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## AN AI-POWERED STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING INDUSTRY-ALIGNED ICT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSES

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With fast-evolving and emerging technologies in the ICT industry, skill and competency gaps among ICT graduates from HEIs continue to increase exponentially. This dilemma is made worse by the existing misalignment between ICT skillsets offered within graduate and undergraduate programmes, and those the industry expects. To avert this trajectory, an AI-powered stakeholder engagement framework for developing Industry-aligned ICT Professional Courses has been identified to suitably fill this gap. This framework will allow for agility in course development and review to reflect industry demand. A qualitative research design was preferred comprising interviews, surveys, observation, and desk reviews as data collection methods. Selective sampling was used to qualify research respondents from among industry stakeholders. The collected data was analyzed using data analysis software: Atlas ti, Google Forms, and MS Excel. LucidCharts was used to draw UML diagrams for the Information System designs. Focused group discussions and end-user testing were used to validate the usability of the developed framework. To achieve this objective, processes 1-6 covering phases I and II were used to develop the framework (Refer to fig, 1 below).

### MOTIVATION:

Globally, the accelerating pace of evolving and emerging technologies in the industry is causing demographic and socio-economic disruption, hence changing the required ICT skillsets demanded by the industry while shortening their shelf-life. The demand-supply situation of ICT graduates is also faced with a misalignment between the much-needed competencies demanded by the employing industry and those possessed by ICT graduates. The slow feedback between industry stakeholders and academia has resulted in a gap between the existing curricula and the rapidly changing needs of the labor market. I, therefore, believe this paper needs special consideration for inclusion under the theme “Multidisciplinary Research – Quality and Synergy in Collaborative Research” as it addresses critical needs that plague Africa's Education Systems and the Employability of Uganda's young graduates.

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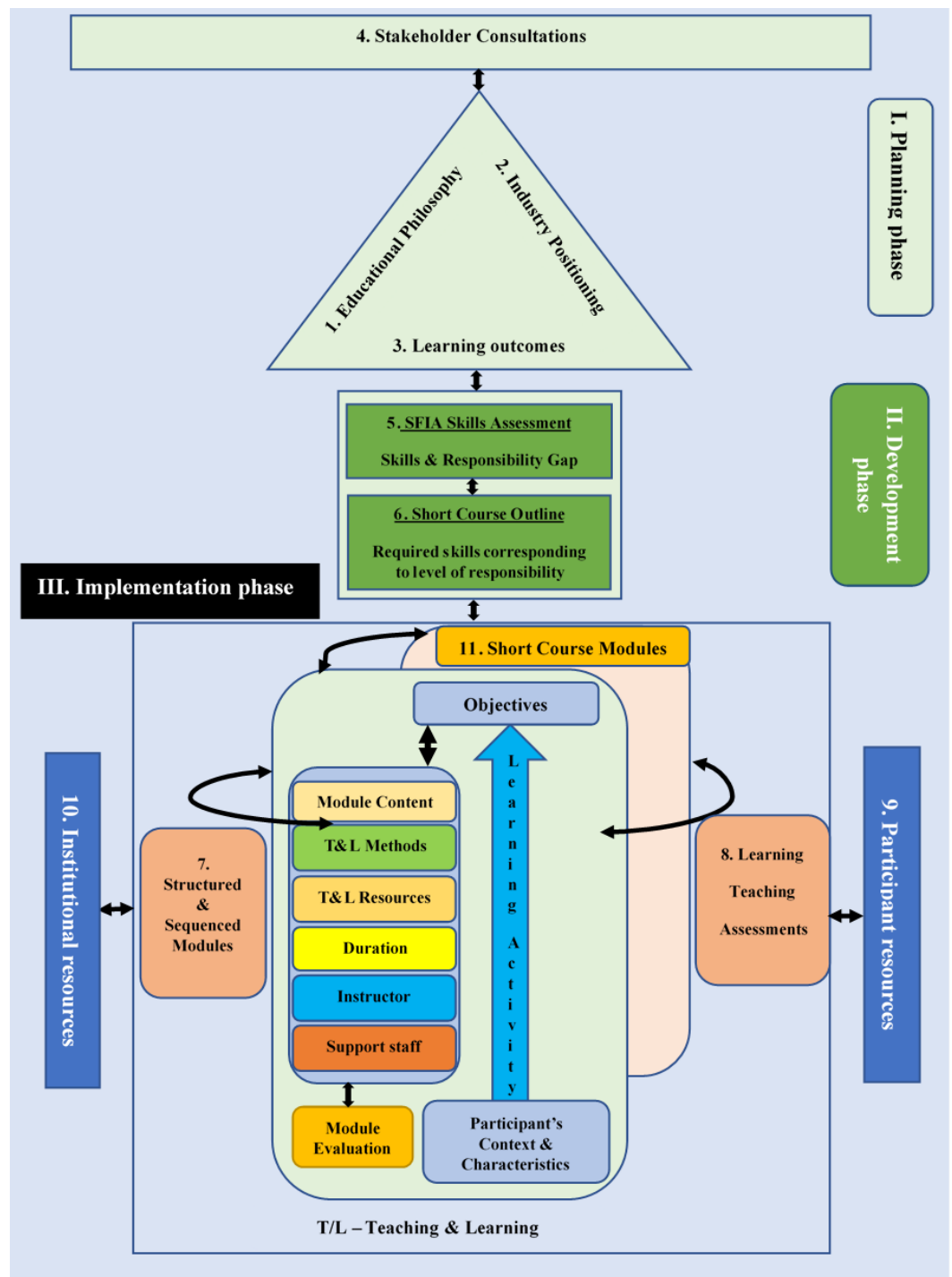


Fig. 1 shows a stakeholder engagement framework for developing Industry-aligned ICT Professional Courses.