

HEAD TEACHERS' USE OF PLANNED TIME MANAGEMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

This study was aimed at determining the time management practices of head teachers in public primary schools in Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study. The study was a descriptive survey involving a sample of four hundred and eighty-nine (489) head teachers. Data were collected through a 12-item researcher-developed questionnaire, structured on a four-point scale that ranged from very great extent to very low extent. Means scores were used in answering the research questions. The findings indicated that head teachers practiced block scheduling and prioritized management practices of planned time management to a low extent. This has the implication of organisational wastages, and duplication of tasks among the head teachers, it was thus recommended among other things that head teachers should make use of time to engage in planned time management practices, and they should be provided with relevant in-service training which would help them acquire a range of time management competencies.

Introduction

Time, defined by Oiof (2004), as the period available for doing something, is a very important concept, which must be ignored by anybody, most especially the head teachers that manage the human and material resources of school. Head teachers, as chief executives of primary school, make use of time in their administrative roles. For instance, in the school system, the administrative roles of head teachers are not only spelt out in professional literature, but are also prescribed by the education laws, edicts. In the words of Aghadiuno (2007), administrative roles are those functions which head teachers are statutorily expected to perform. Administrative roles are the designated functions that a head teacher must perform for the realization of primary education goals. Walesy (2002:17), taxonomised the administrative roles of the head teachers as follows:

1. Development and implementation of education programmes.
2. Development of staff and consideration of staff and pupil welfare.
3. School community relations.
4. Supportive services and programmes.
5. Relation of (he school to the school system, and
6. Evaluation of school programmes.

To effectively perform these roles, head teachers are expected to bring about discipline work performance (Ladipo and Ogunsanya, 2000). They are also expected to take timely actions as leaders to encourage and co-ordinate members of their staff to accomplish tasks or achieve high productivity. The ability of a head teacher to satisfactorily perform these roles depends on, among other things, how he/she manages his/her time (Tirozzi, 2004). There is therefore, a need for head teachers to engage in planned time management practices.

The central focus of planned time management is on scheduling the time available for schools administration so that objectives would be meaningful achieved within stipulated time. Furness (2006), defined planned time management as the planning and programming of activities and functions within an approved or pre-determined time frame. In planning to manage their time, administrators are required to set aside blocks of time for school activities and adhering to it. Time should be set-aside for receiving visitors, handling pupils affairs, attending to staff, attending to visitors, and supervising schools activities.

Planned time management presupposes that an activity, function or duty should be ordered, organized and programmed to a time schedule. This, according to Olof (2004), would be based on prioritized management and block scheduling of activities into time periods. Prioritized management is an element of planned time management aimed at ensuring that tasks are performed in their order of importance. At the same time, the administrator will set-aside which tasks to perform at a particular block of time. Planned time management

should be a major preoccupation of educational administration because it is necessary for the effective implementation of schools programmes and objectives. In schools, head teachers make decisions on all matters necessary for the smooth running of the school affairs, but as Obasi (1998), noted, if the time available for the implementation of the decisions is not properly planned and maximized, such decisions cannot be effectively implemented.

Statement of the Problem

The researcher is worried that many head teachers in Anambra State appear not to engage in planned time management because the extent to which these head teachers have been able to effectively perform these administrative roles is still in question. Consequently, the administration of primary education in Anambra State is currently faced with a number of complexities. Some of these bother largely on instances of inefficiencies in the performance of administrative tasks, rushing of lessons to beat examination deadlines, poor personnel administration, absence from crucial meetings, hasty internal supervision and gross inadequacies in policy implementations by head teachers (Aghadinuo, 2004; Nworah, 2005; Onuorah, 2005). The foregoing explains why several head teachers fail in fulfilling their administrative roles, as effectively desired. Adeola (2004), reported that most stressors being experienced within the primary schools circle is as a result of poor time management techniques. The results of these problems are (hat they experiences stress and dissatisfaction at the end of the day. Therefore, the extent of the use of planned time management practices by head teacher's needs to be empirically investigated, hence, this study.

Research Questions

Two research questions guided the study. They are:

1. What is the extent of the head teacher's practice of prioritized time management?
2. What is extent of head teachers' use of block scheduling practices in managing time?

Methods and Materials

The research design adopted in this study was a descriptive survey. The study was conducted in Anambra State which is one of the States in Nigeria. It covered all the government-owned primary schools in the twenty-one local government education authorities (LGEAs) in the State. There were a total of nine hundred and seventy-nine (979) primary schools in the State as. at October 2006.

The population for this study was made up of 979 head teachers of primary schools in the twenty-one Local Government Areas of Anambra State. Four hundred and eighty-nine (489) head teachers were sampled for this study. The researcher used simple random sampling technique to select this sample. The list of names of schools were collected from the ASUBEB. From the list, 50% of the schools were randomly selected. This percentage is considered representative of the entire population. On the whole 489 primary school head teachers were selected for the study.

A researcher developed questionnaire titled "Head Teachers Planned Time Management Practices Questionnaire (HTPMPQ)" was used to collect data. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. Part 1 was the introductory part, which contained three open-ended statements that sought information on the respondents' gender and school location.

Part 2 comprised of 12 items that were separated into two clustered of six items each. Each of the cluster consists of items on the elements of time management namely prioritized management and block scheduling. Respondents were required to rate their time management practices on a 4-point scale that ranged from: very great extent {4 points) great extent {3 points), low extent (2 points) and very low extent (1 point).

To ascertain the validity of the questionnaire, the draft of the instrument was submitted to two experts who were lecturers in educational management and policy and an expert in measurement and evaluation from Nnamdi Azikiwe Awka for scrutiny. The experts made several corrections that included modifications of some of items, the research questions and the rating scale.

The instrument was pilot-tested using 10 head-teachers from primary schools outside the sample for the study. The scores obtained from the respondents were analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha method. The coefficient value for items in cluster A was 0.81 and cluster B was 0.88. The standardized alpha value for the entire items was 0.85, which was considered satisfactorily for the study.

The researcher and five research assistances visited the head teachers in their offices and disturbed 489 copies of the questionnaire as appropriate. Three copies were lost and only 486 copies representing 99.38 percent were retrieved and used for data analyses. Mean ratings were used in analyzing the questionnaire items for answering the research questions. The decision rule for interpreting the mean scores of the data was 2.5 as the cut-off point for accepting an item as a great extent of the use of planned time management practice of the head teachers. A mean score below 2.50 was taken as an indication of a low extent of use of the planned time management practice.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Research Question One: What is the extent of the head teachers' practice of prioritized time management?

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Head Teachers' Use of Prioritized Time Management Practices

S/No	Items	X	Decision
1	Make a 'to-do' list each day	2.15	Low extent
2	Write down tasks to be performed in their order of importance	2.19	Low extent
3.	List tasks by priorities and specify time for performing each task.	2.14	Low extent
4	Performs only those tasks in the "to do list" in their order of priority	2.20	Low extent
5.	Disseminate important information immediately to avoid time-lags	2.13	Low extent
6.	Keep a list handy of short tasks, which can be done in between others	2.21	Low extent
	Grand Mean	2.17	Low extent

Analysis in Table 1, reveals that the mean ratings for the entire six items are below 2.50, which suggest that the head teachers engage in prioritized management a low extent. The grand mean rating was also below 2.50 confirming that there is generally a low extent of prioritized time management practices by the head teachers.

Research Question Two: What is extent of head teachers' use of block scheduling practices?

Table 2: Head Teachers' Mean Ratings of their Use of Block Scheduling Practices

S/No	Items	X	Decision
7.	Regularly set aside blocks of time for major administrative roles such as supervision and staff meeting	2.59	Great extent
8	Set aside a specific period for receiving visitors	3.82	Great extent
9.	Leave at least thirty minutes of unscheduled time for the unexpected	2.18	Low extent
10.	Break large projects of assignments into intermediate objectives and action steps, and allocate time for each step	2.52	Great extent
11.	Set aside time for relaxation in the daily schedule	1.02	Low extent
(2.	Design work schedules to permit delegation of tasks to other staff	2.51	Great extent
	Great Mean	2.09	Great extent

In table 2, the mean response; for items 7, 8 and 12 were above 2.50 suggesting the head teachers engaged in the listed practices. Items 9, 10 and 11 scored below 2.50 indicating that the head teachers do not manage well in the listed block scheduling practices. Generally, the grand mean score for head teachers is less than the cut-off point of 2.50. One can thus, say that there is a low extent of head teachers' engagement in block scheduling practices generally.

Discussion of Findings

Findings revealed that primary school head teachers in Anambra State indicated that they engaged in prioritized management and block scheduling to a low extent. This finding disagrees with that of Robertson (1999), who found that elementary school principals in the United States used basic time-management practices for managing meetings, establishing priorities and delegating, but lacked competencies in aspects of handling interruptions, scheduling contacts, and managing paperwork; This might be as a result of head teachers' heavy workloads or incompetence in using planned time management techniques.

The low extent of head teachers' use of block scheduling is unfortunate because allocating blocks of time performing activities helps in maintaining some degree of self-control and restraint in

handling work situations or sensitive matters that could otherwise put someone under time pressures (Olof, 2004). One had expected head teachers to indicate a great extent of block scheduling because block is similar to time tabling. Since head teachers are used to allocating time for various subjects in the curriculum, they ought to have followed the same steps to allocate time for their various activities. A visit to any primary school in Anambra State would reveal that head teachers actually scheduled their time, especially time for receiving visitors. But whether they keep to such time schedules is in doubt because some of them receive visitors all the time. Aghadinuo (2007), also observed that many school heads in Anambra State receive visitors all the time, thus, disrupting other activities.

This study also revealed a low extent of prioritized management among the head teachers. This finding deserves serious attention if quality is to be assured in head teacher's performance of their administrative roles. Bredeson (2004), pointed out that prioritized management is necessary in schools administrative routines in such a way that the head teacher and the staff knows what are expected of them at any given time and keep to them. When effectively used, they help to ensure that the head teachers perform their roles in well-synchronized manner. The administrative roles have to be prioritized. The researcher believes that where there is a low extent of prioritized management roles, are bound to be duplicated and scarce resources wasted. This might explain why several deficiencies have been reported among head teachers in Anambra State.

Recommendations

In view of these findings, it is recommended that:

1. Head teachers should make efforts to engage in planned time management practices.
2. Head teachers should be provided with relevant in-service training which would help them acquire a range of time management competencies.
3. There should be periodic evaluation of head teacher's engagement in planned time management practices and an introduction of reward system for excellence and commitment to planned time management by the head teachers.

Conclusion

The results obtained from the data analysed made the researcher to conclude that primary school head teachers in Anambra State did not engage in planned time management practices to a great extent. If head teachers do not engage in planned time management, the extent to which they would timely and effectively perform their administrative roles could be limited. There is also the possibility of organizational wastages and duplication of tasks among the head teachers. There is need for head teachers to maximize time by using prioritized management techniques.

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