THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Proper Management of Time among Registrars of the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

Osei-Bediako Appau

Assistant Registrar, In Charge of Academic Affairs, College of Agriculture Education, University of Education, Ghana

Dorcas Darkoah Kyeremeh

Assistant Registrar and Faculty Officer, Faculty of Vocational Education, College of Technology Education, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

Ama Anim Firempong

Assistant Registrar and Faculty Officer, Faculty of Technical Education, College of Technology Education, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

Abstract:

This survey was conducted to examine the proper time management principles among Registrars of the University of Education, Winneba in Ghana. A descriptive survey design was used because respondents were made to react to predetermined responses from the survey instrument. A sample of 50 out 123 Registrars was selected randomly for this study. The results of the study indicated that Registrars had their own time management principles, which are comparable to best practices elsewhere. They also encountered a few challenges, including frequent interruptions from phone calls and visitors. Consequently, the use of secretary skills to filter phone calls and keeping of visitor's book were recommended for adoption and use.

Keywords: frequent interruptions, effective time management, filter phone calls, secretary skills

1. Introduction

Effective time management among University Registrars is so crucial to the success of the institutions. This is because the registry of a university is the administrative hub, which is tasked, among others, to ensure that the institutions' decisions are implemented to the latter. In the course of discharging this task, effective time management becomes a central issue since everything that has to be accomplished should be done within acceptable time limit.

Basically, as secretaries to the various committees and boards where major decisions are made, it is incumbent upon Registrars to prepare their minutes on time, disseminate highlights of the decisions of the Committee or Board by way of action memos, reminders to officers tasked to accomplish a task and report back to the Committee or Board in a timely manner. If a Registrar fails in sticking to the appropriate time lines, the University would not able to achieve its objectives as expected.

Apart from being secretaries to Committees or Boards, Registrars are tasked with the responsibility of effective administration of Universities and every aspect of a University life is time bound and so effective time management is sine qua non. For instance, every aspect of University's admissions is time bound – from placing adverts, vetting applicants' eligibility, selecting successful applicants and sending admission letters to successful students – all conform to schedules agreed to by the Academic Board. Similarly, issues of student's graduation are time bound and the preparation towards such ceremonies demand that Registrars keep to time schedules and act accordingly, since failure to take action at the stipulated timeframe could affect the next activity. A case in point is that the Publication's Unit should liaise with Academic Affairs Division for students' statistics in respect of numbers and grade classification, among others to be able to initiate procurement process for the printing of congregation brochures and other relevant congregation materials well ahead of the day scheduled for the ceremony, otherwise, the whole event would be a flop. These examples are just a few to buttress the point that University Registrars, more than the other categories of staff in a University, require effective time management strategies to be very successful in their endeavours, since, when time is lost it cannot be replenished as postulated by (Fiore, 2006).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Importance of Time Management

Time is seen among people as the most precious resource any human being should bear in mind because once it is lost it cannot be replenished. To this end, it has been stated that: "time is the most perishable good in the world, and it is not replenishable" (Fiore,

2006: 34). Additionally, time to every organisation is constant and irreversible and that nothing can be substituted for time; worse of all, once it is wasted, it can never be regained (Clark, 2014). Owing to this, university administrators are said to have numerous demands on their limited time. Time keeps getting away and they have trouble controlling it. No matter what their position, they cannot stop time, they cannot slow it down, nor can they speed it up. Thus, time needs to be effectively managed to be effective (Butler & Hope, 2007)

In his contribution, Pavey (2014) mentions 10 mistakes in time management one is likely to make. In sum, the mistakes Pavey alluded to have to do with multi-tasking, failure to take break, failing to keep to do list, not setting personal goals and prioritising, failing to manage distractions, procrastination, taking too much at a time, being busing for nothing and ineffective scheduling of tasks.

Mauri (2012) in a contribution states that speed is now king and so a manager must now be effective at working, though often under pressure where the art of prioritisation, delegating and protecting one's time are must-haves. Besides, an eight hour these days is only 480 minutes. In that time one have to complete tasks, meet deadlines, attend meetings, speak to clients, manage interruptions, write emails, handle voicemail; obviously these have to be done before lunch time.

It is worthy of note that scholars like Imboden (2013); Jones (2005) and Kukreja (2013) had variously written on effective time management practices. Among others, these scholars held the view that managers should prioritize their activities and plan ahead of time to avoid undertaking tasks in an unplanned manner. Kukreja (2013) admonishes that the trick in time management is to organise one's tasks and use time effectively to get more things done each day. Because, in so doing that can help manager to reduce stress and do better at workplace. After all, time management is a skill that takes time to develop and is different for each person. One just needs to find what works best for him/her by adopting a couple of strategies available.

From the perspective of Imboden (2013) time management is an important feature of personal efficiency. Thus, seeking to improve time management depends on one's own drive and perspective in life. Moreover, time management is the core foundation of any successful achievement and that every one is using time in equal measure.

2.2. Effective Time Management Strategies

In her discussion of the concept: effective time management, Anderson (2012) stressed that the term 'Time Management' is a misnomer since one cannot manage time; rather an individual can manage the events in his/her life in relation to time. Ideally, individuals wished they had more time but manage to get only 24 hours, which is 1,440 minutes or 86,400 seconds each day. The extent that time is used depends on skills learned through self-analysis, planning, evaluation, and self-control. In line with these thoughts, Dodd and Sundheim (2011) emphasised that time like money, is both valuable and limited; it must be protected, used wisely, and budgeted. This is so because people who practise good time management techniques often find that they: are more productive, have more energy for things they need to accomplish, feel less stressed, are able to do the things they want, get more things done, relate more positively to others, and feel better about themselves.

In sum, Anderson (2012) held that view that finding a suitable time management strategy that works best for a university administrator depends on the individual's personality, ability to self-motivate and level of self-discipline. Therefore, it is prudent to incorporate some, or all of the ten strategies that have been suggested as follows:

- i. Knowing how to spend one's time,
- ii. Setting priorities,
- iii. Using a planning tool,
- iv. Getting organised
- v. Scheduling one's time appropriately,
- vi. Delegating that is getting help from others,
- vii. Stop procrastinating
- viii. Managing external time wasters
- ix. Avoid multi-tasking and
- x. Staying healthy

In conclusion, Anderson indicates that regardless of the time management strategies one uses, the individual should take time to evaluate how each worked for him/her.

3. Methodology

The descriptive survey was the research design used for this study. The population consisted of registrars of the University of Education, Winneba, who work from the Registrar's Offices across the four campuses, which are Winneba, Ajumako, Kumasi and Mampong. The total number of Registrars in the University was 123 and breakdown is Winneba (86), Ajumako (5), Kumasi (21) and Mampong (11). The sample for the survey was 50 respondents, which is about 38.0% of the population. The simple random sampling was used to select the study sample. A self-administered questionnaire developed by the researchers was used to collect data from respondents. It was developed mainly from literature on time management and was pre-tested on ten of the registrars who did not participate in the main survey. After the testing, a reliability co-efficient was run using the Cronbach alpha with result was 0.75, which was deemed to be appropriate for use in a scientific survey. The data collected for the study were analyzed using frequency counts, simple percentages and tables.

4. Results and Discussion

This survey was conducted based on three objectives as such the results are presented in that order. Each objective is denoted as a sub heading.

4.1. Time Management Practices of Registrars

The first objective of this survey was about the time management practices of Registrars of the University of Education, Winneba. As administrators, they are not oblivious of the relevance of time management practices, hence the intention to re-echo what they had been doing in that respect. The responses in this section were measured using adverbs of time, which are 'Never', 'Sometimes', 'Regularly' and 'All the Time'. In this context 'Never' – means such an idea did not ever occur to the Registrar in the management of time; 'Sometimes' connotes the idea of 'occasionally' or 'not often'; 'Regularly' means 'very often' and 'All the Time' means 'always'. The responses elicited on the time management practices are presented in Table 1.

	Responses			
Time management practices	Never		2	All the Time
N(%)		N(%)	N(%)	N(%)
1. I use goal setting to decide which tasks I should work on during the day.	2(4.0)	6(12.0)	30(60.0)	12(24.0)
2. I work on the highest priority tasks during the day.	0(0.0)	12(24.0)	18(36.0)	20(40.0)
3. Each day I set aside as small amount of time for planning and				
scheduling my work.	0(0.0)	18(36.0)	14(28.0)	18(36.0)
4. I do my priority tasks in the most productive part of the day.	0(0.0)	18(36.0)	20(40.0)	12(24.0)
5. I delegate less important tasks to my subordinates.	2(4.0)	18(36.0)	12(24.0)	18(36.0)
6. I use colour coding to designate various tasks to be carried on a day.	16(32.0) 18(36.0)	6(12.0)	10(20.0)
7. I work diligently to meet deadlines.	0(0.0)	2(4.0)	18(36.0)	30(60.0)
8. I set specific, written goals and put deadlines on them.	0(0.0)	6(12.0)	20(40.0)	24(48.0)
9. I work late at night or on weekends.	12(24.0) 28(56.0)	8(16.0)	2(4.0)
10. I go for break when it is time.	8(16.0) 24(48.0)	6(12.0)	12(24.0)

Table 1: Registrars' Time Management Practices Source: Field Survey, March 2016

First and foremost, Table 1 shows that 60.0% of respondents indicated that they used goal setting time management principle to decide which tasks they should work on during a working day. This strategy is used by the majority of Registrars of UEW across the four campuses because it is good for all administrators to always to set achievable goals that are measurable within a shortest possible time. It is based on this that Pavey (2014) indicated that setting sharp and clearly defined goals can measure and take pride in the achievement of those goals.

Planning is almost synonymous to goal setting, since, the two involve looking into the future with hope. Thus, it is observed from Table 1 that 36.0% of respondents stressed that they sometimes set aside small amount of time for planning and scheduling their tasks. In the same way, 28.0% and another 36.0% of respondents affirmed that they regularly or all the time made time to plan and schedule their daily tasks. It is obvious that planning and scheduling tasks become part of goal setting as broad management activity and this helps to save time in the execution of tasks.

Another time management practice that respondents indicated they used was working on the highest priority tasks during the day. With this strategy, Table 1 shows that 40.0% of respondents said they used it all the time, 36.0% used it regularly and the remaining (24.0%) applied this time management practice occasionally. As a matter of fact, working on highest priority tasks amounted to setting goals because it is within the goal setting strategy such that tasks to be accomplished in a day are prioritised. In line with this finding, Mauri (2012) noted that the eight hour working day is made up of 480 minutes only and during that time frame a manager has to complete tasks that includes meeting deadlines, attending meetings, speaking to clients, managing interruptions, writing emails and handling voicemail in addition to one's main task to administering a schedule in an organisation for instance. This demands that one prioritises one's activities in order to be efficient and effective on the job.

In a closely related issue to prioritising activities for the day, 36.0% and 40.0% respectively of respondents indicated that they sometimes and regularly performed their priority tasks in the most productive part of the day. The phrase, 'productive part of the day' is when a staff is able to give his/her best but this time is not clearly stated. May be this productive part of the day is in the afternoon, where no visitors are coming or early in the day when no other person had come to work and concentration is full. Whatever the case may be, one needs to set a time apart in the course of the day and concentrate on priority tasks to fulfill the challenges of the position of the University Registrar.

At this juncture, it is important to note that the remaining time management techniques are all meant to achieve the goal setting, planning and scheduling of work time management practices. This is because working diligently to meet deadlines indicates that the Registrar should have planned and scheduled his/her work and had prioritised the tasks. On this score, it was seen that a cumulative of 96.0% of respondents agreed they used this strategy of time management regularly or all the time. No respondent refused to use it. Also, a total of 88.0% of respondents emphasised that in their attempt to meet the deadlines, specific and written goals were decided

before they were executed. In the same vein, it became necessary sometimes for some (56.0%) of the Registrars to work late in the night and at weekends to accomplish certain tasks, with the view to meeting deadlines. In spite of the fact that the majority of respondents made sacrifices and worked outside the official working hours, others (24.0%) refused to follow that mode of working at weekends or late in the night.

An equally important time management practice that most Registrars used was delegating authority to deserving subordinates. With regard to delegating of tasks, in this study, variously respondents resorted to the delegation of less important tasks to subordinates to save time. It is not clear what less important task in a university meant, but probably, tasks that did not require signature or even if it is signature, it did not have financial implication for the institution.

Yet another time management practice which is used these days by top managers is colour coding of tasks. Firstly, it is seen from Table 1 that 32.0% of respondents indicated that they did not use colour coding to designate tasks to be accomplished in a day because that was impracticable. In any case, 36.0% of respondents, 12.0% used it regularly and 20.0% used that practice all the time. So in effect, the majority of respondents used colour coding to designate various tasks to be carried on a day. It is a modern technique used in time management for top managers of organisations, in that different colours may be used to show what tasks are to be performed at what time of the day. It is not very different from the previous strategies that had been discussed, it rather complements them since variety is good in every human endeavour, time management practices not an exception. The time management practices that have been discussed became prudent because, Clark (2014) had said that time one wasted cannot be replenished and that the time available to a University Registrar is limited, hence, time management becomes an imperative.

4.2. Time Management challenges for University Registrars

The second objective of this survey was the time management challenges of University Registrars. Generally, it is indisputable that time is perishable resource and once it is lost it cannot be replenished. It has been observed that effective time management is saddled with a couple of challenges – in short, time management is not devoid of challenges as such in this survey, an attempt was made to identify the challenges that confronted Registrars in their time management practices. The responses that were elicited in this direction are presented in Table 2 followed by a discussion of the findings. This time around, statements depicting the challenges were put forward and respondents indicated the extent they agreed or disagreed with each of them. Hence, the response variables, 'Strongly Agree' and 'Agree' would become 'Agree' and 'Strongly Disagree' and 'Disagree' would become 'Disagree.' In the discussion, they are collapsed into two, so we have 'Agree' and 'Disagree'.

	SD	D	A	SA
Challenges to effective time management	N (%)	N(%)	N(%)	N (%)
1. Combining house responsibilities with professional commitments.	2(4.0)	8(16.0)	26(52.0)	14(28.0)
2. Combining social responsibilities and activities with professional commitments.	6(12.0)	6(12.0)	34(68.0)	4(8.0)
3. Always working under pressure to meet deadlines.	18(36.0)	20(40.0)	2(4.0)	10(20.0)
4. Performing multiple roles and responsibilities at work.	2(4.0)	8(16.0)	28(56.0)	12(24.0)
5. Procrastinating because I worked better under pressure.	28(56.0)	14(28.0)	8(16.0)	0(0.0)
6. Feeling overwhelmed with piles of paper in the office and at home.	8(16.0)	32(64.0)	10(20.0)	0(0.0)
7. Experienced interruptions in the form of (emails, meetings, telephone calls and visitors).	0(0.0)	14(28.0)	24(48.0)	12(24.0)
8. Getting home late has become a norm because of the nature of registrar's work.	4(8.0)	18(36.0)	28(56.0)	0(0.0)

Table 2: Challenges Registrars faced in their Time Management Practices Source: Field Survey, March 2016

With the first time management, Table 4 shows that 80.0% of respondents agreed that they combined their house responsibilities with professional commitments. There no doubt back in the house, individuals Registrars have tasks that take a considerable time to accomplish. Sometimes, it becomes imperative to combine one's personal and professional duties whilst at home in order to meet timelines in the office. This is challenging and problematic. Hence, it is agreed among Registrars that combining official and unofficial tasks is a challenge to effective time management.

In a related issue, Table 2 shows that 76.0% of respondents agreed that combining social responsibilities and activities with professional commitments is a challenge to effective time management for Registrars of a University. This is not different from the challenge discussed in the last paragraph since in Ghana, any well meaning citizen has a couple of social responsibilities like attending funerals of friends, relatives and colleagues and attending weddings amidst other social functions – all of which demand the use of time. The attendance of these functions sometime eats into official working hours but which the Registrar cannot refuse to attend. This is a challenge and makes the incumbent administrative head of a faculty overwhelmed most of the time.

Again, it is seen from Table 2 that 72.0% of respondents agreed that they experienced interruptions in the form of (emails, meetings, telephone calls and visitors). This is an undeniable fact because on daily basis, as Registrars, students and other stakeholders would call at office without prior appointments and if you refuse to attend to them it would create bad image for the University, hence, the Registrar does not have a choice than to attend to those situations as and when they come up.

Another challenge that seemed to confront a respectable number of Registrars was the issue of getting home late. With this challenge, it was seen that 56.0% of respondents agreed it was a challenge and 44.0% disagreed. In the University setting, it is not strange to observe that some schedule officers of the Registry closing late from the office and arriving late in the house because they have had to attend meetings or during the normal working hours receive calls and attended to visitors planned or unplanned. In situations like that

the Registrar does not have an option than to stay on a bit late to complete the day's work because if he/she postponed or procrastinated, there would be pressure, which he/she would not want to happen since that could result in the production of a shoddy work.

Apart the above, only a few Registrars considered working under pressure, procrastination and working on piles of paper in the office and at home were considered as challenges. For instance, only 24.0% of respondents felt working under pressure was a challenge. Also, 20.0% of respondents agreed that they had to work on piles of paper in the office and at home and Table 2 shows that 16.0% of Registrars saw procrastination as a challenge to time management. These were expected because, not everyone saw things the same way.

4.3. Suggested Ways Registrars could use to Manage Time More Meaningfully

The third and final specific objective of this survey was to find out how the UEW Registrars could be supported to manage time more effectively on their respective schedules. As has been the trend, some of the ways were suggested for respondents' consideration but they were made to add those they felt had not been proposed. The responses they gave are displayed in Table 3.

	Yes	No
Ways to improve time management	N (%)	N (%)
i. Using secretary skills to filter telephone calls	186.0)	324.0)
ii. Visitors to book appointment	22(44.0)	28(56.0)
iii. Pre-planning of the day's activities	46(92.0)	4(8.0)
iv. Draw a distinction between official and unofficial duties	30(60.0)	20(40.0)
v. All meetings must be planned before hand	44(88.0)	6(12.0)
vi. Doing one task at a time	34(68.0)	16(32.0)
vii. Delegating less sensitive tasks	38(76.0)	12(24.0)

Table 3: Ways Registrars could adopt to Improve their Time Management Practices Source: Field Survey, March 2016

Table 3 shows that there are a couple of ways by which time management challenges can be overcome. Firstly, it is seen that telephone calls either from the Registrar's personal hand set or from the official telephone lines had been a challenge to the administrator and for this, something had to be done to mitigate it. From the table only 36.0% of respondents agreed that the use of secretary skills to filter telephone calls could help reduce the effect of the incessant telephone calls that tend to disrupt the work of the Registrar. It has been observed that overtime professional secretaries have a way of holding a call and filtering those that are to be entertained and those to be discarded. Owing to this realisation, Registrars are urged to know when to ignore a call or to give attention to incoming calls. This skill can be acquired over time through careful planning of how to manage phone calls at the personal level. In spite of the fact that majority of respondents did not see the sense in using secretary skills in blocking unnecessary calls, the measure is worthwhile to ensure effective time management. Regardless of the proportion of respondents who disagreed with the adoption of this measure, Jones (2005) indicated that secretary skills are used widely by managers to manage the phone calls.

The second measure, which, it is believed University Registrars can adopt to manage time effectively, is asking all visitors to book appointment before they could be attended to. This measure also did not receive the support of the majority (56.0%) of respondents; that, notwithstanding 44.0% of respondents agreed that visitors are to book appointment with the respective secretaries to see and talk to the administrator. Frankly, in the Ghanaian society this measure would hardly work because if this was enforced to the letter, people would criticise and talk ill about the Registrar's Department as being officious. Even though, booking appointment is not a new practice but Ghanaians hardly use that format for getting the attention of incumbent public officials, except in few exceptional cases. To this end, Jones (2005) admonished that top public officers must learn to say no to this practice since the status quo cannot continue prevail in a globalised university environment.

Thirdly, from Table 3, it is seen that 92.0% of respondents believed that pre-planning of a day's activities could be used to deal with the challenges that are associated with time management by Registrars of the UEW system. The issue is that university administrators do a lot of planning periodically, but in this instance, they are urged to do mini planning of activities daily – this means, the officer must forecast what he/she wants to do in a day so that if anything does not go as planned then adjustments can be made in the subsequent days.

Again, in Table 3 it is shown that 60.0% of respondents held the view that drawing a distinction between official and unofficial duties would help in the management of time very well. It was explained that when a Registrar comes to office he/she must concentrate on the office work and do same whilst at home. In spite of this laudable suggestion, it was noted that it would very difficult if not impossible to draw a distinction on this score because every now and then one is called upon to attend to an issue and under such emergency circumstances one cannot say I am at home or in the office and therefore cannot attend to you.

Furthermore, Table 3 shows that the majority (88.0%) of respondents agreed that headmistresses and assistant headmistress should ensure that all meetings are planned before hand. This dovetails into pre-planning of activities but it does not work like that because some issues would crop up in the day that would require that the administrator organises a meeting immediately to discuss and take a decision on the issue at stake. However, by and large, most of the activities within a semester should be planned and the plan must be respected, especially when it comes to meetings of statutory committee's meetings like, Academic Board, Joint Admission, Students-

Staff Consultative among others It is also understood that emergency meetings can be organised but such meetings should be planned with clear agenda for discussion so that time would not be wasted on frivolous issues.

Lastly, according to 76.0% of respondents, delegating less sensitive tasks to subordinates is acceptable in management practice every where and so Registrars must adhere to that measure. As a matter of fact, it is one of the measures that have been recommended for adoption by many scholars in time management (Imboden, 2013; Kukreja, 2013). Imboden (2013) focused on planning and delegation and he explained that based on task prioritisation, planning represents a means to anticipate and have a global overview on forthcoming tasks. On his part, Kukreja (2013) said it is common for everyone to take more tasks than one's desired potential. This can often result in stress and burnout. In that sense delegation is not running away from one's responsibilities but it is an important function of management. Under such circumstance, what one needs to do is to learn the art of delegating work to subordinates as per their skills and abilities.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

It can be concluded that there were six-time management practices that are regularly used by Registrars in the UEW system. This was seen to conform to the best practices in effective time management. In spite of the fact, a couple of encountered some challenges along the way by Registrars in conforming to time management principles. What was however observed were that these challenges were mostly peculiar with the Ghanaian environment where one has to receive visitors who have no prior appointment, combining house and official commitments and social and professional engagements such that a distinction could not be drawn most time. Even though, some of the challenges encountered by heads were not situated within existing literature on time management, that notwithstanding, the measures to be adopted to deal with them are based on sound theoretical and empirical opinions.

It is therefore recommended that Registrars:

- i. should resort to the use of visitors' book, should
- ii. draw a line between what is considered as house/social responsibilities and those of professional/official commitments so that the appropriate plan and schedules can be drawn to perform as planned,
- iii. should not multitask since that would not counterproductive, rather they should at all times concentrate on one issue and complete its performance before moving on to other tasks and
- iv. must not stay on the job for too long since that can affect their health however, if there is a need to stay on a bit longer, they should take breaks along the line to gain some strength

6. References

- i. Anderson, P. R. (2012). Ten strategies for better time management. Accessed on 22nd February, 2016 from https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/burkecountyextension/home-and-family/10-strategies-for-better-time-management
- ii. Clark, C. L. (2014). Meeting the challenge of time management. Retrieved April 9, 2014 from www.reflectionsonnursingleadership.org
- iii. Dodd, P & Sundheim, D. (2011) "The 25 best time management tools and techniques: how to get more done without driving yourself crazy". New York:
- iv. John Wiley & Sons
- v. Fiore, N. A. (2006). The now habit: A strategic program for overcoming procrastination and enjoying guilt- free play. New York: Penguin Group.
- vi. Imboden, D. (2013). Time management and personal efficiency. Accessed on 23rd
- vii. February, 2016 from http://www.iteration.info/best-practices-improve-time-management/
- viii. Jones, J. (2005). Management skills in schools: A resource for school leaders. London: Paul Chapman
- ix. Kukreja, R. (2013). Ten ways to improve your time management skills. Accessed on 23rd
- x. February, 2016 from http://www.lifehack.org/articles/productivity/10-ways-improve-your-time-management-skills.html
- xi. Mauri, C. (2012). First things first: Prioritising tasks for better time management. Accessed on 22nd February, 2016 from www.cimaglobal.com
- xii. Pavey, S. (2013). Ten common time management mistakes. Retrieved April 9, 2014 from www.mindtools.com