

## Towards Effective Time Management among Lecturers in Nigerian Universities

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### Abstract

Time is one of the scarce resources known to man. Ironically, man does not have any control over it. The idea of time management could therefore be explained within the framework of achieving a lot of success in the work place within a time frame. Most often than not, lecturers in Nigerian universities complain of 'no time' to carry out their various schedules and activities in schools. It appears that many of them seem to spend much of their time doing things that are not important. This paper therefore discusses the concept of time and time management as well as the strategies for effective time management among lecturers in the nation's universities. Based on the identified problems and the strategies suggested it was recommended that lecturers should set up their priorities and schedule their time to the various activities to avoid lopsidedness in the performance of their job. It was further recommended that lecturers should monitor their activities very well, identify the various time wasters in their activities and try as much possible to avoid or reduce them to the barest minimum if increased productivity is to be achieved.

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**Keywords:** time management, universities, time scheduling, procrastination, time-wasters

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### INTRODUCTION

There is the need for both the lecturers and the students to plan their activities for the purpose of ensuring orderliness and decorum in the school as well as accomplishing the aims and objectives of the school. It is no understatement to say that the works of lecturers in the university system are becoming enormous these days. Lecturers have to teach, write proposals, supervise students' projects, compute students' results, serve on departmental committees, attend departmental meetings, mark students' scripts and above all, carry out research because it is a necessary condition for promotion.

There are instances where some lecturers complain of lack of time to do certain things which they would have done. Suffice it to say a good lecturer must make effective use of his time to be able to have time for all he plans to do. According to Olaniyi (1998), the single most important asset a school principal, an administrative manager or any organisational leader can possess is the skill in managing time. If a manager can effectively control his time he will be able to devote a balanced attention to interpersonal relations and production.

Time management skills are very essential for result-oriented people. Akomolafe (2005) submitted that people who use these techniques routinely are the highest achievers in all walks of life. Complaints of

'no time' among lecturers often result in student scripts not marked on time, results being delayed, students' results not computed on time just because some lecturers seem to engage themselves in activities that are not directly related to their primary assignments. The thrust of this paper therefore is to examine the ways by which lecturers in the university system can manage their time very well towards accomplishing the goals of the school.

### Concept of Time and Time Management

Time is the continuing progress of existence measured in seconds, minutes and in hours. It is 60 seconds in a minute, 60 minutes in an hour and 24 hours in a day; meaning that there are 86,400 seconds in a day, that is, when a whole day is counted in seconds. Ailamaki & Gehike (2003) defined time as the quality of nature which keeps events from happening all at once.

Olaniyi (1998) defined time as a unique resource which is available to all at equal amounts. It cannot be accumulated like money or stockpiled like raw materials. It cannot be turned on or off like machine or replaced like a man. It is ir retrievable. Ajayi (2007) posited that time is a precious resource which must be well-managed along with other resources to achieve the goals of the school.

Time management is the efficient and effective utilisation of a lecturer's or an administrator's corporate time to achieve organisational goals. It is

the art of arranging, organising, scheduling and budgeting one's time for the purpose of generating more effective work and productivity (Sandberg, 2001). According to Obi (2003), time management involves identifying tasks to be performed, planning and scheduling organisational activities, prioritising such activities, allocating time to the tasks according to their degree of importance in enhancing productivity.

Oluchukwu (2003) reiterated that time management like any other skill can be learned. The degree of efficiency and success in teaching and learning in the classroom depends on the adequacy of the planning and use of time.

In another dimension, Olaniyi (1998) and Akomolafe (2005) argued that in the strict sense of it, there is nothing to manage in time because the hands of the clock continue to move beyond our control. What individuals are capable of doing is to decide what to do with time and how best to organise his activities within the time frame. With this, it is clear that time is also a resource which a very good manager has to manage very well in order to accomplish the organisational goals. As Adedeji (1998) succinctly put that time is one of the scarce resources available to man and its utilisation could be explained within the framework of doing the right thing at the right time in the workplace.

While emphasising on the time management skills, Oluchukwu (2003) enumerated the following as consequences of lack of time management skills: continuous lack of, or inadequate time for carrying out essential duties in the class; increased misunderstanding and confusion; lack of direction, purpose and commitment; frequent stamped or panic measures to beat deadlines; lack of coordination and conflict in schedules, timing activities and even in interpersonal relation.

### **Strategies for Effective Time Management among Lecturers**

Managing time effectively is the key to managing individual lecturer's performance. Lecturers can feel like they are continually racing against time and out of control of their days. If lecturers have too much to do, they may feel overwhelmed and not know where to start. Below are the various strategies that lecturers can use in order to achieve their goals.

**Setting up priorities:** For a lecturer to control his time, he needs a very clear understanding of his priorities not only for a particular day, but also for the week and throughout the semester. According to Akomolafe (2005), the key to effective time management is to use proactive thinking. It is very essential in time management for one to identify long term goals, break them down into projects and

prioritise activities. Olaniyi (1998) also posited that managers need to set short and long-range goals and allocate specific blocks of time to each. It is imperative for a lecturer to begin each day's work with a plan of the task to be performed. These priorities must be borne in mind by lecturers at all times in the course of using their time for effecting the priorities set up. If priorities are well set and the time well managed, there will be enough time for all lecturers to bring about efficiency and effectiveness in their activities vis-à-vis the school goals.

**Time scheduling:** Good time management involves keeping a schedule of the tasks and activities that have been important. Keeping a calendar, daily planner or weekly planner seems to be helpful to stay on the task, however, self-discipline is also required. Oluchukwu (2003) emphasised the use of Personal Time Analysis Charts which will show the various activities the lecturers spend their time on; apart from the general schedule of activities for realising the school objectives.

Akomolafe (2005) and Ajayi (2007) reiterated the Personal Time Analysis Chart will help individuals to study the use of their time and on the basis prepare a more useful personal time tables for their activities during the day and each week and it will also allow individual lecturers to identify their time wasters.

**Avoid or reduce time wasters:** A very close monitoring of how a typical lecturer uses his time on daily basis may help reveal certain activities that are time wasters. Ajayi (2007) defined a time-waster as something that occurs during lecturers' corporate time that is not necessary to the day or an activity that consumes more than necessary time. Time wasters eat into one's time unnecessarily and are arguably the single greatest barrier to effective time management.

Akomolafe (2005), Ajayi (2007) and Hassanzabeh & Ebadi (2007) listed the following as time wasters in every formal organisation: disorganization; unclear goals; conversation in the office; too many personal phone calls; disjointed processes; no routines; poor planning; junk e-mail; drop-in visitors; unscheduled meetings with super-ordinates; inability to say 'No', among others.

It therefore becomes imperative for lecturers to develop a list of their time wasters with a view to reducing or avoiding them.

**Avoid procrastination:** Procrastination is the postponement of a task which needs to be accomplished. It is a chronic habit of illegitimately justifying to oneself that a task does not, should not or cannot be started now. It has been observed that some lecturers in the nation's universities are in the

habit of postponing what is to be done at the right time to a later date. The effect of this has been complaints of 'no time' to do the job, stress and so on.

Ajayi (2007) posited that procrastinators are always found of making some statements like 'I work best under pressure'; 'the day is still young'; 'there is still more time to do the job'. Olaniyi (1998), Ajayi (2007) submitted that procrastination may occur as a result of poor utilisation, lack of concentration, fear and anxiety, personal problems among others. It is imperative for lecturers to identify the various causes and reasons for procrastination and plan to overcome them by disciplining themselves on how best to use time wisely, set priorities and perform their duties according to schedule so as to always meet deadlines.

**Avoid the cluster-desk syndrome:** Some lecturers are fond of piling their tables with books and some other unnecessary materials for the day's work. More time is wasted looking for 'buried' items on the table. A good time can be saved if lecturers clear the tables/desks of everything except the work to be done during the day.

#### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Time is finite. No one can actually stretch time. In strict sense, time management is not actually about 'managing' time; rather, it is about how best to organise oneself within the available time frame. With good time management skills, a good lecturer will be able to control his time and his life, control his stress and energy levels. One will be able to maintain a balance between work, personal and family lives.

Based on the foregoing, it was recommended that lecturers in Nigerian universities should set up their priorities and schedule time to them to avoid lopsidedness in the performance of their job. A lecturer should monitor his daily activities very well to be able to identify his time wasters so as to avoid them or at least reduce them to barest minimum. Lecturers should try as much as possible to avoid procrastination.

Procrastination, they say, is a thief of time. If a lecturer is able to manage his time wisely, he will have enough time to do most of the things that are important to him as well as his tasks and invariably increases his productivity level.

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