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## **Strategies for Enhancing Effective Time Management by Principals of Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This work investigated strategies for enhancing effective time management by principals of public secondary schools in Rivers State. The population consisted of principals from junior and senior secondary schools. Employing descriptive survey design, a sample size of 123 respondents was randomly drawn from 494 junior and senior secondary principals in 247 secondary schools across the state. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The instrument for data collection was a 4 point rating scale with 23 items titled "Strategies for Effective time Management Questionnaire" (SETMQ). The instrument was validated and administered. The reliability of the instrument was 0.89 using Cronbach Alpha Statistics. Research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation. The z score at 0.05 level of significance was used to test the null hypotheses. Findings from the study revealed that principals allocate time to all activities in the school and prioritize activities based on importance and urgency. Principals do not adhere to laid down plans and time allocated to these activities nor maximize time management opportunities provided by information and communication technology (ICT) facilities. The encroachment of activities into time allocated to other tasks leads to un-accomplishment of set goals which in turn leads to procrastinations, stress, and backlog of un-accomplished work load. The study concluded that proper time management through use of planning, priority setting and ICT as time management strategies leads to effective performance of principals. It is recommended that principals should adhere to time allocated to tasks and utilize opportunities provided by ICT to enhance effective time management in the administration of secondary schools in Rivers State. Ministry of Education should train, evaluate and give awards to principals on time management.

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### **Background to the Study**

Time is a resource that is very important to all irrespective of one's status, race, colour, belief etc. As it is important to individuals so it is important to organizations, be they Government, Non-governmental, Private, Profit-making or Non-profit-making. In as much as there is activity, time is important. Time is equally a unique resource in nature in that no entity can boast of having it more than the other. It is constantly in motion with the same measurement to all and sundry either in seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, sessions, semesters, years etc. No wonder, there is a popular saying that "Time and Tide wait for no man". Therefore, it is the utilization and management of time by individuals, groups or organizations that distinguishes one from the other. Time is that element in nature that separates events. Time is something that is measured in minutes, hours, years etc using clocks with its basic unit as seconds. (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2001 3rd Ed.).

Time management is the systematic allocation of time for every activity and strict adherence to the time schedule so that the day's organizational objectives can be accomplished (Maduagwu and Nwogu, 2006). In the same vein in schools, time is also utilized and measured in periods, days, weeks, terms and sessions. The accomplishment of organizational goals and objectives depends on time. Time like other resources is scarce and limited with its demand for outweighing its supply. Time is so precious however; it cannot be bought, conserved, hired, or replaced as is the case with other resources. Time is indeed unique, must be valued and properly managed. It is therefore, impossible to effectively and efficiently use other resources without proper time management skills.

The school is full of activities both curricular and extra-curricular, all built in to the curriculum and schedule of the principal to harness to achieve educational goals and objectives. For the smooth running of the school, the principal (administrator) has to be equipped with the knowledge, skills and strategies of time management.

Some of the skills and strategies required by principals for effective time management are quick decision making skills, fairness and firmness, planning, prioritizing, goal setting, use of information communication technology (ICT), Evaluation of task, Delegation etc.

**Prioritizing:** This involves the itemization of goals according to their order of needs. In this respect, most pressing needs of the school are taken care of first before the less pressing needs. It could require the principal to draw a scale of preference in order to achieve this. Scale of preference is a list of unsatisfied wants arranged in order of their relative importance. It will help the principals to meet their maximum satisfaction using their limited time and resources.

**Planning:** This is the process of thinking about and organizing the activities required to achieve a desired goal. It involves the creation and maintenance of a plan, such as psychological aspects that require conceptual skills. There are even a couple of tests to measure someone's capability of planning well. As such, planning is a fundamental property of intelligent behavior. Planning is a core management function that is important to individuals, groups or organizations.

**Information and Communication Technology (ICT):** This refers to technologies that provide access to information through telecommunications. It focuses primarily on communication technologies which include the internet, wireless networks, cell phones and other communication mediums. Presently, ICT has provided the society with a vast array of new communication capabilities.

Therefore, it is imperative that the principal (administrator) should plan, prioritize and use information communication and Technology (ICT) to schedule time for all activities. Affirming this further, Obi (2003) stated that time management involves identifying tasks to be performed, planned and scheduling organizational activities, prioritizing such activities, allocating time to the tasks according to their degree of importance in order to enhance productivity.

Time management in relation to effective administration is concerned with how well an administrator uses his time. It involves overseeing all activities and tasks needed to maintain a desired level of excellence or efficiency, and for creating and implementing quality planning that assures quality control in the educational sector. For an administrator to be effective in managing his time, the administrator has to be proactive, flexible and strategic in his/her approach to planning with the goal of getting the work done effectively and efficiently. To achieve educational goals and improve the quality of school activities, the administrator requires the effort and cooperation of all the staff through time management, because time is a very important administrative tool in carrying out daily duties by the administrator. Time required in accomplishing any given task is carefully analyzed, and other resources are also mobilized with time to achieve desired results. Little wonder, Mullins (2005) refers to time as one of the most valuable, but limited resources and it is important that administrators utilize time to their maximum advantage.

Finally, time management has been a topical issue since its recognition by managers and administrators as an important educational resource that could be deployed to increase work performance and effectiveness. Researchers have proposed some conceptualizations and explanations to some aspects of the way in which people deal with time in work situations, yet, much is still unclear. Hence, this study investigates principals' time management strategies for effective administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State. The researcher therefore, aims at examining time management among educational administrators with the view of improving it, in order to ensure that the educational goals of the nation are effectively and efficiently achieved.

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## Statement of the Problem

Time is a precious element of space. It is difficult to allocate and manage time properly if not well planned. In schools, principals seem to be haphazard in their allocation of time to duties and tasks and they seem not to be conscious of setting time based on priorities. Often, principals of schools misuse time doing things that do not really help them in facilitating the achievement of Educational goals and objectives. Some principals spend much time engaging in meetings with either Board of governors or visitors which eats deep into the time schedule of school programmes. The time spent in such meetings seems to affect their functions as administrators. This is evident in the administrative lapses encountered in such schools making administration look like a load of insurmountable tasks.

Principals seem to be unable to achieve all they set out to achieve for the smooth running of their schools, as the time to achieve these targets seems limited. Given this scenario, one wonders if principals use planning, ICT and priority setting as time management strategies for effective administration of public secondary schools. The study is concerned with how male, female, experienced and less experienced principals allocate time to their basic functions in schools, and how Time Management Strategies of Planning, priority settings and use of ICT can help in effective administration of secondary schools in Rivers State.

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## Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study was to identify strategies for effective time management used by principals in Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

1. Identify ways principals manage their time for enhancing effective administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. Investigate the ways principals use planning as a time management strategy for enhancing effective administration in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

## Research Questions

To guide the study, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What are the ways principals prioritize time as a time management strategy for enhancing effective administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State?
2. What are the ways principals use planning as a time management strategy for enhancing effective administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State?

## Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested in the study:

- Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the ways they prioritize time for enhancing effective administration of Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State.
- Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the ways they use planning as a time management strategy for enhancing effective administration of Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

## Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design with the population of four hundred and ninety four (494) Principals from the Junior and Senior Section of the two hundred and forty seven (247) public Secondary Schools in Rivers State as the respondents. A sample size of one hundred and twenty three (123) Principals representing 25% of the population was drawn from the Junior and Senior Secondary section of the 247 public Secondary Schools using stratified random sampling technique. Data was gotten from the primary and secondary sources. The primary source was through the questionnaire while the secondary sources were the Rivers State Universal Basic Education Board and the Senior Secondary Schools Boards statistics of Academic and Administrative staff. A self structured questionnaire Titled "Strategies for Effective Time Management Questionnaire (SETMQ)" was used for the study. The questionnaire was structured based on the four modified likert scale model of Strongly Agreed (SA) = 4 points, Agreed (A) = 3 points, Disagreed (D) = 2 points, Strongly Disagreed (SD) = 1 point.

The reliability of the instrument was established using the test-retest method. Data was analysed using Cronbach Alpha Statistics which yielded a reliability index of 0.85 and 0.89. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions while z-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Decisions were reached based on the mean boundary limits of the four response pattern: SA, A, D, SD. Any value from 3.50 – 4.00 was considered as Strongly Agreed, 2.50 – 3.49 was considered Agreed, 1.50 – 2.49 was considered Disagreed and 0.50 – 1.49 was considered Strongly Disagreed. A null hypothesis was accepted if the calculated z-value was less than the critical z value of 1.96 and rejected if the calculated z-value was greater than the critical value of 1.96.

## Results

### Research Question 1

What are the ways principals prioritize time as a time management strategy for enhancing effective administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State?

**Table 1: Mean and standard deviation scores of the ways principals prioritize time as a time management strategy for enhancing effective administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State.**

S/no	Ways principals manage time for enhancing effective administration	Male n $\bar{x}_1$	SD	Remark	Female n $\bar{x}_2$	SD	Remark
1.	Principals spend time in supervision of staff and students	2.95	1.00	Agreed	3.29	0.94	Agreed
2.	Principals spend time to plan and take decisions	2.89	0.88	Agreed	3.00	0.90	Agreed
3.	Time is spent on disciplinary actions	2.21	1.10	Disagreed	2.71	0.89	Agreed
4.	Morning devotion eats up most of principals' time.	2.05	1.00	Disagreed	1.64	0.83	Disagreed
5.	Meeting with stakeholders eats up most of principals' time	2.05	0.89	Disagreed	3.39	0.92	Agreed
6.	Principals spend time attending to paper works and mails.	2.84	0.94	Agreed	3.14	1.08	Agreed
	<b>Aggregate mean scores</b>	<b>2.50</b>			<b>2.86</b>		

Source: Field Survey (2018).

Male and female principals had similar opinions on items 1, 2, 4 and 6 as ways principals manage time for enhancing effective administration of public secondary schools in Rivers state. However, the respondents differed in their opinions on items 3 and 5. The male Principals disagreed that principals' time is spent on disciplinary matters while the female principals were in agreement with it.

### Research Question 2

What are the ways principals use planning as a time management strategy for enhancing effective administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State?

**Table 2: Mean and standard deviation scores on the ways principals use planning as a time management strategy for enhancing effective administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State.**

S/no	Ways principals use planning as a time management strategy for enhancing effective administration	Male n=95 $\bar{x}1$	SD1	Remark	Female n =28 $\bar{x}2$	SD2	Remark
1.	Principals make a 'to do list' for the day and assess value of task.	2.89	0.74	Agreed	2.54	1.07	Agreed
2.	Principals identify urgent and important tasks and order tasks by estimated effort.	3.21	0.90	Agreed	3.07	1.05	Agreed
3.	Principals set short, medium and long term goals	3.00	0.92	Agreed	3.11	0.88	Agreed
4.	Principals adhere strictly to laid down plans.	1.84	0.99	Disagreed	2.18	1.12	Disagreed
5..	Principals are proactive in their planning	1.74	0.91	Disagreed	1.86	0.93	Disagreed
	<b>Aggregate mean scores</b>	<b>2.54</b>			<b>2.55</b>		

Source: Field Survey (2018)

The results from table 2 revealed that principals agreed on items 7, 8 and 9 with mean scores higher than 2.5 and disagreed on items 10 and 11 with means scores lower than 2.5 as ways principals use planning as a time management strategy for enhancing effective administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State.

### Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the ways they prioritize time for enhancing effective administration of Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

**Table 3: z-test analysis on the difference in opinion on the ways male and female principals manage time for enhancing effective administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State.**

	Sex of Principals	N	$\bar{x}$	Std	z-cal	z-crit	Level of significance	Df	Decision
1	Male	95	2.50	0.96	1.73	$\pm 1.96$	0.05	121	Ho Failed to reject
2	Female	28	2.86	0.93					

The data on the table above revealed that male principals have mean scores and standard deviation of 2.50 and 0.96 while the female principals have mean scores and standard deviation of 2.86 and 0.93 with 121 degrees of freedom at an alpha level of 0.05. The z-calculated value of 1.73 is less than the z-critical value of  $\pm 1.96$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference failed to reject. By implication, there is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the ways they manage time for enhancing effective administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State.

## Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the ways they use planning as a time management strategy for enhancing effective administration of Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

**Table 4: z-test analysis on the Ways principals use planning as a time management strategy for enhancing effective administration of Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State.**

S/N	Sex of principals	N	$\bar{x}$	Std	z-cal	z-crit	Level of significance	Df	Decision
1	Male	95	2.54	0.89	121		0.05	121	Ho Failed to reject
					0.05	$\pm 1.96$			
2	Female	28	2.55	1.01					

Table 4 above shows sex of respondents, numbers of respondents, means and standard deviations assigned to respondents' variables. It also shows the z-cal, z-critical, level of significance, degree of freedom as well as decision. It further revealed that the z-cal of 0.05 was less than the z-crit of  $\pm 1.96$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis failed to reject. Hence there was no significant difference between the respondents on the ways they use planning as a time management strategy for enhancing effective administration.

## Discussion of Findings

The principals just like any other individual have the same 24 hours to perform similar tasks, but use them differently, based on their personal preferences. The results showed that principals schedule time for various activities in the discharge of their duties. But they do not adhere strictly to lay down plans. The findings agrees with Alete (2015) who opined that principals organize all school activities properly but implementing time management techniques and skills are the major challenges faced by principals in the management of time. Continuing, Alete (2015) said that complying with time management schedules is important in the process of time management as there is frequent conflict among workers in the dispensation of their duties as a result of their inability to comply with time schedule. The effectiveness of time management depends on the extent to which task can be carry out without interruption in the time allocation Ebong (1997). By implication, it means that the male and female principals have not deviated from the norm or standard of allocating time to their tasks.

The study identified the various ways principals use planning as a time management strategy for effective administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State. The chain of management functions begins with planning. The result showed that Principals set short, medium and long term goals; identify urgent and important tasks and order tasks by estimated effort. This finding agrees with Maduagwu and Nwogu (2006) who defined time management as the systematic allocation of time for every activity and strict adherence to the time schedule so that the day's organizational objectives can be achieved. Principals also make use of timetable as a means of time scheduling to manage their time and make best use of it. Timetable shows the subject to be taught in each class and the time allocated to the subjects expected to be taught. This has helped in effective administration in that principals are not spending time in activities that are not directly related to their primary assignment as according to Ebong (2011), timetable guides the daily academic activities based on the curriculum, and rules and regulations of the institution. Also, Alete (2015) opined that Complying with time management schedules is important in the process of time management as there is frequent conflict among workers in the dispensation of their duties as a result of their inability to comply with time schedule.

The educational implication is that the degree of efficiency and success in teaching and learning in the classroom depends on the adequacy of planning and the use of time. It is also important to note that time is important to be planned to avoid failure because if you fail to plan then you plan to fail according to a popular saying. Planning has helped in effective administration in that principals accomplish tasks within a set out period and also utilize the available resources based on the fact that resources are limited including time. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the ways they use planning as a time management strategy for effective administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn;

- Time Management Strategies are vital for effective Administration and accomplishment of Educational goals.
- Lack of proper planning, lack of proactive measure, ineffective use of time, lack of managerial skills, and injudicious use of time by principals lead to major challenges to academic achievement, especially when time is not properly planned.

## Recommendations

Based on this premise, the following recommendations are made:

1. Proper planning and priority settings as time management strategies should be adopted by principals to enhance administrative effectiveness and minimize organizational wastages.

2. Principals should ensure that tasks are performed in order of priority, set realistic goals which the school hopes to achieve, clearly stating how and when to achieve it. This will enable principals use their time more efficiently and reduce cramping of activities which usually result to stress.

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