

## **Enhancing Teachers' Personal and Professional Time Management Effectiveness in Nigerian School System**

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**ABSTRACT :** *Inability to manage time appears to contribute to the eventual teacher burnt and inefficiency. If they could manage their personal and professional time in more productive manner, they would likely be more effective, less hassled, frenetic and more content in how they solve their problems. This paper offers some suggestions, tips and strategies in the hope that teachers may be helped to manage their personal and professional time. They should analyze their problems; establish priorities, identify specific time-wasters; build reward into their schedules, develop mastery in classroom management skills and learn to delegate responsibilities. It further recommends that teachers should learn to manage time by starting to learning personal self and space organization, at their homes, offices – Effective Management of time is effective management of life.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Time Management, School System, teachers*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Time is very important. It is a natural gift and is equitably distributed to all persons. However, many teachers may agree that no matter how hard they apply themselves and re-allocate their time, they can't escape a nagging feeling that they have more work to do and more people to see than they can satisfactorily handle. Many teachers may also agree that they have at one time or the other been hassled, frenetic and even burnout in their work or life because of inability to effectively manage time. Conversely, many also, have lived their professional career in celebrity, happiness and success because of their ability to manage time. This means, as many may agree that we succeed or fail, not only as teachers but as human beings, to the extent that we learn to manage our time. Fortunately as many may also agree, regardless of one's formal education, experience, position or age it is never too late to start on the adventure of managing his or her time. The purpose of this paper is to offer some suggestions, tips and strategies in the hope that these may help teachers more effectively manage their personal and professional time.

### **II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Time management is the method that is directed toward the more efficacious use of professional or personal time. "It is the process of effectively allocating time among different tasks and a key factor in managerial effectiveness" (Boone and Kurtz, 1992:140). Morgenstern (2000:3) asserts that: "Time management is about designing a schedule that is a custom fit for you. It's about identifying what is important to you and giving those activities a place in your schedule based on your unique personality needs and goals. And it's about feeling deeply satisfied at the end of each day". Most time management programmes are based on the assumption that there is only a limited amount of time available for carrying out tasks, and that time must be utilized in the most productive manner possible. McCay (1989) observes that almost without exception, executives express in one form or another, their ever present awareness that they haven't time to do all that they should do, and that their subordinates, at every level of management express the same problem. Vipene and Akponi (2009) have also made similar observation even though time is one thing given freely and evenly distributed without discrimination to everyone. It is common to hear many conscientious teachers preface their comments with the expression "if I only had more time". Time for them is a precious commodity. There never seems to exist sufficient time in the day for them to meet all the demands and responsibilities of their positions. In addition, many teachers find themselves bringing their work home at an ever increasing rate. Sadker and Sadker (1997:170) observed that many researchers have spent a great effort analyzing time in school because as one teacher says "Time is the currency of teaching. We battle with time – in the end, we know it's going to defeat us." Yet, as McCay (1989:6) asserts, "we succeed or fail, not only as business leaders but as human beings to the extent that we learn how to manage that strangest commodity in the world – time". Feldman (2004) writes that the goal of time management is not to scheduler every moment so we become pawns of a timetable that govern every waking moment of day. Instead, the goal is to permit us to make informed choices as to how we use our time.

Rather than letting day slip by, largely without our awareness, the time management procedures can make us better able to harness time for our own ends. An inability to manage time effectively can contribute to eventual "teacher burnout". As teachers begin to more readily to recognise the symptoms and results of burnout, they realize the need to develop strategies to more effectively manage their personal/professional time. Unfortunately many victims of the time crunch are at loss as to how to resolve this problem. If teachers could learn to manage their personal and professional time in a more productive manner, they would likely be not only more effective teachers but also less hassled, frenetic and more content in how to resolve this problem. As Morgenstern (2000) writes:

*When you develop good time management skills, instead of being overwhelmed by it, you can celebrate it. You know what to choose. You feel clear and focused, ready to take on life – you take control of your days. You'll feel content and happy about how you spend your time. You will maintain balance between work and love and play that energizes you and makes your life feel rewarding. You will learn how to tune to yourself, and consistently spend your time in ways that are meaningful to you (p.3)*

Time management is also a matter of serious concern to the school organizations. According to Goetch and Davis (2000), school management has need to study the use of time as a good way to identify an improvement project and determine how employees spend their time. An excessive amount of time devoted to a given process, problem, or work situation could signal serious problem, that should be studied carefully to determine the root causes. Frederick Taylor, who is believed to be the father of scientific management found it necessary to study time as a factor of production (Stueart & Moran, 2002). The metaphors, "Time is money"; "Time is a limited resource"; "Time is a valuable commodity" are common expressions that enhance the worth of time. It is suggested that "Time and money are increasingly exchangeable commodities: time is one means by which money can be appropriated, in the same way money can be used to buy time; money increases in value over time while time can be invested now to yield money later" (Hassard, 1996:583). Besides, there are many images of time which further exalt the value of time. For instance, in industrial society time is the dominant machine of productive organization; it provides signal for labour to commence or halt activity. Workers must consult the time-clock before they begin working. Time keepers are the regulators and controllers of work; they quantity and transform activity into money value. Time is commodified and being valuable to users are obliged to display good stewardship (Hassard, 1996). Time is a hegemonic structure in school like it is in the industrial organization, its essence being precision, control and discipline. School activities are structured around times allocated for different activity. The school time table, among other functions gives a sense of direction to all the school system, personnel as well as train them in punctuality and aid the use of time (Uche, 2002) and every personnel of the school must conform to it (Uche, 2000).

Davis (1983) opines that: Time management techniques stress two types of interrelated organization: self and task. The teacher must first learn how to organize themselves both personally and professionally, before they can hope to develop effective time management techniques for job-related tasks. He observes that teachers who make a concerted effort to more productively utilize professional time, for example, by attacking problems in a prioritized order, frequently discover that they themselves are more organized and less frenetic– they are more relaxed because job-related tasks are being accomplished in an acceptable manner. Corroborating this view, McCay (1989:157) says "when you take over the direction of your personal organization you can steadily increase your available time, your output, and your satisfaction". Morgenstern (2000) also sees a relationship between self-management and space organization. He reports thus:

*In the journey from chaos to order, it is often easier to start with space organizing, because it is much more tangible than time – once you organize your space, you will have much, more time on your hands to manage. Most studies show that we lose an average of one to two hours per day searching for missing items in messy files, closets and stacks (p.4)*

Teachers may therefore consider the strategies discussed in this paper for effectively managing their personal and professional time. The strategies are the following:

**Analyze the problem:** Davis (1983) suggests that teachers need to ask themselves one key question before attempting to develop strategies for solving their time management problems: "where am I now with respect to the management of my professional time?" He recommends that teachers need to assess how they currently spend their time across the major teaching tasks. The teacher is thus encouraged to measure time usage against priorities or predetermined standards. The teacher's daily activities are logged. A time log is a record of how

the teacher actually spends his time – including interruptions. It does not have to be a second-by-second record of every waking moment, but it should account for blocks of time in increments as short as 15 minutes (Feldman, 2004). For instance, a teacher records exactly how much time is devoted to direct pupils' instruction during a given time segment as compared with the time devoted to routine paperwork. Also, all time-wasting behaviours and interruptions are recorded – examples: phone calls, unexpected visitors, daydreams. In this way a teacher attempts to locate a pattern in relationship to his/her daily professional activities.

**Establish priorities.** : Boone and Kurtz (1992) suggest that an analysis of actual time usage should be followed by the establishment of priorities. They note that many hardworking, enthusiastic teachers are ineffective because of a lack of priorities to guide their use of time. According to Feldman, priorities are the tasks and activities a teacher needs and wants to do, rank-ordered from most important to least important. There is no right or wrong priorities, but he/she has to decide for him/herself what he/she wishes to accomplish. A teacher should ask himself: “Of all of the tasks and activities that should be accomplished during any given time period, which one absolutely must be done? And how soon must they be accomplished? Could some tasks be postponed temporarily or indefinitely? The establishment of graphic timetable can often help a teacher prioritize tasks within a given time frame.

As said above, establishing priorities is not always a simple task. At times it appears as though everything is a major priority (Hassard, 2002). Also, many priorities are already established for the teacher. Yet teacher can usually influence, to a large degree, how their time should be distributed in order to meet demands which are placed upon them. By analyzing their priorities and demands across all dimensions and identifying time wasting behaviours, teachers can more easily pinpoint what specifically they must change in their daily schedule and behavior in order to achieve or attain their prioritized goal. The answer to the question “which task or activity should a teacher attack first in a time frame?” has often been confronted with debate. Some authorities in the area of time management suggest that the teacher should address and complete the task which he perceives as the most difficult or threatening first. In this way, he will usually be able to close the door on this task and proceed to those that he perceived as less difficult and therefore, usually easier and less time-consuming to accomplish. As Davis (1983) says the positive feeling that “the worst is now behind me” often helps.

However some other authorities in time management (Boone & Kurtz, 1992), think that teachers may be more successful in managing time by first completing those tasks that they perceive as easier. Such procedure seems to help some individuals by providing them with a sense of accomplishment. Thus one task can be cross off the list. Often this method can prove to be rewarding because the teacher sees some progress. The strategy of constructing lists of things to do and crossing them off as they are accomplished can also help individuals organize themselves and their time commitment.

**Identify specific time-wasters.** : Good time management strategies require that teachers identify which specific factors typically prevent them from utilizing their time as progressively as possible on a day-to-day basis, and take measures to control the negative and disruptive influence of these factors. McCay (1989:55) says “To save energy you need to know where your time is going”. The following “time-wasters” are consistently cited by many authors in the subject (Morgenstern, 2000; Sadker & Sadker, 1997; Boone & Kutz, 1992):

- Telephone interruptions or unnecessary telephone conversations
- Unnecessary or unproductive meetings
- Procrastinations – difficulty in getting started on tasks that needed to be accomplished.
- Excessive paperwork and clerical duties
- Difficulty in locating needed materials, forms, or reports
- Socialisation at the wrong times
- Dealing with excessive public relations requests including accommodating visitors
- Expending considerable time and energy worrying about being overextended and overcommitted
- Others include attendance problems; non-instructional activities such class changes and assemblies; administrative and organizational activities; and
- Disruptions caused by student misbehaviour.

In attempting to deal with identified time-wasters, teachers could help themselves by developing increased self-organisation and discipline. For example, other than emergencies, a teacher could give instructions not to be interrupted by phone calls. Messages could be taken and return calls made at a more convenient time. Also, some teachers find it helpful to schedule a certain segment of each day as “telephone time”, during which period they devote exclusively to making and returning calls.

With regards procrastination as a factor in time-management, some teachers are victims of this problem because they perceive the tasks before them as overwhelming. But by establishing task priorities and specifics, reasonable timeliness, a good deal of procrastination can be reduced. McCay (1989) suggests that one can overcome procrastination by launching attack on the habit and taking control of his own time. He recommends that the "victim" should be determined "to start now". He should adopt the "Rational-emotive therapeutic" approach: "I have all I need to start now". "I am at this moment alert to the basis of my time problem and therefore I have power to act now". "Tomorrow I may be lost in preoccupation again". The efficacy of "rational-emotive therapy" in changing unproductive behaviours again". The efficacy of "rational-emotive therapy" in changing unproductive behaviours even by the so called "normal" persons are well documented (Jones & Jones, 2004). Teachers have often found that paperwork and record keeping tasks can be dealt with more effectively if a specific time period can be allocated for such during the school day as part of their routine professional responsibilities.

A teacher can deal with problem of excessive and inappropriate socialization by learning to exert self-discipline. He has to learn to identify and avoid those people, environments, and situations that frequently lead to excessive or inappropriate socialization on regular basis. A certain amount of small talks, jokes, social conversation or phatic speeches are healthy, cement relationship and are needed (Vikoo, 2003). Yet the teacher should try to limit such interactions by not allowing himself to get into regular routines that typically foster such disruptive and unnecessarily time-consuming behavior. He might for instance, discretely reschedule paperwork period, or at least attempt to limit socialization activities to a very cordial, but brief, period. Some teachers have learned to put notice at the door to their offices carrying the information "Be brief, this is a busy office"; "There is dignity in short visits. Be brief and to the point, please!" Such notices help to great extent in checking time-wasting behaviours of some visitors.

Dealing with public relations request or other external demands upon the teachers time can be difficult and frustrating. On one hand, he recognizes the value, to himself and his programmes, of developing and maintaining good public relations within the school and the community. However, at certain times, he need to learn to say "No", as not every request can be granted, if he feels already overcommitted by other personal or professional demands. He should politely decline certain offers and adhere firmly to his decision.

**Teachers should build rewards into their schedules.** : Davis (1983) notes that when confronted with the pressures needing to complete several tasks during a specific time period, whether it is a year, month, week, or day, many teachers are so goal-directed that they fail to build "self-reward" into their planning schedule. He notes also that, with so much to do and so little time in which to do it, many get enmeshed in a work routine that often involves compulsive and frenetic behavior that often results in not only ineffective time management but also ineffective work results. He recommends for individuals in such prolonged, crash-work situation, a management technique involving establishment of a reward system that can be built into their work schedule. For example, a teacher might divide a lengthy project into four time segments. At the successful completion of each segment, the teacher would reward himself with some positively reinforcing activity or event. By establishing "reward breaks", it often becomes easier to complete tasks which appear overwhelming at the beginning. The teacher, in this situation is employing the principles of behavior management and distributed practice (Davis, 1983). Teachers need to plan relaxation time into their personal and professional schedules. They need something or event to look forward to such a reward may be as simple as a quiet night at home once a week, watching television and just doing "nothing". If this type of activity is regarded as especially rewarding, for example, the teacher need to discipline himself not to bring home any school-related work during that evening. While the temptation often is great to bring home just a few papers or report home on these evenings, and while some work may get accomplished, the individual may not have allowed himself to enjoy a total break from work. Often this behavior is counterproductive. Regarding this, it has been noted that, although effective time management strategies involve identifying time-wasters, there are occasions when doing absolutely nothing is not wasting time at all, but rather a necessary and productive time management tool.

**Develop mastery in classroom management skills.** : Many writers (Jones & Jones, 2004; Gargiulo, 2000) believe that many problems, such as students disruptive behaviours class changes and many non-instructional activities which sap the teacher's time and health, can be appropriately dealt with by effective mastery and application of classroom management skills. These could help teachers maximize time spent in instruction as well as help students increase on-task behavior. Because on-task behavior is incompatible with off-task and disruptive behavior, a teacher does much to prevent misbehavior in the classroom if he understands and effectively apply appropriate classroom management skills. Jones and Jones (2004:283) list the following instructional management skills that facilitate on-task behavior:

- Giving clear instruction
- Beginning a lesson
- Maintaining attention
- Pacing
- Using seatwork effectively
- Summarising
- Providing useful feedback
- Making smooth transition
- Dealing with common classroom disruptions
- Planning for early childhood settings.

The research revelation that as much as half the time allocated for instruction during the school day is lost to students' off task behavior, interruptions, disruptive behavior and lack of teacher preparation (Garguilo, 2000) heightens the need for teachers to develop these skills. Garguilo suggests that teacher should also teach time management skills directly to students. The strategies include requiring students to maintain calendars on which they list their assignments and activities; helping students establish and prioritize goals for assignment completion; allocating time during the school day to help student develop timeliness and plan for completing assignments. A good understanding and effective application of classroom management skills will not only save the teacher's time and health, it will increase his output. This point is well captured by McCay (1950:23). He says "you can increase your output as you increase your capacity to get accurate, clear, fast impressions of what is going on around you".

**Learn to Delegate Responsibility :** Part of some teachers' problem may be an unwillingness to give up control. They are afraid of becoming dispensable, that if someone else do their job they would no longer be needed or have value forgetting that they have reserve of unique skills, ideals, and personal treats that make them always valuable to others. Some other teachers feel too busy to delegate. They feel they don't have time to invest in delegating and supervising someone else. Others often feel guilty dumping on others undesirable or grunt work. Some have difficulty depending on others. They are imprisoned by the mentality: "if I don't do it myself, it won't get done right". But as Morgenstern (2001:171) points out, there are delightful aspect of delegating responsibilities: "It allows for a very healthful interdependence among people. When people you work as a team, it brings people together. Relationships solidify as you share the workload and learn to rely on one another". Effective delegation is one of the most important time-management skills to master and employ.

Teachers should delegate responsibility currently handled to their dedicated assistant teachers, teacher aides, volunteers and secretaries. A teacher can especially delegate to (1) an expert, some who can do better, faster, more efficiently than he can. This makes instant time saving (2) an equal, someone who is, just as qualified as he does, and who can do it just as well as he can, with minimal time on his part to explain the job and give guidance (3) beginner, someone who does not know how to do it as well as the teacher but requires the teacher to invest some time to train and supervise him. Great rewards are accrued to this: the teacher becomes a mentor and a helper of someone to shine, to have enhanced confidence in his abilities, and the teacher may even be freed up for long-term. Teachers should especially delegate the following kinds of jobs: (a) tasks they are not good at doing, and someone else can do better (b) tasks they do not enjoy doing, (c) tasks that deplete them of energy or time needed for more important activities.

**Learn to organize self and space :** Studies on time management, cited by Morgenstern demonstrate the relationship between teacher personal/space organisation and effective time management. The Wall Street Journal reports that the average executive loses six weeks per year searching for missing information in messy desks and files. That breaks down to one hour per day per person – a conservative estimate. The USA Today reports also that Americans waste 9 million hours everyday looking for misplaced items. The instruction from this works is that teachers should first learn to invest time in organizing their space, their offices and their rooms and homes. Researchers (McCay, 1989; Morgentern, 2000) emphasise that the sooner they invest time in self-organizing, the sooner they will gain the extraordinary benefits of more time to work with. The process of time management should therefore start with or include learning how to organize self and space and seeing their relationship. Space is tangible, visible and easier to organise. Time is invisible and utterly amorphous and more difficult. The teacher needs to change their perception of time and develop a more tangible view it. They need to learn to see time in more visual and measurable terms. When they start to see time as having borders, just as space does, they will become much more realistic about what they accomplish and much more motivated to master various time management tools and techniques to help them make the best use of their time.

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS :** There never seems to exist sufficient time for teachers to meet all the demands and responsibilities for their position. Inability to manage time appears to contribute to eventual teacher burnout and inefficiency. If they could learn to manage their personal and professional time in more productive manner, they would likely be more effective, less hassled, frenetic and more content in how they solve their time problem. Time management techniques stress two types of interrelated organizations: self and task. This paper offers some suggestions, tips and strategies in the hope that these may help teachers more effectively manage their personal and professional time. Teachers should analyze their problems establish priorities; identify specific time-wasters; build rewards into their schedules; develop mastery in classroom management skills; learn to delegate responsibilities; and learn to organize self and space. It is recommended that teachers should learn to manage time by starting to learn to organise their own personal self and space. They should learn to keep their physical bodies and environment decent and well organized. The spaces in homes, rooms, offices, files closet should be orderly kept – Effective Management of time is effective management of life.

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