. A thought-provoking observation from the study is that AKU-N employees prefer use of Computer Mediated Channels for conflict resolution; as opposed to Face-to-face communication which has widely been advocated for in other studies. For further research therefore;

1. A study on the influence of Computer Mediated Channels on conflict resolution within an institution of higher learning is a relevant topic of study. This will be helpful to institutions of higher learning as they consider the outcomes of adopting ICT medium as modern channels of communication. Furthermore, a look into modern channels of communication could set a platform for organizations to remain relevant in the market they operate in and attract skilled employees who keep abreast of current affairs though Computer mediated channels like social media.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Study Participant Consent Form

<u>Title of research project</u>

Influence of Internal Communication Channels on Effective Management of University Academic Programs: A Case of Aga Khan University, Kenya

<u>Investigator</u>

Ms. Nancy W. Kamanda

<u>Purpose of research</u>

Internal communication has been recognized as a strategic focus for business communication, second only to leadership concerns. The competitive advantage of internal communication comes not only from the obvious benefits of employee satisfaction and productivity, but also from the positive contributions that well-informed employees can make to a company's external public relations efforts and the achievement of the organization goal.

The objective of this study is to investigate influence of internal communication channels on effective management of University's academic programs with specific focus to Aga Khan University. The study will investigate whether face to face communication, telephone communication, computer mediated communication and written communication enhances effective management of University's academic programs in the Agha Khan University.

The knowledge established from this study would be useful in helping the regulatory authorities and university management to formulate future policies aiming at improving the efficiency of the institutions.

<u>Description of the research Process</u>

The study questionnaire will be administered by the researcher using computer software SurveyMonkey to send out a web link hosting the questionnaire. This was followed by online reminders requesting you to complete the questionnaires within the given timeframe of two weeks There is no right or wrong answers as what the researcher will be interested in is the study participants' opinion.

The study participation is voluntary. One can choose not to participate or withdraw from the study at any point of the study; this will not interfere or compromise your employment status in any way. In addition, no personal identifiers (like names, emails, employment number) will be collected.

Consent:

By clicking on the link provided, I agree that:

1) The study has been explained to me. All my questions were answered.

2) I know about the alternatives to taking part in this study. I understand that I have the right not to participate and the right to stop at any time. The decision about whether or not to participate will not interfere with my employment status at Aga Khan University.

3) I have the right now, and in the future, to ask any questions about the study.

4) I am aware that no information that would identify me will be released or printed without my permission

I hereby consent to participate. The Person who may be contacted during the research is:

Nancy Wanjiru Kamanda who may be reached at: 0724558204

I the undersigned have understood the above information. I have clarified my queries with the person obtaining consent and decided not to participate in the study.

Click on the Link - https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/J5HCB6S

Appendix B: Questionnaire for Aga Khan University Staff

Dear respondent,

My name is Kamanda Nancy, a post-graduate student at the University of Nairobi. I am undertaking a research study on Aga Khan University internal communication channels and influence on the effective management of the University's academic programs. Kindly take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. All responses will be treated with confidentiality so please feel free to express your honest views. Thank you.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/MySurvey_EditorFull.aspx?sm=Vq%2bqym6vEt9spY wQ8J5TwBjQrIK35yCpahV7CgkMXCA%3d

(Instruction: Where choices are provided, please tick the appropriate box otherwise write your opinion on the space provided.)

<u>**SECTION 1**</u>

Q1: Kindly respond to the below questions which are geared towards enabling us have a basis for demographic characteristics

- Please indicate your age bracket (Years)

☐ 25 and below   ☐ 26 – 40   ☐ 41-60   ☐ 61 and above

- What's your gender?

☐ Female   ☐ Male

- What is your highest education qualification?

☐ Secondary education   ☐ Diploma   ☐ Higher Diploma
☐ Bachelor's degree   ☐ Post graduate

- In which university program do you work?

☐ Medical College   ☐ Faculty of Arts and Sciences
☐ School of Nursing and Midwifery   ☐ Graduate Professional School

- How long have you worked for the University?

☐ Less than 2 years   ☐ 2 - 6years   ☐ 7 – 11 years
☐ More than 12 years

SECTION 2

This section will enable us generate data on the current internal communication channels available at the Aga Khan university

Q2: Please select at least two communication channels through which you receive information relating to the University's academic programs.

☐ Face-to-Face communication   ☐ Computer mediated communication
☐ Telephone Communication   ☐ Written Communication
☐ Other (specify)

Q3: Please rate your frequency of using the below channels of communication by ticking the appropriate box. (Use a scale of 1-5. Where 1=never and 5 most of time)

	Never	Hardly	Often	Sometimes	Most of the time
Face-to-Face communication					
Give at least two reasons for your choice above …………………………………………………………………………….					
Computer mediated communication					
Give at least two reasons for your choice above …………………………………………………………………………….					
Telephone/phone					
Written					
Give at least two reasons for your choice above …………………………………………………………………………….					

SECTION 3

This segment will try to identify the influence of the various internal communication channels on effective management of the University Academic programs

Q4: As an employee of the University which channel do you receive information on the below tasks?

	Face-to-Face	Computer mediated communication	Telephone	Written
I obtained information regarding the overall goal of the university through				
My supervisor adequately spells out what is expected of my role through				
My supervisor usually updates me on the changes/direction the university is taking using				
There is an open door policy where I can easily consult with my supervisor usually through				

	Face-to-Face	Computer mediated communication	Telephone	Written
Channels are in place to gather staff suggestions through				
I obtain information on what my colleagues in the department are working on through				
Internal issues affecting departments are raised through				
There is prompt feedback from managers when concerns are raised communicated to staff through				
Two-way communication is encouraged between employees and management usually through				

Apart from the academic activities mentioned above please highlight at least two other activities you feel the university needs to communicate to you to improve your work out put

Q5. Rate the level to which each channel makes you feel connected as an employee to the University Academic programs hence making it easier to execute your duties. Use a scale of 1-4; Where 1= Not and 4 Connected

	Connected	Very connected	Neutral	Not
Face-to-face meetings on various academic activities				
Computer notifications on academic program schedules				
Telephone calls on updates/changes on program schedules				
Periodic written periodicals on university programs				

List at least two communication channels which you would you prefer to receive information that would likely improve your work out put

SECTION 4

Q6. Kindly indicate in your view, the importance of communication channels in addressing issues relating to your work within the University

☐ Not at all important   ☐ somewhat important   ☐ A little important
☐ Very important   ☐ Other (Specify

Q7. Please give your opinion on the below statements

	True	False
The current communication channels make it easy to converse with my supervisor when there is a problem		
The communication channels make me aware of what my colleagues in the departments are working on		
I am satisfied with the current communication channels used by the Institution		

Q8. What is your opinion on the below statement?

I am aware of the campus recent academic activities of expanding its programmes and planning new faculties.

☐ True   ☐ False

- If true, through which communication channel did you receive information?

☐ Face-to-Face communication   ☐ Computer mediated communication e.g. emails
☐ Telephone/phone   ☐ Written   ☐ Other

- If false, which communication channel would you like to receive information on such academic activities?

☐ Face-to-Face communication   ☐ Computer mediated communication e.g. emails
☐ Telephone/phone   ☐ Written   ☐ Other

Q9. Please propose how you would improve the use of the available communication channels so as to effectively execute your work in the management of the university's academic programs.

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Thank you for your time

Appendix C: Data Collection Authorization AKU-N

THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Health Sciences
Medical College

Ref: 2014/REC-29
29th May, 2014.

Ms. Kamanda W. Nancy
(Reg: No. - L50/68100/2011)
Principal Investigator and student,
University of Nairobi, Kenya

Dear Ms. Nancy,

Re: **Influence of Internal Communication Channels on Effective Management of University Academic Programs: A Case of Aga Khan University, Kenya**

The Aga Khan University, Nairobi (AKUN) Health Research Ethics Committee (REC) is in receipt of your proposal submitted to the Research Support Unit (RSU) on 15th May, 2014.The committee records your request to undertake the above named study involving the University as research respondents.

In consultation with relevant stakeholders at AKU, the committee notes that this study is relevant, feasible and has scientific merit. Further, it is recorded that this is a low risk descriptive study that will not involve collection of respondent's personal identifiers. Based on AKU research guidelines, the study falls within the category of service evaluation as opposed to intervention, hence qualifies for exemption from a protracted scientific and ethics review.

You are authorized to conduct this study from **01st June, 2014**. This approval is valid for academic research only until **31[st]August, 2014**.

The study should be conducted as proposed and you should notify the REC immediately of any changes that may affect your project design. As the Principal Investigator you must advise the REC when this study is completed or discontinuedand a final report submitted to the RSU.Further approval from the university should be sought before publishing the results.

If you have any questions, please contact Research Support Unit - kamanda.ciru@aku.edu or 020-366 2148.

Sincerely,

Dr. Amyn Lakhani
Chair, Health Research Ethics Committee, AKU (N)

3rd Parklands Avenue, off Limuru Road, P. O. Box 30270, GPO 00100, Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: +254 20 366 2107/2109; Fax: + 254 20 374 3935
Email: medicalcollege.enquiries@aku.edu; Website: www.aku.edu

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Appendix D: Email Communication

From:	kamanda.ciru
To:	
Subject:	Internal Communication
Date:	Thursday, June 05, 2014 12:52:12 PM

Good afternoon,

We are in the process of conducting a brief analysis directed at understanding influence of Internal Communication Channels on Effective Management of Academic Programs. Kindly consider taking about 5-10 minutes of your time to respond to our online questionnaire by clicking the below link. We appreciate your feedback as we endeavor to contribute to the body of Knowledge in varying academia.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/J5HCB6S

Regards,

Kamanda Ciru
Administrative Officer (Research)
Faculty of Health Sciences
Aga Khan University - Nairobi
East Tower Block -
7th Floor (709) Tel.
020 366 2148/0711
092 148
Email- kamanda.ciru@aku.edu

From:	kamanda.ciru
Bcc:	
Subject:	FW: Internal Communication
Date:	Tuesday, June 10, 2014 11:55:26 AM

Good afternoon,

We are in the process of conducting a brief analysis directed at understanding influence of Internal Communication Channels on Effective Management of Academic Programs. Kindly consider taking about 5-10 minutes of your time to respond to our online questionnaire by clicking the below link. We appreciate your feedback as we endeavor to contribute to the body of Knowledge in varying academia.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/J5HCB6S

Regards,

Kamanda Ciru
Administrative Officer (Research) Faculty of
Health Sciences
Aga Khan University - Nairobi
East Tower Block -
7th Floor (709) Tel.
020 366 2148/0711
092 148
Email- kamanda.ciru@aku.edu

Appendix E: Screenshot of the SurveyMonkey Questionnaire

Link
https://www.surveymonkey.com/MySurvey_EditorFull.aspx?sm=Vq%2bqym6vEt9spYwQ8J
5TwBjQrIK35yCpahV7CgkMXCA%3d