**INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATION**

**Communication**

Definition: communication is the giving, receiving, or exchange of information, opinions or ideas by writing, speech or visual means or a combination of the three so that the material communicated is completely understood by everyone concerned.

**Communication Terms and Concepts**

**Communicator (Sender/receiver)** - the participants in communication. Typically the roles reverse regularly. The sender is the person or body responsible for sending the message. The sender can be an individual, or a group such as a company, a department, or even a government ministry or a political party. The receiver is the person or body which receives the message. The receiver can be an individual or an organization-a company or some other large group of people. **Information.** This is the material from which the communication will be constructed. It is the actual content put across to the listener, reader or viewer.

**Message**.Having defined or decided on the information to be conveyed, the sender puts it into the best form in a process called encoding. When information has been encoded, it is known as the message. This simply refers to the form the communication takes i.e. a letter, memo, telephone call or even something as simple as a smile, a shrug of the shoulders or some other gesture.

**Encoding**. Encoding is the process by which the sender converts the idea into a message by using verbal or non-verbal mediums of communication. These can be words, signs, gestures, symbols or body movements. In order to ensure that the message is well understood, the sender uses words and non-verbal signals that the receiver is familiar with.

**Decoding**. This is the process of translating words, signs and symbols into meanings. Successful decoding is the correct understanding of the intent of the message as transmitted by the sender. **Medium.** This is the larger group of ways of communicating within which the particular communication can be classed. There are three main media:

* Written communication- letters, memos, books and articles, notices and posters.  Oral communication- that is, any method of using the spoken word, such as meetings, telephone calls, interviews, lectures and informal discussions.
* Visual communication- a drawing, photograph or other means of putting over a message by pictorial means.

**Channels** – The channel is the method or methods used to convey a message. The type of message will determine the channel to be used. Channels include face to face conversations, telephone calls or videoconferences, and written communication like emails and memos.

* For written communication it might be a notice board, an internal mail service, memo, report, radio or the public postal service.
* For oral communication it might be a personal interview, a committee meeting or a public telephone system.
* For visual communication it might be a computer printer, a printing press or a fax system. **Noise/ barriers** – This is the name given to any factors which prevent the proper exchange of information apart from those caused by the sender or the receiver. Noise can be physical such as the sounds of traffic, typewriters or telephone bells which interrupt a meeting or it can be some other form of interference e.g. a bad telephone connection, poor handwriting in a letter, a computer failure which causes the loss of documents on a fax line, or even a conflicting message or if the speaker‘s facial expression conveys a different message from that being given orally. **Environment (**part of context) - that which surrounds and provides a basis for the meaning/interpretation of a message:
* Physical (surroundings) o Temporal (point in time)
* Relational (the existing relationship between communicators - friends, strangers, etc.) o Cultural (language and behavior community the communicator(s) come from) The context helps determine the tone and style of your communication.

**Feedback** – This is the receiver‘s response to the sender‘s message. The responses can be both verbal and non-verbal. It is an important factor in the communication process because it helps the sender to know whether the message has been understood or not