

# Time Management Skills and Administrative Effectiveness of Principals in Nigerian Secondary Schools

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## Abstract

The study examined time management skills and administrative effectiveness of principals in Nigerian secondary schools. The descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population consisted of all the principals and teachers of secondary schools in Ondo, Ekiti and Osun states. The sample comprised of 200 principals and 600 teachers randomly selected from the three states. The data collected were analysed using frequency counts, simple percentage, mean and standard deviations. The study revealed that the time management skills as well as the level of administrative effectiveness of the principals were encouraging. However, the study revealed the factors that constitute impediments to the time management skills of the principals. These include the need to respond to emergency cases in the school, the need to respond to urgent calls from the ministry of education among others. The study further revealed the strategies that can be put in place for better time management among the principals. These include the need for the principals to identify their most consuming tasks and determine whether or not they have investing their time in the most important activities, and keeping a readily accessible record of their appointment and tasks among others. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the tempo of time management skills of the principals as well as their administrative effectiveness should be sustained while efforts should be directed towards avoiding those factors that constitute impediments to their time management skills.

**Keywords:** time management, administrative effectiveness, principals, secondary schools, time wasters

## 1. Introduction

Time is one of the resources that an administrator needs to manage efficiently in order to achieve organizational goals. The school administrator who coordinates the activities of staff and students must be able to manage his time very well in order to accomplish the aims and objectives of the school. However, what makes time different from other resources used in an organization is that it cannot be accumulated or stockpiled like machines and raw materials replaced like a man. Time is irretrievable. All it entails is its effective management for organizational success.

Time management is very important for everyone. It is the ability to produce and follow a schedule, meet deadlines, prioritize and minimize distractions and unimportant tasks. It includes managing time wisely so that tasks and projects can be done effectively and efficiently. Akomolafe (2005) posited that time management skills are essentially for effective people. Prochaska-Cue, Preston & Mahar (2007) also opined that time management skills require four basic steps: decide what you want to accomplish; determine activities to reach each goal; make a daily 'to do' list; and set one's priorities everyday.

According to Olaniyi (1998), a good time manager is a person who can efficiently manage himself and all his activities within a time range. Manktelow in Akomolafe (2005) submitted that school administrator's managerial abilities should reflect on their time management skills. They should devote available administrative time to immediate administrative tasks and ability occurrences. The heart of time management is concentration on results and not on being busy.

It has been observed that the most common difficulties encountered by some principals of secondary schools in Nigeria are their inability to organize and plan their work properly. That is using time effectively. It is not

uncommon to see principals having standing meetings with members of staff everyday after morning devotions. This tends to waste the teachers' time in attending to the first periods. These principals also waste their own precious time as there are some other pressing issues waiting for them in their offices.

It has also been observed that some principals attend to issues that should have been handled after their corporate hours. Such issues include unnecessary personal phone calls, wasting much time with drop-in visitors, involving in routines and details that should have been delegated.

Experience has also shown that some principals of secondary schools delight pleasure in visiting members of the Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) executive when they suppose to be in the school attending to issues that bother on the school's success. The situations explained above seem to make principals of schools ineffective in their usage of time to achieve the goals of the schools.

Various researches have explained how administrators can make good use of their corporate time to achieve the goals of the organization. Setting priorities seems to be foremost in time management strategies. According to Lakein (1973), Olaniyi (1998), Morgenstern (2004) and Ajayi (2007) setting priorities involves a clear understanding of one's job and one's life. One of the easiest ways to prioritize is to make a "to do" list daily, weekly, monthly or termly. It is essential to set priorities and estimate the time required for all identified tasks, so that you are aware of what is important (Akomolafe, 2005).

Following priorities setting is time scheduling, activities take different forms and different amounts of time. So to effectively use one's time, it is important to estimate how long a task will take and allow that amount of time for the task. To get a more accurate estimate, an administrator needs to keep track of how he spends his time for a week. This will help him on how to get a better idea of how much he needs to spend on each activity, assignment and programme. Ajayi (2007) recommended Personal Time Analysis Charts for effective time scheduling. According to him, this will show the times in the day and the days in the week in which specific activities come up.

Besides, MacKenzie (1972), Akomolafe (2005), Ajayi (2007) and Hassanzabeh & Ebadi (2007) posited that administrators can make good use of their time by reducing their time wasters. Ajayi (2007) defined a time waster as something that occurs in the day that is not necessary to the day or an activity that consumes more than necessary time. MacKenzie (1972) and Akomolafe (2005) listed the following as time wasters: telephone interruptions, drop-in visitors, conversation with colleagues, unscheduled meetings among others.

Other time management strategies as pointed by researchers include: delegation of duties to competent subordinates; avoidance of procrastination; avoidance of multi-tasking; minimize clutter and paper on one's desk. These are some of the basics of effective time management.

However, in the secondary school system, it appears that some principals do not realize the need to manage their time for the school success. It is against this backdrop that this paper assesses the time management skills of secondary school principals and their level of administrative effectiveness.

## **2. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to find the level of principals' time management skills. The study also examined the level of administrative effectiveness of the principals. Besides, the study examined the problems facing time management skills of the principals as well as the strategies that can be put in place to ensure better time management skills of the principals.

## **3. Research Questions**

Four research questions were raised to pilot the study:

- 1) How do the principals assess their time management skills?
- 2) To what extent are principals of secondary schools administratively effective?
- 3) What are the problems facing the time management skills of principals in secondary schools?
- 4) What are the strategies that can be put in place to ensure better time management among principals in secondary schools?

## **4. Methodology**

A descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted for this study. The population consisted of all the principals and teachers of secondary schools in three states in the south-west Nigeria. The states are Ondo, Ekiti and Osun. The sample was made up of 200 principals and 600 teachers selected from the three states using simple random sampling technique. Two instruments were used for the study. The first was tagged "Assess Your

Time Management Skills Questionnaire (AYTMSQ)” adapted from Hindle (1998). The second instrument was a self-designed instrument tagged “Administrative Effectiveness of Secondary School Principals Questionnaire (AESSPQ)”. AYTMSQ contained four sections with *Section A* of the instrument seeking bio-data information of the respondents. *Section B* sought information on the level of principals’ time management skills. While *Section C* sought information on the various problems facing time management skills of the principal and *Section D* sought information on the strategies that can be put in place to ensure better time management among principals of secondary schools.

The second instrument (AESSPQ) also had three sections with *Section A* seeking bio-data information of the respondents. *Section B* sought information on the administrative effectiveness of the principals and *Section C* sought information on the strategies of ensuring better time management among principals of secondary schools. AYTMSQ and AESSPQ were administered on the principals and teachers respectively.

The instruments were validated by research experts in the areas of educational management and tests and measurement at the University of Ado-Ekiti. Test-re-test method of reliability was used for the instruments and Pearson product moment correlation was used to determine their reliability co-efficient which stood at 0.85 and 0.76 for AYTMSQ and AESSPQ respectively. The data collected for the study were analysed using frequency counts, simple percentage, mean and standard deviations.

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Research Question 1

How do the principal assess their time management skills?

In analyzing how principals assess their time management skills, *Section B* of AYTMSQ was used. Frequency counts and simple percentage were used to analyze the responses on items 1—12 of *section B* of AYTMSQ. The result was presented in table 1.

Table 1. Assess your time management skills

S/N	Statement	Always	%	Frequently	%	Occasionally	%	Never	%
1.	I arrive on time in school and prepare for daily work	38	19.0	158	79.0	4	2.0	—	—
2.	I complete daily task without interruptions from my teachers	15	7.5	40	20.0	145	72.5	—	—
3.	I close my office door when I want to think strategically	25	12.5	137	68.5	32	16.0	6	3.0
4.	I limit the time spent on phone calls	5	2.5	136	68.0	35	17.5	24	12.0
5.	I ‘skim-read’ internal memos as soon as I receive them	54	27.0	117	58.5	29	14.5	—	—
6.	I clear my desk of all paperwork	23	11.5	135	67.5	29	14.5	13	6.5
7.	I delegate duties to teachers that I could... myself	22	11.0	76	38.0	102	51.0	—	—
8.	I follow up on the work I have delegated	6	3.0	136	68.0	58	29.0	—	—
9.	I make a list of things to do each day	3	1.5	102	51.0	87	43.5	8	4.0
10.	I make effort to keep in touch personally with my staff	8	4.0	39	19.5	153	76.5	—	—
11.	I do visit some members of the PTA executives during the normal office hours	2	1.0	2.6	13.0	52	26.0	120	60.0
12.	I meet with staff everyday before starting the day’s work	13	6.5	24	12.0	141	70.5	22	11.0

Results in table 1 revealed the time management skills of principals of secondary schools. While 38 respondents representing 19.0% agreed that they arrive on time in school and prepare for the day's work, 158 respondents (79.0%) indicated that they were punctual in their duty post frequently. 72.5% of the respondents agreed that it was only occasionally that they were able to complete their task without interruptions from their teachers. While 68.5% agreed that they occasionally close their office doors when they want to think strategically, 68.0% agreed that they frequently limit the time spent on phone calls.

Besides, 117 respondents (58.5%) indicated that they frequently 'skim-read' memos as soon as they receive them. Also, 67.5% agreed that they frequently clear their desk of all paper work. While 51.0% agreed that they occasionally delegate duties to members of staff, 68.0% agreed that frequently follow-up the work they have delegated. 51.0% of the respondents indicated that they make a list of things to do each day, 76.5% agreed that they occasionally make effort to keep in touch with staff personally. 60.0% agreed that they never visited member of the PTA executives during the normal office hours, 70.5% agreed that they occasionally hold meeting with staff before the day's work.

From the analysis so far, it could be deduced that principals of secondary schools are able to manage their time judiciously towards accomplishing the goals of the school.

### 5.2 Research Question 2

To what extent are principals of secondary schools administratively effective?

In analyzing the extent of administrative effectiveness of secondary school principals, *Section B* of AESSPQ was used. Frequency counts and simple percentage were used to analyze the responses on items 1—20 of *section B* of AESSPQ. The result was presented in table 2.

Table 2. Administrative effectiveness of secondary school principals

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Effective</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Ineffective</i>	<i>%</i>
1.	Supervising of teaching-learning process	498	83.0	102	17.0
2.	Conducting terminal examinations	489	81.5	111	18.5
3.	Delegating duties to staff	378	63.0	222	37.0
4.	Punctuality to school	447	74.5	153	25.5
5.	Punctuality to staff meetings	438	73.0	162	27.0
6.	Holding staff meetings	459	76.5	141	23.5
7.	Building cohesive teamwork	384	64.0	216	36.0
8.	Motivating staff	498	83.0	102	17.0
9.	Handling grievances of staff	489	81.5	111	18.5
10.	Involving students in decision making	350	58.3	250	41.7
11.	Showing concern for students' welfare	409	68.2	191	31.8
12.	Showing concern for teachers' welfare	468	78.0	132	22.0
13.	Keeping up-to-date record for every students	474	79.0	126	21.0
14.	Preparing school budget early	312	52.0	288	48.0
15.	Promoting good relationship with the community	417	69.5	183	30.5
16.	Encouraging advice from the parents	309	51.5	291	48.5
17.	Holding Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) meetings	361	60.2	239	39.8
18.	Handling grievances of students	393	65.5	207	34.5
19.	Providing recreational facilities for both staff and students	470	78.3	130	21.7
20.	Promoting skill development among students	393	65.5	207	34.5

Results in table 2 showed the extent of administrative effectiveness of principals of secondary school. The result showed 83.0% of the respondents agreed that their principals are very effective in supervising of teaching-learning process and in motivating members of staff. While 81.5% of the respondents agreed that their principals are very effective in conducting terminal examinations as well as handling grievances of staff, 79% of them agreed that the principals are very effective in keeping up-to-date record of the students.

The table showed that 78.3% of the respondents agreed that the principals are very effective in providing recreational facilities for both staff and students, 78% agreed that the principals show much concern for teachers' welfare. While 76.5% of the respondents agreed that the principals are effective in holding staff meetings, 74.5% of them agreed that their principals are very punctual in school and 73.0% agreed that their principals are very punctual to staff meetings.

Of the respondents, 69.5% agreed that their principals are very effective in promoting good relationship with the community, 68.2% of them agreed that their principals show much concern for the students' welfare. 65.5% of the respondents agreed that their principals are very effective in handling students' grievances as well as promoting skill development among students. Other areas of administrative effectiveness of the principals as revealed in the table include building cohesive teamwork (64.0%); delegating duties to staff (63.0%); holding meetings with the PTA (58.3%); preparing school budget early (52.0%) and encouraging advice from the parents (51.5%).

### 5.3 Research Question 3

What are the problems facing time management skills of principals in secondary schools?

In analyzing the problems facing time management skills of principals, *Section C* of AYTMSQ was used. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the responses on items 13—19 of AYTMSQ. The result was presented in table 3.

Table 3. Problems of time management among principals

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Decision</i>
1.	I often need to respond to some emergency cases in the school	3.20	0.81	Agreed
2.	I quickly respond to urgent calls from the ministry of education	3.42	0.76	Agreed
3.	Crisis situations sometimes disrupt my plans for the day	3.82	1.15	Agreed
4.	My personal activities outside the school affect my goal attainments in schools	2.41	0.93	Disagreed
5.	Unscheduled visit of officials from the ministry of education often disrupts my activities in the day	3.31	0.73	Agreed
6.	I do not have enough time to devote to activities that build my professional reputation	2.39	0.92	Disagreed
7.	I have trouble finding a time management system that works well for me	2.36	0.89	Disagreed

Table 3 showed the problems of time management among principals of secondary schools. The table revealed that only items 1, 2, 3 and 5 scored more than the acceptable mean of 2.50. The standard deviations for the items also converged between 0.73 and 1.15. The rest of the items (that is, items 4, 6 and 7) scored below the acceptable mean. This shows that the problems of time management among principals of secondary schools are those of the need to respond to emergency cases in the school; the need to respond to urgent call from the ministry of education; crisis situations which often disrupts the day's work whenever it happens and unscheduled visits of officials from the ministry of education.

### 5.4 Research Question 4

What are the strategies that can be put in place to ensure better time management among principals in secondary schools?

In analyzing the strategies to be put in place for better time management of principals, *Section D* of AYTMSQ and *Section C* of AESSPQ were used. Items 20-29 of AYTMSQ and items 21—30 of AESSPQ were used. Frequency counts and simple percentage were used to analyze the items 13—19. The result was presented in table 4.

Table 4. Strategies for better time management

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>%</i>
1.	Keeping a readily accessible record of your appointment and tasks	785	98.1	15	1.9
2.	Avoid or minimise interruptions in the office	773	96.6	27	3.4
3.	Avoid loading your table with the work that will not be addressed that day	620	77.5	180	22.5
4.	Determine the time of the day when you are most productive	664	83.0	136	17.0
5.	Identify your most time-consuming tasks and determine whether you are investing your time in the most important activities	790	98.8	10	1.2
6.	A good sense of the amount of time required for routine tasks can help you to be more realistic in planning	524	65.5	276	34.5
7.	Tell an unexpected visitor politely that you cannot meet with him at this time and reschedule the visit	606	75.8	194	24.5
8.	Establish a 'to do' list for every family activities outside your corporate hours	631	78.9	169	21.1
9.	Avoid multi-tasking as this may lead to difficulty in concentrating and maintaining focus when needed	679	84.9	121	15.1
10.	Reduce the number of times meetings are held in the school	761	95.1	39	4.9
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>85.4</b>		<b>14.6</b>

Results in table 4 showed the various strategies that can be put in place by school principals to ensure better time management in secondary schools. These include: identifying one's most time-consuming task and determine whether one is investing his time in the most important activities (98.8%); keeping a readily accessible record of one's appointment and tasks (98.1%); avoid or minimize interruptions (96.6%); and reduce the number of times meetings are held in the school.

Other strategies include avoid multi-tasking as this may lead to difficulty in concentrating and maintaining focus when needed (84.9%); determine the time of the day when one is most productive (83.0%); establish a 'to do' list for every family activities outside one's corporate hours (78.9%); avoid loading one's table with the work that will not be addressed that day (77.5%); refusing an unexpected visitor politely and rescheduling his visit (75.8%) and a good sense of the amount of time required for routine tasks can help to be more realistic in planning (65.5%).

## 6. Discussion

The study revealed that the principals of secondary schools are able to manage their time judiciously. This presupposes that their time management skill is very encouraging. They are able to manage their time by arriving early to prepare for the day's work; closing their doors when they want to think strategically as well as reducing the time spent on personal phone calls. It was also revealed in the study that the principals were able to reduce their time wasters by not allowing reading of internal memos to take their time; by delegating duties to staff and by not making unnecessary visits to the PTA executives during office hours.

The study also showed the various areas of administrative effectiveness of principals. These include: supervising of teaching-learning process; motivating staff; conducting terminal examinations; handling of staff grievances; keeping up-to-date record for students and providing recreational facilities for both staff and students. Other areas include showing concern for teachers' welfare; holding of staff meetings among others.

It was also revealed in the study that the major problems of time management among principals of secondary schools are those of time wasters. The problems as revealed in the study include: the need to respond to emergency cases in the school; the need to respond to urgent calls from the ministry of education; crises situations which waste time in an attempt to manage them and unscheduled visits of officials from the ministry of education. This submission finds solace in Mackenzie (1972), Akomolafe (2005) and Ajayi (2007) who submitted that time wasters constitute a dangerous threat to administrators' corporate time management.

The study also showed the various strategies that can be put in place to ensure better time management among the principals of secondary schools. These strategies include: the need for principals to identify their most time-consuming tasks and determine whether or not they have been investing their time in the most important activities; keeping a readily accessible record of their appointment and tasks; the need to avoid or minimise interruptions; and the need to reduce the number of meetings held in the school. Others include avoidance of multi-tasking activities; determining the time of the day when they are most productive and establishing a 'to-do' list for every family activity outside their corporate hours among others. This submission also agrees with Morgenstern (2004), Akomolafe (2005), Hassanzabeh & Ebadi (2007).

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that principals in secondary schools in the area covered make good use of their corporate time in their schools. It was also concluded that the principals were effective in the administration of the schools. Despite the fact that the principals make good use of their time and they were administratively effective, the findings of the study still showed that there were some impediments to the extent to which the principal can make judicious use of their time.

Based on this, it was recommended that the tempo of time management skills of the principals as well as their administrative effectiveness should be sustained, while efforts should be directed towards reducing or avoiding those factors that constitute impediments to the time management skills. Besides, the strategies for effective time management as found out in this study will be of immense benefits to the principals if well made use of in their planning for the schools.

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