



TIME MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECTIVENESS: LESSONS FOR EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS

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Abstract

Time has always been used as an excuse by educational administrators for not meeting their expected targets. This paper has attempted to examine the relative importance of time as a resource available to administrators in the course of carrying out policy formulations and implementation of educational activities to achieve institutional goals. In order to describe the practice of effective time management by administrators, it became necessary for this work to analyse the specific tasks of administration, the knowledge of which will guide the administrator in proper scheduling of tasks, ordering of priorities and allocation of time according to their degree of importance in achieving educationally productive goals. It also emphasised that proper time management is essential to the accomplishment of institutional goals and objectives. Finally, some recommendations on how to improve administration through proper time management were outlined.

Keywords: Time, Time Management, Effective, Administration, Administrators

Introduction

Time is the most crucial resource to be considered in the performance of any activity. Time determines the imperativeness of any other resources in accomplishing organisational set out objectives and goals (Ugwulashi, 2011). It is an essential resource every manager needs to achieve the goals and objectives of an organisation (Adejo, 2012). Time, according to Nwaiwu (2000), is the interval between the beginning and the end of an operation. It is so delicate that it cannot be saved but can only be spent and once misused it can never be regained. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary time is defined as a period either long or short, during which you do something or something happens while management is defined as the act or skill of dealing with people or situations in a successful way. Therefore time management can be defined as a period, either short or long, which involves how people use their time judiciously to produce result. Time management starts with the commitment to change (Adejo, 2012). According to Shirley (2008), better time management can be achieved if goals have been set and then all future work is prioritised based on how it moves the individual or organisation towards meeting the goals. The value of time management lies in the fact that people have too many tasks they need to do but not enough time for the things that they want to do. Time management helps identify needs and wants in terms of their importance and matches them with time and other resources Ezine (2008). It also brings about orderliness and enables one to be more productive and fulfilled (Adejo, 2012). Without time management the efficient and effective use of all resources will be impossible. Therefore time management stands as an effective tool necessary for organisational effectiveness in realisation of set out objectives and goals (Ugwulashi, 2011).

Time and Effective Time Management

Time is an immaterial resource, inelastic, scarce and erodes fast and once spent, cannot be won back, stored or recalled for use (Kalu, 2012). It is an essential resource; it's irrecoverable, limited and dynamic. Irrecoverable because every minute spent is gone forever, limited because only 24hours exist in a day and dynamic because it is never static (Adejo, 2012). Managing time appropriately leads to achieving results easily with limited resources. Consequently, any productive system, whatever its structure, human, technology or financial support requires efficient and effective time management procedure. Time management is probably not as easy as what it is imagined and expected to be. Hence, authors differ in the way in which they define time management. In their study, "time management: effectiveness, logic and challenges", Claessens, Roe & Rutte (2009) have noted that the term time management means different things to different people.

According to North (2004), time management is the organisation of tasks or events by first estimating how much time a task will take to be completed, when it must be completed, and then adjusting events that would interfere with its completion in the appropriate amount of time. Achunine (2004) defines time management as the effective and efficient utilisation of a manager's or an administrator's corporate time to achieve organisational and personal goals. It involves identifying tasks to be performed, planning and scheduling of organisational activities, prioritising such activities, allocating time to the tasks according to their degree of importance in enhancing productivity, minimising interruptions and frivolities and dealing with routine tasks in such a way that the truly important tasks could receive due attention.

According to Lakein (1973), time management refers to the use of particular techniques such as 'to-do' lists or deliberately planning activities, or to participate in training with the purpose of learning how to master and use such a technique. In general sense, Claessens et al (2009) have defined time management as types of behaviour that differentiate

people who do things on time, stick to deadline and spend little time on their activities from those who are often late, pass deadline, spend much time on their activities and waste time on unimportant matters.

Time management consequently involves taking conscious control over the amount of time spent on specific activities. It is also exercised to increase productivity, effectiveness, efficiency as well as effective scheduling of your time, goal setting, prioritising and choosing what to do and what not to do, delegating tasks, analysing and reviewing spent time, organising workspace, keeping concentration and focus at work, motivating one's self to work towards a goal (Fybin, 2012). Time management is not about getting more things done in a day. It is about getting the things that matter most done. Time is that quality of nature which keeps all events from happening at once. Time management refers to the development of processes and tools that increase efficiency and productivity (Adejo, 2012).

According to Claessens, Roe & Rutte (2009), time management is a method for managers to increase work performance effectiveness. Obviously time is very important administrative tool in carrying out daily duties of administrators. Mullins (2005) points out 'that whatever, the attributes or qualities of a successful manager, or the quality of subordinate staff, one essential underlying criterion is the effective use of time'. Accordingly Drucker (1988) refers to time as 'the limiting factor for effective executives'.

As a result, it is imperative for every administrator to seek ways to improve time management. Whether it is the management of an organisation looking for business improvement or an individual looking for ways to better spend their time, time management is important to both.

A time management plan enables an effective administrator to identify if he/she is using his/her time effectively and doing important activities with the highest energy levels in the system.

Importance of Time Management in Educational Administration

Across the globe, current changes within the various levels of education, with increased challenges, expectations and the need to operate and achieve success have made the tasks of the educational administrators more cumbersome and challenging. If administration is to facilitate teaching and learning, how one schedules the various tasks and allocates commensurate amount of time to the various tasks, determines to a large extent the productivity level of the organisation (Kalu, 2012).

In educational administration, these various tasks and functions include:

- Policy implementation and programme planning
- Human Resource Management
- Student Personnel Management
- Facilities Maintenance
- Procurement Management
- School plant management
- Finance Management
- Records Management

These tasks and functions can be productively addressed by the administrator; if he/she acquires the necessary time management skills. Administrators spend a lot of time each day planning, organising, controlling, holding meetings and communicating. These onerous tasks call for systematic approach to the management of time and a clear identification and allocation of duties. For effective administration and control, time management skills must be imbibed (Olawolu & Ahaiwe, 2011).

Ajayi (2007) highlights the following as some of the importance of time management:

- (i) It reduces misunderstanding and confusion out the essential duties
- (ii) It creates time and opportunity for carrying out the essential duties
- (iii) It reduces conflicts in schedules, activities and interpersonal relations
- (iv) It facilitates delegation of duties to staff
- (v) It increases the productivity of staff
- (vi) It makes it easy for staff to meet deadlines

In an educational setting, time is a very important resource; there are scheduled times for every activity, owing to this fact, educational administrators need to recognise it as such. Therefore administrators must budget and legitimate the time to accomplish set out goals as well as compare the total estimated time for expected maturity task (Ugwulashi, 2011).

Maduagwu and Nwogu (2006) notes that, every activity is allocated some frames within which the activities are to be accomplished in educational institutions. Time is utilised to maintain facilities, delegate functions or even spend fiscal cash. Time management is also important for effective inspection and supervision in the academic workplace in bringing the much needed quality. Effective time management ensures unambiguous objectives, proactive planning, well defined priorities and actions; participatory and successful delegation of activities. Nevertheless, time is continuum and all activities or roles performance depend on it whether voluntary or involuntary in avoiding conflicts.

Time management plans appropriately adopted by administrators helps to improve standard, save costs, remedy poor situations, leads to value and above all, harmonises organisation focus. Improving higher education administration requires time to provide all it takes to make a quality institution. It upholds the principle of Just-in-Time approach in managing educational processes for quality assurance at various levels of education. Improper use of time has been attributed to poor administrative styles by most educational administrators in handling organisational task (Ugwulashi, 2011).

Consequently, Mullins (1999) refers time as one of the most valuable, but limited resources and it is important that administrators utilise time to the maximum advantage. For not realising time as a scarce resource most administrators run out of time before expected result is achieved.

Principles for Effective Time Management

According to Mercer (2008), there are some principles which guide effective and efficient time management of administrators. Sound time management is more than what experience can teach hence must be learnt and practiced until one gets involved with the science and art of time management. Its application is not strictly guided by true laws but it can be systematically practiced. Achunine (2004) proposed that time could be managed through the following:

A. *Planning:*

This involves the formulation of goals and definition of practical ways or steps to be taken to achieving same. Planning involves adequate patterning of time according to activities in order to enhance role performance and accomplishing tasks within a set out period. Planning helps to avoid conflict among use of resources based on the fact that resources are limited including time. Time is planned in such a way to enable easy goals achievement with the available limited resources to the administrator. Planned work schedule therefore means a designed way by which all activities are arranged for efficient and effective role performance in realisation of results. Planning can either be short-term covering daily, weekly, monthly tasks or long-term. Assigned job schedules and to-do-lists should serve as a plan of how time can be spent productively at work.

Planning is important to avoid failure, an administrator committed to bridging the gap between potential and performance, should make better time management a lifestyle choice. Richard (2003) states that the time we have depends on the time we use. As a result, in order to manage time successfully, administrators must have self knowledge and set out goals to achieve. Such an awareness of what goals to be achieved helps to prioritise activities. Administrators should plan effective use of their time and should not perform tasks by chance. Smithson (1998) postulates that every administrator must have details of his/her job description embracing all the task areas.

The principle of planning is the 10/90 rule of effective time management (the Rule of Indispensability). It states that 10% of time taken to plan your activities carefully in advance will save 90% of the effort involved in achieving your goals later. The very act of the administrator thinking through and planning his/her work in advance will dramatically reduce the amount of time that will take him/her to do the actual job (Hisrich & Peters, 2002).

B. *Organisation*

Organising is the next stage after successful planning. Organisation means putting all resources into plan to achieve goals. Organising involves ordinary arrangement of all planned activities; this stage of time management has to do with bringing all the required resources together (Ugwulashi, 2011). It deals with assembling of resources for facilitating the easy realisation of set out goals. Organising time in its simplest meaning relates to putting time into jobs according to people, place or needs. In this regard, administrators must in this process assign roles and responsibilities to staff accordingly with targets. There must be timelines for any administrator to have target met.

Time management provides an opportunity to create work schedules for easy goal accomplishment. It involves developing and maintaining a corporate, flexible schedule which leaves room to include the things that are most important to the institution. There are different types of schedules for different activities. The resources available are not only limited but can be efficiently and effectively managed when activities are properly organised, coordinated and controlled by the administrator.

For administrators to be effective organisers, the following principles for organisation of work must be followed.

- Setting priorities.
- Setting time targets for priorities.
- Allowing time space for the unexpected.
- Embarking on one project at a time.
- Allowing time for idle minute between meetings and major jobs.
- Focusing on results not on activity.

When tasks have been scheduled, the next move is to put the specific activities through which the goals are expected to be achieved into hierarchy, according to their degree of importance in enhancing productivity, from the most educationally productive to the least educationally productive functions. Killian, Michael and Sexton (1999), proposed the idea of time scheduling and time allocation to tasks based on how educationally productive they are for ensuring effective teaching and learning. In their time management ladder, they grouped the numerous functions of the educational administrator into three categories; the professional goal functions, the critical/crisis functions and maintenance functions, with the professional goal functions at the apex of the ladder and the maintenance functions at the base of the ladder in order of priority.

- The professional goal functions embrace all efforts by the administrator towards the development and implementation of the curriculum and instructional matters and most functions in staff personnel matters that lead directly to effective teaching and learning.
- Maintenance functions embrace all routine management tasks geared towards maintaining stability and status quo in the institution.
- The middle level critical/crisis functions embrace mostly activities critical to student personnel administration and fiscal management etc.

Killian and Sexton (1999) maintained that it is very important to allocate large quality time at a stretch to programmes of importance instead of allocating bits of time stretched out for a long period to the same function. For instance, allocate some two to three weeks in the year at a stretch for supervision and monitoring. This will give the administrator a clear and comprehensive picture of the direction the programmes of activity are going and what general and specific problems there are in relation to effective implementation of planned activities. Allowances must however

be made for emergencies and unexpected events as they are bound to come up in any human organisation. Over-estimation of time should be preferred to under-estimation to avoid frustration of not meeting deadlines.

C. *Responsibility:*

The essence of modern management borders on responsibility and accountability. The biggest hurdle administrators need to overcome is realising that they are much more on their own in terms of scheduling activities and ensuring that work gets done. It is the responsibility of administrators to see to the adherence of time schedules and conformity of other employees.

The steps towards responsibility are:

- Being responsible for who you are.
- Being responsible for what you can do.
- Being responsible for what you have received.
- Being responsible to those that lead you.

D. *Accountability and Integrity*

It is one thing to have a goal; it is another thing to achieve that same goal. At the end of specific periods, it is important for every responsible administrator to take stock of actual results of his/her actions and compare same with set plans. Time cannot only be planned, organised and implemented but must also be evaluated to show its efficient use in accomplishing set objectives and goals. This helps to find out the workability of planned activities whether they can be accomplished within the time allocated to them. A review of allocated time to activities indicates where deficiency exists. Evaluated time also helps to determine saved periods at the end of each session, the problem encountered as well as the capabilities of staff. Efficient time management is an assurance for accomplishing activities in time.

Time evaluation serves a lot of purpose by seeking answers to the following questions:

- Whether time plan worked for the accomplishment of goals?
- Did it help in accomplishing school result?
- What next needs to be done?
- Are there any changes to be made?
- What will be the future of the system?

E. *Effectiveness*

Time management also depends on the principle of effectiveness. This means focusing on the most important issues/tasks as 'there will never be enough time to do everything you have to do'. The things that matter least must be at the mercy of the things that matter most. This is the real meaning of the Pareto principle which says that 20% of your activities will account for 80% of the value of your activities. This means in essence that if you have a list of ten items to accomplish, two of these items will be worth more than the other eight items altogether. These two activities are thus worth-concentrating on as they contribute the greatest value to your work. The principle is sometime called the principle of forced efficiency which states that "there is never enough time to do everything, but there is always time to do the most important things".

Time Management Behaviours for Administrators

Several authors have described time management behaviours, some studies have focused on three types of behaviours that include: time assessment behaviour, planning behaviour and monitoring behaviour (Claessens et al, 2007). Kaufman et al (1991) states that time assessment behaviours are aimed at awareness of here and now, or past, present and future and self-awareness of one's time use and they cover or help to accept tasks and responsibilities that fit within one's capabilities. In relation to planning behaviours, which include goals, planning tasks, prioritising, making-to-do lists, grouping tasks, aim at effective use of time (Macan, 1996). Monitoring behaviours focus on observing one's use of time while performing activities, generating a feedback loop that allows a limit to the influence of interruptions by others (Fox & Dwyer, 1996; Sijlstra et al., 1999; cited in Claessens et al. 2007).

The Action planning process is a process that helps an organisation to manage its time effectively. The following are steps under the action planning process and they include:

- **Objective:** The action plan begins with recording what it is you wish to achieve.
- **Goal:** The second step in designing the action plan is to record the specific behaviour to addressed along with how it is to be addressed. It is important to be very specific so that there is no confusion about the intention of the action plan. The more specific a goal is, the better performance will be.
- **Action:** The third step in designing the action plan is to record the specific action that will be taken to modify behaviour to achieve the goal. It may be necessary to list numerous actions to achieve a single goal. It is perfectly acceptable to have several actions for a single goal as long as there are measurements (recorded in step five) for each of the actions.
- **Target Date:** The fourth step in designing the action plan is to record the date(s) that performance will be measured. It is crucial to the process that this date be realistic. High achievers are notorious for selecting deadlines that can be overzealous: this is not a good tactic when dealing with self-improvement efforts. Choose deadlines that take into account potential delays and the involvement of others. Try to make deadlines as realistic as possible while still holding yourself accountable for immediate and continual action.
- **Measures:** The fifth step in designing the action plan is to record how performance will be measured. The measurements must be quantitative and objective in order to retain validity throughout the behaviour modification programme. The measurements must also be specific and detailed. Please take the necessary time

to develop a strong measurement system as performance with the behaviour modification programme relies on it.

- **Support:** The sixth step in designing the action plan is to determine who will help in the self-improvement effort. Try to involve people that will hold you accountable for your performance and provide guidance when needed. The people in the support system do not necessarily have to be good time managers themselves; they simply need to be able to observe performance on the goals set forth in the action plan. It is also necessary in this step to determine what resources will be needed in order to achieve the action plan goal. Resources such as finances, equipment, software, cooperation, etc. should be listed in detail.
- **Status:** The last step in designing the action plan is to record performance. Using the measurements listed in the action plan; assess performance on the target dates listed. The results, whether positive or negative, are recorded on the action plan and shared with supporters.

Time management creates self-assured behaviours on what to be done and when it will be done. In an educational environment, the administrator is saddled with a lot of tasks which require proper attention.

Time Management Challenges of Administrators

Despite the fact that what administrators do on a given day may be determined in part by advanced planning, scheduled responsibilities, certain factors play a major role in influencing time management practices of administrators. Some of the factors include;

- **Reactive Mode of Working:** Some administrators are only concerned about what is happening at present in their organization. They do not take time to act to events that come their way rather they react and keep complaining.
- **Failure to think correctly before acting:** Taking action without prior correct thinking is a cause of time management failure. Some administrators seem not to believe in or find it difficult to put into practice, the 10/90 principle of effective time management which states that 10% of time that it takes to plan your activities carefully in advance will save you 90% of the effort involved in achieving your goals later.
- **Failure to acquire new skills, knowledge and abilities:** Some administrators fail to update themselves in terms of attending seminars and lectures that will increase their horizons instead they feel they know all things and do not need to be updated.
- **Procrastination on Hard Challenging Jobs:** Some administrators adopt procrastination on hard challenging jobs. Instead of getting started on them and allocating good time thereto, they adamantly refuse to work on these tasks. The most injurious aspect of this approach is that such hard challenging jobs are not in the bottom 80% but in the top 20% of jobs which add most value to the administrators' work.
- **Others:** Other reasons for time management failure by administrators includes poor team building, refusal to relax, poor creativity, poor self-confidence, inability to set a conducive working environment etc.

In order to ensure effective time management in the academic workplace, it is suggested that;

- Administrators should concentrate on important task to increase their productivity save their time. Concentrating on important task also shapes and molds the administrator's character to a superior, more competent and confident, happier and more productive person.
- Administrators need to make out a list of jobs to be attended to in the following day, a night before it. Making out your list the evening or the night before, makes your subconscious mind to work on the list all night long while you sleep. Again, a master list of tasks containing daily lists, weekly lists and monthly lists may be made.
- While prioritization of your tasks remains supreme, different administrators need to determine what time of the day they are most efficient. They should use such a period of time to work on the hardest and most complex tasks.
- It is also important that before starting the day's work, administrators need to set up the work area to be comfortable, attractive and conducive to working for long periods.
- It is also important for you to develop a sense of urgency as every minute counts, being proactive and dynamic, being committed to team building and effective delegation of duties.
- Avoid Procrastination.
- Avoid management by crisis: Lack of planning and contingency planning allows time for the unexpected. Accept mistakes so you can learn from them and avoid them next time. Do not overreact.
- Assertiveness – learning to say NO: Saying "No" is not so difficult if done tactfully and gives reasons why you cannot or should not do it. Offer alternatives or suggestions.
- Effective delegation: Do not delegate tough tasks beyond your staff's skills. You must organize tasks to the right people and with the right materials.

Conclusion

Effective time management is a universal remedy to administrative effectiveness and not an excuse. Effective time management will improve staff productivity, make scheduling of jobs easier, make staff to perform tasks at their highest skill level, helping staff to prioritize and accomplish important task, recording and guiding the organization towards achieving its set goals. Being well organized in respect of the use of time does not necessarily means a fixed state of quality. It can be acquired through learning and developing through consistent practicing and experience. Time will only work if the person is committed fully to it thereby removing any shred of doubts. In order to create a time-conscious institution that one will have to become more time efficient, the institution must itself streamline its processes. The

benefits an institution will reap in future depend on what it does with its time now. The basic element of time is event, and key to effective time management is event control. This is to say that an institution cannot time, but it can control what it does with time. Although in human circumstances no one can scientifically and completely manage time resource, yet through acquisition of time management skills, through practice and exercise of discipline, administrators can control their time to enhance productivity at work place.

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