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EFFECTIVE TIME MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on access to effective time management in Nigerian schools. The issue of time is one of the challenges facing managers of Nigerian schools. Time is an underlying factor in the management of schools. Whatever resources that are available to schools are managed within a definite time frame. In the words of Obi (2003) "every person in the school is expected to live a timetable life". The issues discussed in this paper include the concept of time, analysis of time management, strategies for effective time management. No meaningful achievement can be recorded in the school system without time consciousness. In Nigerian schools, effective time management is witnessing challenges ranging from poor communication, conflict and lack of co-operation. This paper critically examined effective time management in Nigerian school; challenges and prospects.

Introduction

Managers of Nigerian schools, before now, were not faced with multifarious and multidimensional tasks of time management. These managers had to contend with fewer tasks of managing Nigerian schools. During those days, our school system was not as complex as today. Schools started by the missionaries were simple in structure. The curriculum was narrow and little planning was required. In recent years, the Nigerian school system has become very large and indeed very complex. Managers of Nigerian schools are faced with the problem of allocating time effectively to their numerous tasks in the very large and complex school system.

New social expectations have made the task of managing Nigerian schools more cumbersome, stretching and challenging. In Nigeria, managers of schools are saddled with the responsibility of co-ordinating activities of teaching and learning. Ukeje, Akabogu, Ndu (1992) articulate the various tasks and functions of school manager under four areas:

1. Improving the educational programme: under this role, the school manager should provide:-

a. A climate of efficiency, cooperation, service and stimulation within which the school programme, as it exists, can operate most effectively.

b. Leadership and coordination in periodic and continuing evaluations of the effectiveness of the total school programme in meeting the needs of the learners.

c. Leadership and coordination in continuing revisions of the total school programme to meet the needs of the learners.

2. Selection and developing personnel: To develop high morale among his or her staff, the school manager:

a. Take the initiative in becoming familiar with the needs and interests of individual members of the staff.

b. Recognize achievements of staff members.

c. Provide for staff members the information of the work of others in the school and administrative actions or decisions which affect their work.

d. Encourage teacher - participation in school planning and

e. Encourage all staff members to offer suggestions.

3. Working with the community: The role makes it necessary that the school managers:-

a. Know the community.

b. Take an active part in the growth and improvement of the community and encourage the staff to do likewise.

c. Facilitate community participation in the life of the school.
d. Provide for interpretation of the school to the community.
4. Managing the school: under this area, the school managers should: -
a. Develop a internal staff organization with clear lines of authority and responsibility.
b. Work with the staff to determine which supplies and facilities are needed for the best Job and work with other school administrators and school business administrator to obtain these supplies and facilities.
c. Plan with the staff for the efficient use and maintenance of existing supplies and facilities.
d. Make provision for careful records concerning the staff, the learners, the supplies and facilities.

School managers have the obligation of accomplishing these numerous tasks to facilitate teaching and learning. How they schedule the various tasks and allocate commensurate amount of time to various tasks, determines to a large extent the achievement of educational goals. In order to realize the goals of Nigerian education, there is the need for school managers to manage time effectively.

The Concept of Time

Time, as a concept, is an universal measure. It applies to every aspect of an organization. It is to an organization what blood is to human body. Resources available to an organization are managed within a definite time frame. Time becomes one of the most precious resources to be managed by the organization. Obi (2003) buttresses this fact thus: "Time appears to be more precious than other resources in the sense that once lost, is lost forever". Hence, time is an immaterial resource, inelastic, scare and erodes fast and once spent, cannot be wound back, stored or recalled for use.

In the word of Weber (1999), "Time is a mindset. If we believe we are constantly under pressure and have no time for ourselves, we won't. If we believe we are in control of how we plan our time, have established life priorities and are good time managers, then we are in control of time". We must be aware of a few realities related to planning and controlling time. Most of these realities exist independent of our control.

Each day consists of 1,440 minutes, no more and no less. We cannot create more time. We can rearrange time, set priorities and change our attitude towards time, but we cannot create more minutes in a single day. For Jaron (2005) "Life runs on time. Always do first what needs to be done. No matter how much more fun other things sound". Why? Because one way or another, you are going to finish it and get it over with, so why not get it out of the way? There is only 24hours in a day. Time is therefore limited, its supply is inelastic. All actions and processes take place within a time frame. Careful utilization of this 'scarcest' resource is thus an imperative.

Analysis of Time Management

According to CISE senior project time management and presentation skills (2006) time management is the art and practice of scheduling and using the time available to you for senior project, so that you can;

1. Complete your project on time, to meet specification.
2. Build a working prototype (hardware, software, or both);
3. Complete and submit your final report to your advisor, at least a week before your final presentation and
4. Plan and deliver all your presentations successfully.

Achunine (1998) contends that "time management is the effective and efficient utilization of a manger's or an administrator's corporate time to achieve organizational and personal goals". She further holds that it involves identifying tasks to be performed, planning and scheduling of organizational activities, prioritizing such activities, allocating time to the tasks according to their degree of importance in enhancing productivity. It also involves minimizing interruption, frivolities and dealing with

routine tasks in such a way that the truly important tasks could receive due attention. How a school manager manages his or her time will determine largely the coverage of the school's curricular prescriptions for a given period of time. It will also determine the school's performance in the internally and externally set examinations, the discipline tone and general performance in other areas of school administration. If tasks are scheduled and appropriate amount of time allocated, one can be said to exercise control of one's corporate time. (Achnuine, 1998)

In the words of Wright (2002) "you make time for everything and everything simply fits well where it is supposed to fit". Time management therefore becomes a very critical issue. School managers ought to handle their time religiously. They should allocate their time according to priorities, do away with time robbers, use official time for official purpose and delegate as much as possible. The important thing is that every minute should be well spent. Achunine (1998) affirms this position thus; how manager of organization spend his or her time on the job determine to a large extent organizational performance, profits and survival of the individuals and the organization as a whole. All school managers have the same amount of time in each day but how they use this time makes the difference between them. They ought to reflect on how they can make the best use of their time for an increased accomplishment of their tasks.
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A major aspect of organizational efficiency and effectiveness is time management. Appleby (1994) holds that "A well organized manager who makes good use of the time available can ensure objectives are successfully achieved". Managerial time is so expensive that every organization must benefit from it by examining issues of time management. Failure to manage one's time can lead to negative results. Tiffany (2005) recounts thus "when I don't study for a test like I should, there's a chance I'll do poorly on my test and receive a low grade. It's nobody else's fault but my own because had I planned my time better, I could have accomplished more". By implication, he ought to take his defeat in good faith, also take it as a lesson to learn from. He ought to learn how to manage his time.

By assigning time to tasks, school managers will use time well by ensuring the completion of work on schedule, so that other tasks could be undertaken. Time is then an important factor for organizational effectiveness. Hence, the rationale for effective time management by Nigerian school managers.

Strategies for Effective Time Management

The strategies for effective time management are usually learnt and practised. Its application is not strictly guided by true laws, but it can be systematically practised to great advantage. It is more than what common sense or experience can teach one. Time management improves with practice. Some of the strategies are discussed below:

Planning

Hopkins (2006) reports that Time Management Consultants agree that to effectively manage time, people must plan, delegate, organize, direct and control. He further reports that Dr. Ivan Fitzwater, author of Time Management for School managers is often asked if there is one most important idea in managing time. "I always reply planning" Fitzwater told Education world. One minute in planning can save twenty of doing, he continued. Start every day by making a list of the most important things that must be done. Put a check beside the one that's most important and start on that item. Then do one thing at a time and never work on several at once. That will help block interruptions and it will help you stick to your priorities.

Planning is then the first thing one does before embarking on any project. One must consider the necessary options open to him, the means required and possible consequences. It is often said that failing to plan is planning to fail. Obi (2003) buttresses this idea thus "To plan is the basic thing in a project of which any neglect can be horrible and leads to unpleasant results" One interesting thing about planning is that it is

future-oriented. It is an insight into the future and its prospects. Planning involves a process or method which deals with pre-determined objectives and goals of an organization. Igboeli (1990) confirms "planning means setting goals and objectives, and the means, for achieving them". Every activity that is important enough must have explicitly specified objectives. When we are talking about an organization, effectiveness is a very important concept and planning provides the yardstick for its measurement. Organization must, of course, be effective in time management or it will not continue to exist in its present form.

Emetarom (1997) proposes that "in planning, one ought to concentrate on specific problems which should be prioritized for each day. For each item on your list, jot down a list of things that you will need to do, highlighting action areas". By planning which entails estimating the time needed for a task and evaluating the time estimates, school managers will improve on their ability to use time effectively. The success and survival of any school system would depend considerably on the amount and quality of planning that is undertaken by the school managers. According to Ukeje, Akabogu and Ndu (1992) steps in planning involve the three elements:

i. Where we are;
ii. Where we want to be and
iii. How we get there

These steps in planning vary but they have become popular: decision stage, implementation stage and evaluation stage. We must determine our objectives and goals in planning. A preparation of alternative decisions is very necessary in planning. A plan will be useless if there is no stringent effort to implement that which is planned. We need constant evaluation of our efforts so far and prepare to make amendments where need be. In the words of Achunine (1998) "planning can either be short-range covering daily, weekly or monthly tasks or long-range covering yearly or full six year term". It must be emphasized however, that the shorter the range, the more definite the plans can be achieved and the less the risk of non-achievement. The daily timetable is an example of a clear, rather rigid plan of how the days in each week can be spent productively in the school. For a school manager to plan effective and productive use of time, he must be very familiar with the specifics of his or her job, the goals the school and school system are striving to achieve during a definite time period.

Delegation

According to Appleby (1994) "Delegation is a process whereby an individual or group transfers to some other individual or group the duty of carrying out some particular action and taking some particular decisions". In school system, delegation enables the decentralization of authority or office functions. Delegation can take place at all levels of management. A key tool in time management is the art of delegation. In analyzing the place of delegation in time management, Hopkins (2006) reports the experience of a new school manager thus: Tracey Thomas has been involved in many training sessions and discussions about time management. "The recurring solution is delegation', she said. As busy school managers, we must find responsible, trustworthy people on our staff who are leaders or aspiring leaders to handle tasks that we cannot tackle due to time limitations".

Hopkin (2006) further reports the advice of an experienced school manager les potter who holds that "delegation is very important. Trust your administrators, counselors, secretaries and teachers to do jobs. Let them grow in their job responsibilities". School manager Teri Stokes has learned the same lesson. Hence, she declares: "It took several years as a school manager for me to realize it, but the one major epiphany I have had is that I just can't do it all. I have learned that I don't have to be in charge of everything, and that I can allow others to be in charge of some things especially things they are good at and enjoy". Hopkins (2006) also reports assistant school manager Bonita Henderson's testimony who says "she tries to delegate as much as possible; there is no way managers can do by themselves all that is required of

them. We sometimes don't possess all the skills or time to get every job done, but other people are good, even exceptional, at some of those things. So I try to find those people and let them shine". Carefulness is needed in the assigning of duties. The recipients of delegated authority must be given all necessary resources, information and executive authority. Delegation of duties is indispensable in any organization. For Obi (2003) "Some of the vital issues which the manager must consider before delegating any duty are:

i. Can the task be delegated?
ii. Should it be delegated?
iii. Is there a person in the department capable of seeing to it?
iv. If not, should a person be trained?
v. Will a particular subordinate benefit from doing this work?
vi. How will the experience fit in with his or her career development?

To delegate, you must decide when to delegate and in what circumstances. Such circumstances are when your work load becomes excessive, when met by technical problems of a highly specialized nature or whenever you believe your subordinate will be motivated, feel a greater sense of participation or will learn something useful from performing the tasks delegated. However, Weber (1999) reminds us that "there are limits to how much we can delegate to others in order to be more efficient without time. He further reminds us that the individuals to whom we delegate some of our work have the same 1,440 minutes in one day". Therefore, organized delegation is recommended. Work that is particularly suitable for delegation includes fact-finding assignments, preparation of rough draft for reports, investigation of feasibilities of possible solution to problems or straight forward analysis of routine information or practicum in various areas of school administration.

Organizing

According to Okigbo and Nsiegbunam (2000) "This is setting out of the formal structure of authority and flow of work in such a way that the work in the various sub-divisions, sections and branches is carefully arranged, defined and effectively coordinated with a view to accomplishing the objective of the organization". This is grouping of activities necessary to attain objectives, the assignment of each grouping to a manager with authority necessary to supervise it, and the provision for coordination horizontally and vertically in the organization.

Igboeli (1990) contends that "The function of organizing is based on the objectives that were set in the planning process". It involves the creation of functions and the relationships among these functions are well defined. Work activities are grouped in their natural units. The organizing function is built around four fundamental concepts – division of work, the scalar process, span of management, and the formal structure or line and staff.

In the words of Obi (2003) "The final product of planning is a plan. In order to execute or translate this plan into action, it requires a further sub – planning in the form of organizing". Organizing is the element of administration that is concerned with relating all the components of an organization into a coordinated whole so as to achieve set goals. The components are:

i. The job to be done
ii. The people to perform the job
iii. The tools to be used in doing the job (Obi, 2003)

At the organizing, school manager determines what actions are needed to achieve the objectives. He or she then classifies the work. Each work is assigned to a group or an individual according to his or her qualification or position. It has in mind the correlation of the human and material resources and the task. It is the method of determining the activities required to achieve the objective of the institution. School manager needs to adopt the time management strategy like organizing to enable him or her achieve the goals and objectives of school education.

Directing

Fayol referred to directing as "command", others have called it stimulating or influencing while others call it leadership. All these words connote the present day

concept of making things happen through other people. The concept is trying to explain the step that follows after planning, organizing and assembling resources have set the stage. This next step starts action and keeps the system moving towards its goals. This step is concerned with the authority that issues directives, consults and decides. According to Ukeje, Akabogu and Ndu, (1992) "directing is the interpersonal aspect of management by which subordinates are led to understand and contribute effectively and efficiency to the attainment of organizational goals and objectives". This function is difficult because it entails dealing with a complex of forces about which not enough is known and over many of which we have no control. The most important of these forces is the human factor which must be managed in such a way as to promote its full contribution. Okigbo and Nsiegbunam (2000) contributing on this function hold that "The function of directing is the continuous task of making decisions, embodying them in specific and general instructions and setting the pace as the leader of the organization". In some works of administrative scholars, this function is treated and regarded as leading function.

Management and directing or leadership are therefore one and the same thing. As it is true that the most effective school manager will most certainly be an effective director or leader, there is however more to managing than just directing. The task of the director as a manager is to encourage subordinates to strive willingly and enthusiastically towards the achievement of organizational objectives and goals. School manager plan the time of their subordinates through assigning work to them and generally, ensuring that they are kept busy. Such ways include:

- Scheduling tasks or activities for the subordinates.
- Eliminating frivolities for the subordinates and
- Setting up priorities and allocating time for its accomplishment. (Obi, 2003)

For school managers to effectively manage time, they ought to plan the time of their subordinates and manage their time.

Controlling

Planning and controlling are inseparable. Unplanned action cannot be controlled, for control involves keeping activities course by correcting deviation from plans. In this light, Igboeli (1990) put it thus, "controlling actually takes place after planning has been. completed and after the organization's activities have begun.
Controlling occurs after the fact while planning takes place before
the fact".

It is then fashionable in management to talk about planning and controlling. According to Obi (2003) on controlling "this is a managerial function of making sure that plans succeed. In other words, it is the measuring and collating of activities of subordinates to ensure that these activities are contributing to the achievement of planned goals". It is then a process that measures performance against standards and ensure that organizational objectives and goals are accomplished. If a comparison is made between accomplishments and plans, the organizational effectiveness can be determined. For school managers to effectively manage time, they ought to control all the activities in the school system. It is only with this control that they would achieve the school objectives and goals.

Conclusion

Time management was discussed as challenging to managers of Nigerian schools. This is because in recent years, the Nigerian school system has become very large and indeed very complex. New social expectations have made the task of managing Nigerian schools more challenging. Strategies for effective time management were discussed in the areas of planning, delegation, organizing, directing and controlling. These are special skills which Nigerian school managers require to manage time effectively.

School managers are advised to make use of these time management strategies through time monitoring guide. School managers should set deadlines for work, work

started should be finished. They should also write down ideas, accomplish task for each day and prioritize tasks. If Nigerian school mangers should constantly practice these effective time management strategies, challenging of poor communication, conflict and lack of cooperation would be a thing of the past.

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