

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AS A SUCCESS FACTOR IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT IN AN UNIVERSITY CONTEXT

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Abstract. This paper examines the effectiveness of communication of university students with high school students from all over the country. We look to provide a deeper understanding of how effective communication contributes to the success of a project in the sector of education and we identify some strategies that contribute to the improvement of some key aspects of communication. Thus, we have analyzed the importance of communication both inside and outside the team using three qualitative methods: project case study, document analysis and in-depth interviews with project participants. Our results are relevant for the potential new project participants, but also for the stakeholders in the public education sector in general, who aim to foster the bridge between university and pre-university education. We finally address conclusions and recommendations, which may serve as a guide for future participants and those who want to know how they can benefit from better communication in similar projects.

JEL Classification: M14, H43, I23

Key words: project management; effective communication; higher education projects

1. Introduction

Effective communication is the basis for good cooperation and coordination within a project and ensures its success. Programs that provide a certain continuity in the curriculum by bridging the gap between pre-university and university curricula have become a necessity.

One such program where students are introduced to the academic environment at short notice is the Student University, offered by the German Department of the Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. Through the “Student University” project, students could visit faculties that offer courses in German. Thus, this program plays an important role in facilitating the transition to academic life and developing communication skills in a specific context.

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This article is divided into three chapters. In the first chapter, we present the main theoretical aspects and concepts related to project success factors and the effectiveness of project communication with internal and external stakeholders. In the second chapter, we describe our research objectives and the scientific methods used (i.e., case study, document analysis and interview). The third chapter presents the most important aspects of the “Student University” program, the interpretations of the conducted interviews and the analysis of the internal and external documents of the project.

With this work, we aim to gain a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of communication in the “Student University” project and identify successful practices and aspects of communication in project management that could be improved. We believe that the results and findings of this research contribute to the development of a solid foundation in the field of effective project communication and provide useful recommendations to improve future practices.

2. Theoretical foundations for effective project communication

Project management researchers have been theorizing and trying to identify the elements that contribute to project success since the late 1960s. The factors that make projects successful are part of a strategic perspective and several influences are derived from stakeholder expectations (Jugdev et al. 2013; cited in Besteiro, de Souza Pinto and Novaski 2015). Project outcomes remain unsatisfactory for stakeholders, despite these well-known research findings, decades of individual and collective experience in project management, the rapid increase in project membership, and the proliferation of project work in the industry.

So, what are the critical factors that ‘really’ lead to successful projects? Various authors (Pinto and Slevin, 1988; Nicholas, 1989; Hartman and Ashrafi, 1996; Kharbanda and Pinto, 1996; Belassi and Tukel 1996; Graham and Englund, 1997; Chua et al, 1999; Cleland, 2004) have identified several Critical Success Factors (CSFs) for projects. A review of the literature reveals nine common important CSFs for projects: (1) project understanding, (2) top management support, (3) communication, (4) customer involvement, (5) competent project team, (6) project manager authority, (7) realistic cost and time estimates, (8) adequate project control and (9) problem-solving skills.

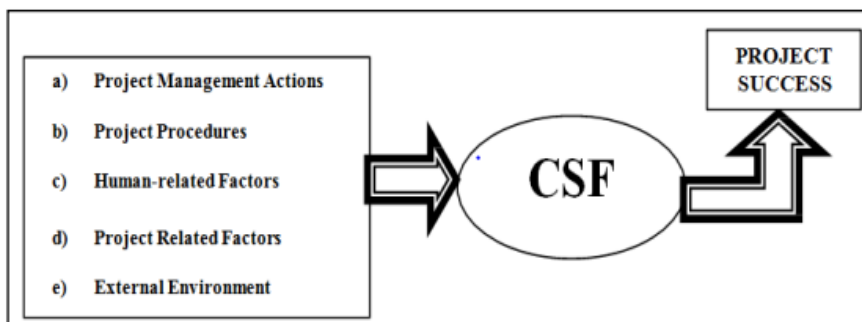


Figure 1. Conceptual framework (Alias et al., 2014)

As in Figure 1, from a project management perspective, CSFs are characteristics, conditions or variables that can have a significant impact on the success of the project if they are properly maintained, nurtured or managed (Milosevic and Patanakul, 2005; cited in Alias et al., 2014).

2.1. Communication as a success factor

Communication management is one of the most intensively researched areas of project management. On the one hand, most stakeholders emphasize its importance, but on the other hand, the communication processes and practices formalized in the company's project management methodology are neither followed nor prioritized by project managers (Monteiro de Carvalho 2013; cited in Muszynska et al., 2015).

A shared understanding is established through communication, which is derived from the Latin verb "communicare", which means "to do something together", "the transmission of meaning from one person to another or many people, whether verbal or nonverbal" (cf., Barrett, 2006, p.386). There is a group of researchers who consider the communication skills of the project manager as the single most important aspect that determines the success of a project. If it is true that everything depends on communication and leadership, it is obvious that leadership communication skills are the fundamental skills that a project manager must acquire in order to be effective.

Communication involves capturing all pertinent information, understanding it and passing it on effectively to the people who need to hear it. Information is described by Bowen and Edward (1996, p.396) as "data that has been processed and presented in a format that gives it meaning". Thus, to achieve the project objectives, the members of the project team need to collaborate, share, collate and integrate information and knowledge. Therefore, it is important to understand the communication process. A sender, a transmission channel or medium and a receiver make up communication at its most basic level.

Effective communication can be an excellent tool for systematically managing stakeholder relationships at multiple levels. Communication and Stakeholder engagement processes are often described as "soft" because dealing with people (stakeholders) and developing appropriate messages for information exchange (communication) is difficult. In other words, people's behavior is unpredictable and therefore it is difficult to develop objective (tangible) means to effectively engage progress or even success with stakeholders (Bourne, 2009; cited in Rajhans, 2018).

Inadequate communication can lead to misunderstandings. Insufficiently defined tasks and critical processes, uncertainty about responsibilities, scope or objectives of projects can lead to project failure. Managing a project requires constant idea exchange and change, explaining the scope and methods of the project to different groups of people (the public, management, departments and other stakeholders), threatening or negotiating with service providers and suppliers, or negotiating to resolve disputes or conflicts between project team members or others (Steyn et al. 2016; Zulch 2014).

To provide clear guidance to all stakeholders, it is advisable to agree on a communication plan in advance, especially for complex projects. When creating a communication plan, the focus should be on keeping key stakeholders informed of project progress and promoting the project by always making it public. The communication plan should include the following points, which are also shown in Figure 2:

- Who (communication channels - sender and recipient - responsibility and authority)
- What (scope of communication and format)
- When (schedule)
- Acknowledgement (confirmation that the message has been received and understood - document control)
- Storage (retrieval, storage, emergency recovery)
- How (email, document, phone, meeting, presentation) (Burke, 2013).

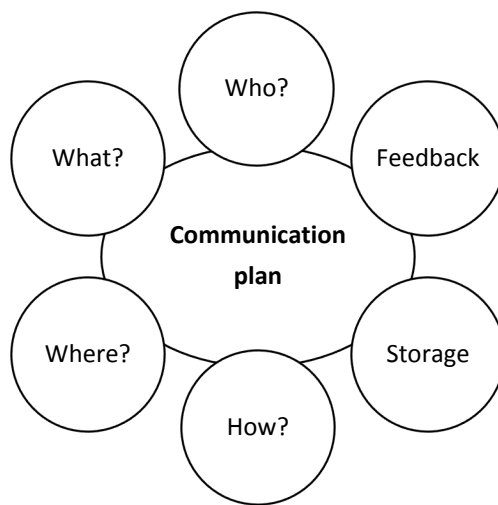


Figure 2. Communication plan

Project communication occurs as soon as two or more actors refer to a project and its objectives in their communicative actions. Project communication includes communication within projects (internal project communication between project members), communication between project members and non-members (stakeholder communication) and communication about projects among non-members (public communication) (Freitag, 2016).

Other categories help to differentiate between forms and media of communication. Formal communication is provided for in the project plan and regulated organizationally, while informal communication is ad hoc and not centrally controlled. A distinction is made between personal communication and mass communication according to the number of participants and between one-way and two-way communication according to the possibility of feedback. Vertical communication takes place top-down or bottom-up along the hierarchical organization, while horizontal communication predominates in hierarchical organizational structures such as the project team. If the initiative for the use of media lies with the communicator, this is *push communication*. If it lies with the recipient, it is *pull communication*. Communication can take place directly and without aid (usually as face-to-face communication) or based on a technical infrastructure. These technical communication media differ in terms of their sign systems (verbal/nonverbal), the sensory organs they address and their ability to bridge spatial and temporal distances. Actors use this media mix according to availability, task, personal preference, and experience (Freitag 2016, Irimiaş, 2019).

The creation, collection, dissemination, and storage of information, as well as the definition of roles for project team members and other project participants, are necessary to ensure that project communication is appropriate and effective. However, it is also crucial to maintain good personal relationships with team members and adhere to the basic principles of effective and positive communication.

3. Methodology

Our objective has been to analyze and evaluate the role of communication in the “Student University” project; to what extent it contributes to the success or failure of the project, using qualitative research methods such as case studies, interviews, and document analysis. This research aims to identify key factors influencing communication in the project and practical suggestions for improving communication in future projects. From this, the descriptive research question is developed:

“How can clear and effective communication between the project leader and the project members within the “Student University” project contribute to the project achieving its goals and being successfully completed?”

In order to answer the research question, a qualitative study was conducted. The research methods used in this thesis are: (1) case study, (2) interview and (3) document analysis. Case study research is a qualitative research method in which a particular phenomenon or person is studied in their real-life context in order to understand the complexity and uniqueness of the case. This method is particularly suitable for research questions that ask ‘how’ and ‘why’ and for research projects that seek to investigate complex, multi-layered phenomena in their natural setting (Yin, 2018). The case study will focus on Babeş-Bolyai University’s “Student University” project, which is dedicated to high school students from all cities.

An interview is a commonly used research method in many fields. It involves a structured or unstructured conversation between an interviewer and an interviewee to gather information or assess a candidate’s knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes. According to Salant and Dillman (1994), an interview is a method of data collection through a conversation with an interviewee, usually face-to-face but sometimes by telephone or videoconference, to inquire about the interviewee’s attitudes, beliefs, opinions, behaviors, or experiences.

To collect our empirical data, we used a standardized, fully structured interview according to a guideline with identical questions. The interviewees were not deprived of their desire to talk during the interviews and were allowed to recount their experiences in breadth and depth. The literature offers some recurring themes that we examined in our interviews. Thus, we asked about the efficiency of communication in the “Student University” project, to what extent the objectives were achieved and what could have been changed in terms of the approach and communication in the project, but also how everything worked from the perspective of the project participants, including the problems they encountered and how they were able to solve them. The interview consists of 13 questions relating to 4 key areas, namely: effectiveness of communication within the project team, effectiveness of communication outside the

project team, evaluation of the quality of communication and motivation of the project team members. These domains are further detailed in the appendices.

Document analysis is a research method that involves collecting, reviewing, and analyzing written materials such as policies, laws, regulations, reports, memos, and minutes to answer research questions or achieve research objectives (Bowen, 2009). The documents we analyzed are the project file, reports, permits and certificates related to the “Student University” project.

Case study, document analysis of the project and interpretation of the interview results

In this chapter, we have focused on the detailed case study of the selected project and analyzed both internal and external product documents. We also present the results of the four interviews conducted with key project stakeholders. The aim of this study is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the project, identify the challenges encountered and assess the impact of communication on the success of the project.

Case study “Student University” project

Participating in a faculty visit project provides an opportunity to experience the academic atmosphere and familiarize students with the campus and facilities of the University. They can obtain important information about academic programs, extracurricular activities, and resources available to students. In addition, participation in the Faculty Visit Project allows students and faculty to interact in an informal setting. Students can ask questions and receive advice and assistance in choosing a faculty. Participation in the “Student University” Project not only provides students with academic experience, but also helps them develop social, teamwork, organizational and communication skills. These skills are of great value for long-term personal and professional development.

The case study for this project explores how hands-on experiences can influence students’ learning and development. By having the opportunity to visit universities and interact with students and faculty from different fields, students can gain a concrete insight into what it means to study and work in a field. Through this project, students can interact with students and professors at the universities, ask questions and receive relevant information about study programs, career opportunities and admission requirements. In this way, they are encouraged to improve their communication skills and gain more confidence in different areas. Visiting universities and interacting with students and teachers can motivate and inspire students. This hands-on experience can develop a passion for learning and spark an interest in studying and finding more out about future career opportunities. Students can see examples of success and understand that there are real opportunities to pursue their passion in their favorite field.

“Student University” is a project of the Babeş-Bolyai University, organized by the German language department of the Babeş-Bolyai University. The target group consists of German-speaking students in the 11th and 12th grades who are learning German as a native, intensive, or foreign language. The aim of the project is to show high school students the possibilities of studying in German. Faculties from Babeş-Bolyai University with a German language focus are involved: Faculty of

Mathematics and Computer Science, Faculty of Biology and Geology, Faculty of Geography, Faculty of Economics and Business Management, Faculty of Literature, Faculty of European Studies, Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences.

The 11th edition of the project took place in Cluj-Napoca from March 6 to 10, 2023. In the edition of this year, 8 schools (both with a humanities profile and a real profile) with a total of 109 students and 6 accompanying persons from and outside Cluj took part. The participating schools were: German Theoretical High School "Friedrich Schiller" from Oradea, National High School "Samuel von Brukenthal" from Sibiu, National Pedagogical High School "Andrei Saguna" from Sibiu, Theoretical High School "Adam Müller Guttenbrunn" from Arad, Theoretical High School "Joseph Haltrich" from Sighișoara, Theoretical High School "Roth-Oberth" from Mediaș, National High School "George Coșbuc" from Cluj-Napoca and Theoretical High School "Báthory István" Cluj-Napoca.

The project was promoted in the following ways: invitation to German-speaking high schools in the country, Gutenberg Caravan, LSLG (German Study Line) Facebook page, press release - presence of TVR Cluj at the opening gala and the invitation to participate in the "Transilvania Policromă" program.

As part of the project, high school students participated in a series of activities to get to know study programs in German at Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj, having the opportunity to get to know the elements of the infrastructure of each faculty. In addition to these activities, the organizers also prepared a cultural and entertainment program for the students, in cooperation with the Gutenberg Association and the Student Council of the German-language field of study, in order to familiarize them with student life in Cluj-Napoca. At the opening gala, the students also had the opportunity to meet representatives of the sponsoring companies and hear about the career opportunities they offer. This year, for the first time, the Babeș-Bolyai University Treasure Hunt was offered, an activity that was very well and successfully received by the students. The faculties and the German-speaking Student Council also facilitated contact with current students.

Communication within the project has taken place both internally and externally. In terms of internal communication, it took place between the organizing team (student volunteers: coordination, initiation, meetings, logistics), with the offices and departments involved (i.e., 1. financial, legal - for sponsorship contracts, expenses, invoices, grants, 2. image: promotional items + social media, photo-video, press releases, 3. applications and approvals: Lodging, transportation, catering, room booking, other materials and image, 4. Communication with each faculty for integrating the program into the bigger picture, 5. Billing: lodging and catering + visuals). External communication includes communication with the participating schools (approx. 50 invitations sent out, average 7 schools present per session, approx. 100 students per session, check-in and check-out logistics, accommodation, mobility within the event) and with the sponsors (approx. 20 invitations sent out, average 6 sponsors per session, average 6 emails per sponsor, information on: sponsorship amount, conditions, event logistics, presentation and online and offline presentation/ promotion), as well as media communication (interviews, media appearances, coordination of social media presence).

The following communication channels are used:

- With UBB schools, students and colleagues: Econ and UBB institutional emails.
- With the student team: WhatsApp, Teams, and One-Drive.
- With all stakeholders: social media - advertising: LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, TV, radio.

To summarize, the “Student University” project is a motivating project that could lead to success because the communication channels were very well chosen, and each project member was clearly informed. The students benefited from an experience that was useful for educational purposes as well as for socialization and communication. It is crucial for the project to establish a clearly defined communication system and use the appropriate channels to ensure effective information transmission. We will also investigate using the following research method: document analysis.

Analysis of the documents as part of the “Student University” project

Document analysis makes it possible to group and analyze the most important documents related to the communication of the project and observe how they contributed to the success of the project. Document analysis in a project can be of great help in assessing a communication process (its efficiency and effectiveness). It provides an objective view of the communication within the project and allows the identification of patterns and problems related to the flow of information and communication between team members.

In Appendices 1 and 2, the documents are grouped according to the following criteria: Document Name, Document Type, Subject of Communication, Departments Involved and Communication Type.

Internal communication documents (Appendix 1)

Document (1) contains a table with the list of the 14 volunteer students - names, surnames and the signature that they have received the amount of 100 lei for their efforts for the Student University project. Documents (2) to (6) present different perspectives and aspects related to the Student University program. For example, document (2) contains information about the bus timetable: for each day of the schedule, it shows the address and time from where students take the bus, the number of trips and the number of people who can board the bus. Document (3) shows the meal program in the Hasdeu school canteen. Document (4) contains the detailed program of the project to help student volunteers understand their tasks and responsibilities. The official program of the event is presented in documents (5) and (6), with the difference that one is intended for students from Cluj-Napoca and the other for students from outside Cluj-Napoca. At the beginning there is the poster promoting the School University project, then the division of the events by days and the activities of each day.

The presentations of the faculties have been divided according to certain criteria: different cities, different profiles (real or humanities) and interests of the students. The addresses and times of the individual activities are listed next to each activity. In the free time between the presentations, the students could visit Cluj-Napoca and its tourist attractions: the Botanical Garden, museums, exhibitions, Central Park and others.

The document (7) contains some useful tips and important points that were discussed in the preliminary design meeting on March 1st.



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Figure 3. Public project presentation

External communication documents (Appendix 2)

Document (8) shows the project's support packages, while also including some notes on the location of the opening gala, the fact that everything will be presented in a live streaming on the event page for other interested students, pupils or teachers, and the fact that the local press will also be invited to provide audio and photo montage.

Document (9) includes a list of subjects from which student volunteers must be exempted during the project if they are unable to attend classes. The first and last name of the respective teacher, the subject taught and whether a seminar/course took place during the week in question are added.

Documents (10) to (12) are applications submitted by the project coordinator to various departments of the university. Document (10) contains an application sent by the coordinator of the "Student University" 2023 project to the Dean of the Faculty. It gives detailed information about the program with the request to book the room "Aula". The analysis of document (11) shows a request from the project coordinator to the PR department of the university to approve the production of video material for the organization and promotion of the event. Document (12) contains a request for approval from the project coordinator for the production of printed materials for the organization and promotion of the event.

The final report (13) contains relevant information about the project: organizer, period, objective, target group, participants, promotion of the project, program, partners, sponsors, facilities, as well as some answers and conclusions from a questionnaire filled in by the participating students.

Document (14) contains some questions received at the “Transilvania Policromă” broadcast on 20 February 2023, where some important aspects of the project were discussed by the project coordinator, when this event was organized and who was invited to participate. Participation in the program provides a comprehensive platform for promoting the project. This will make more students aware of the opportunity to visit colleges and the benefits they can gain from it. On the show, the project coordinator mentioned success stories of past projects and how these experiences have positively affected the students. This can inspire and motivate other students to sign up for and participate in the project. So participating in a program can be beneficial in several ways when it comes to communicating the visiting faculty project.

In summary, the document analysis has deciphered the communication channels used, the frequency and methods of information transmission, and their effectiveness in conveying project messages and instructions. The roles and responsibilities of participants in the communication process have come to light as to how information was conveyed to both indirect and direct participants in the project.

The analysis of the “Student University” project documents provides a solid basis for understanding the background and development of the project. However, in order to get a more complete picture and learn the direct perspective of those involved, we conducted four interviews with team members who played an active role in the project. These interviews bring additional information to light and provide a deeper understanding of key aspects of the project.

4. Interview results and discussion

As part of this research, we conducted four interviews, each lasting 40 minutes. These interviews took place online on the Zoom platform, both with the project coordinator and with three student volunteers involved in the project. The interviews were conducted in Romanian for easier and more efficient communication and were further translated using DeepL. The aim of these interviews was to discuss the most important aspects of communication in the project, communication strategies, motivation, communication channels, problem solving and evaluation of communication quality. This analysis gave us valuable insights and helped me to formulate concrete recommendations for improving communication in similar projects in the future. The following table provides some information about the interviewees, namely 4 out of 15 project members from the core team (26.67%).

Table 1. The project members interviewed

Crt. No.	Team role in the project	Gender	Duration of the interview
11	Project coordinator	Masculine	50 minutes
12	Volunteer	Feminine	30 minutes
13	Volunteer	Feminine	30 minutes
14	Volunteer	Feminine	30 minutes

The results of these interviews were interpreted with the help of Maxqda software, whereby we coded and analyzed the texts obtained. In the next figure, one can see the relationships between codes and units of analysis (such as text segments or data fragments). The code matrix browser provides a tabular representation of the data, with codes on the horizontal axis and units of analysis (interviews) on the vertical axis. There are 4 main categories of codes: Effectiveness of communication within the project team, Effectiveness of communication outside the project team, Evaluation of communication quality and Motivation of project team members, with each of these codes having 2 or 3 sub-codes.

Code System	I1	I2	I3	I4	SUM
Effective communication within the project team				•	1
Communication tools	●	●	●	●	31
Volunteer involvement	●	●	●	●	37
Overcoming communication problems	●	●	•	●	23
Effectiveness of communication outside the project team					0
Means of communication	●	•			9
Cooperation with other stakeholders	●	•	•		14
Top management support	●	•	•	•	14
Evaluation of the quality of communication					0
Communication evaluation	●	●	•	•	20
Feedback	●	•	•	•	18
Motivation of the project team members					0
Team collaboration and communication strategies	●	●	•	•	19
Instruction of new members	●	•	•	•	15
Σ SUM	96	37	31	37	201

Figure 4. Code Matrix Browser

Effectiveness of communication within the project team

First, we will discuss the results of the analysis of the effectiveness of communication within the project team. Effective communication within the project team is the key to the success of the project. Good communication enabled team members to work together effectively, share ideas and coordinate activities properly.

The sub-code 'Communication tools' (30 segments) refers to the most important online platforms and apps for collaboration through which team members were able to interact effectively and coordinate activities.

“Teams gave us access to the entire Microsoft platform, which also offers Pages and OneDrive. All relevant documents were therefore accessed via the institutional Email account and internal team documents such as schedules, times and places where a particular person had been sent via WhatsApp” (I1, pos. 14)

“During the 4 months there was a lot of communication via phone, WhatsApp, emails and about 7 face-to-face meetings” (I1, pos. 16)
“We also had a separate WhatsApp group with all team members where we discussed every problem or task in detail.” (I2, Pos. 11)

The sub-code ‘Volunteer involvement’ (36 sections) is a crucial aspect of the project that contributed to its success. The volunteers brought enthusiasm, commitment and valuable resources and it was important that they were given meaningful opportunities to get involved and make their personal contribution to the project.

“We, as volunteers, received training on the guidelines and values relevant to the project. “ (I4, pos. 7)

“Each of us was assigned different tasks and everyone had a responsibility, the work was evenly distributed, and everything was done with maximum organization” (I3, pos. 15)

“Also, in the first session we discussed how to be careful when working with personal data, e.g. about pupils or schools” (I2, pos. 7)

Another aspect of internal communication is ‘Overcoming communication problems’, as indicated by the third sub-code (22 segments). This ensured effective collaboration and avoided certain delays or misunderstandings, which strengthened the team and forced it to overcome difficult moments and unpleasant situations.

“There were delays and I asked a student volunteer to take care of it. In times of crisis, I kept in touch with her and then the student volunteer took care of it and called the person directly, knocked on their door and helped me a lot in that direction” (I1, pos. 14)

“Some problems with unavailable student volunteers were solved by replacing them with other team members. There was always a replacement person to take care of an action. If there were delays, these were resolved either by phone, directly with the person who had responded late, or with their replacement if it was an urgent matter” (I1, pos. 28)

“We avoided some problems by simply talking in advance and planning the day’s schedule carefully” (I2, item 9)

The team used various means of communication, including online platforms such as Teams, WhatsApp, emails, and face-to-face meetings, to collaborate effectively and share information. Volunteer training and clear assignment of tasks helped to ensure that they were engaged and made valuable contributions. Direct communication, substitutes and careful planning helped to avoid delays and misunderstandings. Overall, these measures led to efficient collaboration, the achievement of goals and the overcoming of challenges within the project team.

Effectiveness of communication outside the project team

In the following, we analyze the results of the interviews with regard to the importance of effective communication outside the project team, i.e. external communication. Collaboration with other stakeholders is crucial to the success of the

project and requires constant communication and interaction to exchange information, clarify issues and obtain feedback.

The first sub-code 'Means of communication' (9 segments) again contains the main forms of communication with external partners: sponsors, professors, UBB Directorate of Communication and Public Relations, GDPR staff and other stakeholders.

"We also informed the dean's office by email, but also personally with our faculty management, and at the level of the rector with the vice-rector responsible for the German line, we had personal discussions, by institutional email, but also via WhatsApp. We also used WhatsApp and institutional email with the vice-rector's secretary, who took care of all the bureaucratic matters" (I1, item 6)

"We communicated with external members both in person and by email, e.g. the coordinating teacher sent invitations to sponsors online, by email" (I2, item 11)

Regarding the sub-code 'Cooperation with other stakeholders' (14 segments), it was important to build trusting relationships and maintain constant and open communication. This included sharing relevant information and actively responding to the needs and concerns of other stakeholders. Effective communication and good collaboration helped to increase stakeholder engagement and gain support for the project.

"Communication with other schools and other departments outside the project was through the project coordinator" (I2, pos. 5)

"Each faculty had a teacher in charge of the project, sometimes with the task of welcoming the students on a specific day and introducing them to the infrastructure of that faculty. Before the event, either the sponsors sent the promotional materials to the rectorate by courier, or I went to the sponsors myself and in about 90% of the cases personally took care of taking these materials and displaying them at the opening gala on Monday or including them in the welcome packet" (I1, pos. 17)

"Efficient communication was sought with other external teams, members and departments, which is why the coordinating professor took on these tasks" (I3, pos. 11)

In relation to the next sub-code 'Top management support' (14 segments), we can say that the top management provided strategic guidance, resources, and support in solving problems or obstacles encountered when communicating with other stakeholders. They also ensured that the project team had the necessary authority and resources to communicate effectively and respond to all participants' needs. Both the Dean's Office and the Rectorate were responsive to the needs of the project and helped with interest and commitment.

"The dean's office was informed that a visit was coming and that students would be in the faculty premises and that the dean's office approval was needed for the classroom, and in the rector's office the requests were facilitated or somehow guided by the vice rector's secretary" (I1, pos. 7)

“At every step, we were supported by the coordinating faculty member, but we also motivated each other and received support from the other team members. The teaching staff were very supportive throughout the project and provided us with everything we needed. Communication with other schools and departments was handled by the project coordinator” (12, pos. 5)

“Support for the project was provided both financially through sponsorship and verbally through encouragement and collaboration with team members and participating students” (14, pos. 5)

The analyzed interview results emphasize the importance of effective communication in the external collaboration in the project, which was about 5% of all communications. The use of various means of communication such as emails, face-to-face meetings and even messaging applications enabled a flexible exchange of information with external partners. Constant and open communication with other stakeholders encouraged engagement and support from the project participants.

Evaluation of the quality of communication

In the following, we will look at the assessment of communication quality and the implementation of a communication evaluation, important steps for assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of communication in the project. Such an evaluation makes it possible to identify weaknesses, recognize potential for improvement and adapt the communication strategy.

The sub-code ‘Communication evaluation’ (20 segments) illustrates that communication was mostly effective, well organized, and even praised by external parties, but nevertheless some areas for improvement were also identified.

“We intend to develop together a good practice that can be passed on from generation to generation, with some key points, some chapters that are dealt with in a qualitative and descriptive way” (11, pos. 30)

“We evaluated the communication from the first day of the project, day by day, every evening there was a small team meeting” (11, pos. 32)

“Communication, even if it was a bit chaotic at times, has improved because everyone knows what their tasks are” (13, Pos. 21)

“During the whole project we realized that communication is the key to solving any problem, and without listening and proper communication nothing will work as we imagined.” (14, Pos. 23)

The sub-code ‘Feedback’ (18 segments) was provided by several parties involved in the project. An evaluation questionnaire completed by the participating students at the end of the project provided information about their satisfaction with the project. In addition, a final board meeting with the teachers and faculty representatives involved in the project provided an opportunity to gather feedback and suggestions for improving communication in future projects, as well as to praise the entire project team for the excellent organization.

"It was important to give and receive feedback to my colleagues and so we could avoid arguments by simply following each other's advice" (12, pos. 25)

"The evaluation of communication was also based on the feedback questionnaire we sent to the students, which 60% of the participants completed. A final evaluation took place at the German Line board meeting, to which I was invited to present the results of the event. There I also received feedback from colleagues and teaching staff from the individual faculties who were involved in welcoming the students, and here too the level of satisfaction was high." (11, pos. 33)

"The feedback helped us to become a more professional organizational team from year to year. The project received general feedback through the final questionnaire completed by the students" (14, pos. 25)

In summary, communication was effective, transparent, clear and well-coordinated and contributed to the successful implementation of the project. It was emphasized that communication is the key to problem solving. The feedback from the students and the board meeting was positive and praised the quality of communication. It also helped the participants in the project to become a more professional organizing team. The communication evaluation has helped to identify weaknesses and adjust the communication strategy.

Motivation of the project team members

To motivate team members and promote collaboration and effective communication in the project, it was important that objectives and roles were clarified, open communication was encouraged, and regular meetings were held. Collaboration and knowledge sharing between team members needed to be facilitated by the project coordinator, who provided ongoing support and constructive feedback and ensured that new team members received an appropriate instruction and were provided with the resources they needed to perform their tasks and that the old team members were at least as committed as in the previous project.

The next sub-code 'Team collaboration and communication strategies' (19 segments) includes some motivating factors such as: a volunteer diploma that confirms their commitment and dedication, a small amount of money in recognition of their efforts, the opportunity to take on a leadership role that allows them to develop their leadership skills, and the opportunity to have an unforgettable experience that enriches their knowledge and opens up new perspectives.

"We motivated each other and were supported by the other team members. The faculty was very supportive throughout the project and provided us with everything we needed" (12, pos. 5)

"The motivation for us was the fact that we really wanted to help future high school graduates who are still at the beginning of their path" (13, Pos. 13)

"We showed them that they can make the most of the opportunities available to them" (14, item 13)

The next sub-code 'Instruction of new members' (15 sections) contains useful tips for new volunteers from both the project coordinator and the student volunteers. The new volunteer should listen to and learn from the more experienced members and the project coordinator, actively engage and collaborate with the whole team, enjoy the experience and be open to feedback while showing respect and a desire for personal development and learning.

"They can learn to coordinate an event, get involved in the organization and gain some practical skills that will help them in their future career, but also in some subjects related to projects and communication" (I1, pos. 41)

"I think the best advice I can give to a new member of the volunteer team is to enjoy the whole process to the fullest and to do everything they do with heart, because in the end they will be proud of their work and of the fact that they have left their mark on such a beautiful project. I would advise them to always listen to the other teachers around them and to the advice of the coordinating teacher, because that is very important" (I2, pos. 27)

"I would point out to him that effective communication is the most important factor in the smooth running of a project" (I3, pos. 27)

"It is very important to listen to the views of the team and discuss them together to find optimal solutions. It is not acceptable for everyone to impose their own opinion and ignore the opinions of colleagues." (I4, pos. 27)

In summary, we can say that the student volunteers' experiences were rewarding as they were constantly motivated by various factors, both intrinsic, through personal interests, passions and satisfaction from the desire to learn and develop, and extrinsic, such as the rewards in the form of money and the diploma for volunteering and participation. They recommend volunteering in such a project and give good advice to potential new members.

Based on the project case study, the analysis of internal and external documents and the interviews conducted with the four interviewees, we have come to a solid conclusion: communication was a crucial factor for the success of the project. This conclusion is supported by all four interviewees, who unanimously recognize the importance of effective communication within the team and with external stakeholders. Through a coherent and transparent communication strategy, the project was able to overcome obstacles and achieve positive results. This underlines the importance placed on communication in project management and its relevance in ensuring ultimate success.

5. Conclusions

Our study, which used scientific methods such as the project case study, analysis of internal and external documents and interviews with the project coordinator and the three student volunteers, provided an in-depth understanding of how clear and effective communication between the project leader and the project members can contribute to the achievement of the objectives and successful completion of the 'Student University' project.

The results confirmed that communication was one of the key factors in the success of the project. We found that effective communication within the internal team motivated the volunteers and actively involved them in the project, which facilitated the coordination of the process and supported the efforts of the project leader. We also found that effective communication with external stakeholders such as sponsors, faculty, dean's office, and rectorate helped to gain additional support and ensure compliance with university policies and values. At the same time, we have found the importance of assessing the quality of communication and providing feedback, both in terms of the project itself and the involvement of project members. This evaluation and feedback process has contributed to the continuous improvement of communication and the effectiveness of the project.

The results of this study also clearly emphasize that a well-functioning team is closely connected to effective coordination and a clear distribution of roles. Smooth communication, which was identified as a fundamental factor, not only enables efficient collaboration, but also promotes the motivation and active participation of team members. The successful implementation of the project was significantly influenced by the team's ability to share information clearly, approach tasks in a coordinated manner and utilize the different skills of its members.

However, the limitations of our study should also be mentioned. One of them is that the empirical data was only collected by the project coordinator and three student volunteers, and the views of the participating students were not considered. Including the perspectives of the high school students involved would be an essential aspect of not only uncovering potential weaknesses, but also gaining a deeper insight into their positive internal experiences. Looking from their perspective would allow a better understanding of any challenges or ambiguities in communication within the team and the project. This perspective could potentially highlight inconsistencies or misunderstandings that have arisen from their perspective and therefore help to make specific improvements. Another limitation is the time constraint of the study, as we only focused on communication during one edition, and the fact that we were not able to analyze all relevant documents in depth due to privacy restrictions or other issues.

To get a more comprehensive picture and to observe the development of the entire communication process, further research is needed, which should include all 11 editions of the project. These further investigations may provide important information for the continuous improvement of the communication and effectiveness of the 'Student University' project and may stimulate future research.

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Appendix 1: Internal communication documents

Crt. No.	Document name	Document type	Subject of the communication	Departments involved	Communi-cation type
1	Nominal table with the list of student volunteers who receive a participation grant	Financial - Presentation document of the volunteers of the 11th edition of the Student University	First and last name of the volunteer and signature for receipt of the amount	Volunteers participating in the project	Internal
2	Student university bus program	Presentation document for the bus timetable	Place and time of meals for breakfast/lunch/dinner	Pupils participating in the project	Internal
3	Schüleruni – Canteen food program	Presentation document for meals	Place, time and number of people requiring bus transportation	Pupils participating in the project	Internal
4	Schüleruni – Student program	Progression document of the tasks of the volunteers	First and last name of each volunteer, abbreviation and responsibility of each volunteer for different activities	Volunteers and students participating in the project	Internal
5	“Student University”– Program Participating students from Cluj-Napoca	Presentation document of all project activities	Location, date and time of the individual activities as part of the Student University project, participant limit for each faculty	Students from Cluj-Napoca taking part in the project	Internal
6	“Student University”– Program Participating students outside of Cluj-Napoca	Presentation document of all project activities	Place, date and time of the individual activities as part of the Student University project, participant limit for each faculty, including the type of transport and meals	Pupils participating in the project outside Cluj-Napoca	Internal
7	Schüleruni – Meeting	Implementation document of the project and all activities	Organization and communication rules, volunteer responsibilities, signatures, speeches, treasure hunt game	Internal project team	Internal

Appendix 2: External communication documents

Crt. No.	Document name	Document type	Subject of the communication	Departments involved	Communi-cation type
8	Schüleruni 2023 Sponsorship Package	Financial - Presentation document of the sponsors of the 11th edition of the Student University	The main sponsors, their contributions and other information about their involvement in the project	Students and sponsors participating in the project	External
9	Professors FSEGA - Reasons for absences	Request for justification of absence of voluntary students	First and last name of the teachers and subject (course or seminar)	Volunteers and professors participating in the project who should justify the absence	External
10	FSEGA Application for assembly hall Aula – Schüleruni 2023	Application to reserve the “Aula” classroom for the “Student University” 2023	Reservation of the auditorium for the presentation of the German section of FSEGA for approval	Project coordinator and faculty dean’s office	External
11	Video request - from LSLG to the DCRP (Directorate for Communication and Public Relations)	Request for the creation of video material required for the organization and promotion of the event	Live streaming during the opening gala on UBB’s electronic channels without saving or processing the material	Project coordinator, Design and PR	External
12	Order form for printed materials for faculties	Form for the production of print products for the project	Printed materials for the organization and promotion of the Student University, including their number and type of sheets, as well as promotional materials in digital form	Project coordinator, Design and PR	External
13	Schüleruni 2023 – Report	Final report of the “Student University” 2023 project	General information about the project (organizer, faculties involved, aim of the project, target group, funding, participants, partners, sponsors),	All project participants	Internal & External

Crt. No.	Document name	Document type	Subject of the communication	Departments involved	Communi-cation type
			recommendations from students for future editions and acknowledgements		
14	Interview about Schöleruni Policromă	Project funding document	Questions asked during the interview and answers given by the project coordinator	Interviewer and project coordinator	External