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## MODULE ONE

### UNIT FIVE

#### Time Management

##### Introduction

It is likely that, as head of a school, you find your time, as a resource, is very scarce. It is impossible to store, or stretch, or restore, once it has passed. As a head you will appreciate how important it is for you to manage your time if you wish to achieve your objectives. Consequently, you and your staff will need to reflect regularly on how you use your time to ensure that you are making the best use of it. Making the best use of the available time is a key element of good management. It is the aim of this unit to help you become a better time manager as part of your own self-development.

Individual study time: 4 hours

##### Learning outcomes

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- list your main time users
- identify your main time wasters and time savers
- realise the importance of budgeting time
- design and implement your own action programme on time management
- build up more disposable time
- rank tasks in the order of their importance
- delegate effectively.

##### Understanding the job of the school head

Before you can manage your time efficiently, you should first know and thoroughly understand the tasks you are expected to perform. It is worth your while to refer to Unit 4 on 'Job Analysis' before proceeding. Once you have mastered the tasks you are expected to perform, you will be in a better position to determine which ones you have to do as a head and which ones you can delegate. This will further assist you in allocating time to each task.

##### Activity 5.1

- (1) List what you believe are the major types of tasks a head is expected to perform.
- (2) Divide the types into those important ones you have to undertake and those you can delegate.

(3) Allocate time to each task you perform. This may be done by using percentages. Thus in a 40 hour week, 4 hours = 10 per cent.

1 hour

### Comments

We hope you have identified at least four broad types of tasks you are expected to perform, namely:

- routine tasks: duties repeated at specific periods (daily, weekly or monthly)
- personnel duties: management of personnel issues
- thinking: allocating time to creative tasks designed to improve the operations of your school
- problem-solving: allocating time to solving unexpected and routine problems.

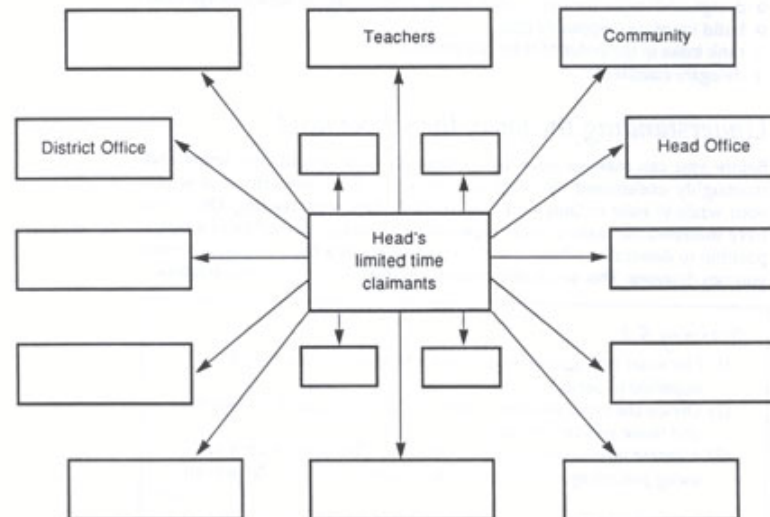
Having a clear understanding of how you spend your days will help you to identify the main users of your time. Having a clear understanding of what your duties are will assist you to rank the users of your time in order of their importance. It may surprise you to discover that the operations of your school would not be adversely affected if you did not attend to some of your time users or if someone else attended to them on your behalf!

### Activity 5.2

Fig 3 below shows some of the parties that claim the use of your time. In the light of your own experience, fill in the rest of the boxes. (The boxes are drawn in different sizes to help suggest differences in the amount of time each party may claim. If you need more boxes then add them in.)

30 minutes

Fig 3 Claimants on head's time



### Comments

Arising from this activity, you should now realise that all the parties listed above are not only time users but also potential time wasters, unless you plan and budget your time and determine criteria for deciding which parties you have to attend to as a head. In particular, it is important for you to make time available just for yourself.

### Activity 5.3

Fig 4 shows potential time wasters in Column 1. Indicate the causes of these time wasters in Column 2. Leave Column 3 for the moment.

30 minutes

Fig 4 Potential time wasters

TIME WASTERS	POSSIBLE CAUSES	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS
1 Lack of planning		
2 Lack of priorities		
3 Over-commitment		
4 Management by crisis		
5 Paperwork & reading		
6 Meetings		
7 Indecision		
8 Unclear objectives		
9 Postponed decisions		
10 Procrastination		
11 Lack of delegation		
12 Lack of self-discipline		
13 Unnecessary meetings		
14 Lack of managerial skills		
15 Incompetent subordinates		
16 Inconsistent actions		
17 Socialising & interrupting others		
18 Cannot say 'No'		

### Comments

From this activity we hope you will now appreciate that some of the time wasters may be caused by yourself! Once you have identified these time wasters, or leaks, you need to take steps to eliminate them. The process of eliminating time wasters and leaks is not an easy one. It involves tight budgeting of your time and developing efficient work habits. Efficient time management is a process that takes time and, like everything else the manager does, should be continuously reviewed and refined.

We hope you now have a clear picture of what constitute time wasters. In the next section we will explore ways through which you can prune off time wasters, thus managing your time more efficiently.

## **Strategies for saving time (time savers)**

### ***Activity 5.4***

Now complete Column 3 'Suggested Solutions' in Fig 4.

30 minutes

### **Comments**

Here is a checklist of some solutions to the time wasters listed in Column 1. See how many you got and whether you have any additional suggestions:

- recognising the importance of planning
- formulating a clear mission statement with a few selected objectives and targets which have been discussed and agreed with your staff
- learning to say 'No'
- putting first things first
- encouraging rapid communication
- taking time to do a task to avoid having to do it again
- differentiating between urgent and important tasks
- attempting less and delegating more
- reading selectively
- taking time to plan
- setting goals and sticking by them
- screening visitors
- screening and grouping telephone calls
- staying uninvolved with all but the essentials
- not planning or attending unnecessary meetings
- getting facts, setting targets and investigating alternatives
- training subordinates well and allowing for mistakes
- giving credit to your subordinates.

The activity above has clearly demonstrated to you how you can eliminate time wasters and plug leaks in your time. Let us have a look at some time savers in more detail in order to enhance further your understanding of how to manage time effectively.

### **Delegation**

As a head, you will appreciate that one way of creating more time for yourself is to ask some of your staff members to perform some of your duties on your behalf. This is what delegation is all about. It may also have an added advantage of helping to create a team spirit amongst staff. But before you delegate you must take steps to ensure that it won't lead to confusion.

### ***Activity 5.5***

What steps would you suggest you should take before you delegate some of your duties and responsibilities to your staff?

15 minutes

### **Comments**

You may have identified some of the following:

- identifying the strengths and weaknesses of your staff
- recognising the existing skills and competencies of your staff
- clarifying your own attitude towards those with whom you work
- ensuring you have the necessary authority to delegate
- preparing a clear statement of the task to be delegated
- getting acceptance and commitment from the delegatee
- establishing control or checking mechanisms.

If you delegate effectively you will find yourself doing mostly those tasks which you alone have the necessary qualifications, authority and judgement to do. This will free you to devote your time to creative thinking and reading. Thus to delegate means to manage time and this means working better, not harder or quicker.

### **Building efficient work habits**

Once you have identified old habits that lead to time wasting, you should take steps to eliminate these by:

- beginning a deliberate campaign against the old habits
- not tolerating exceptions
- beginning straight away to change your behaviour and not waiting
- getting started
- avoiding decision-dodging by committees.

Persistence and determination can produce dramatic results that are well worth your effort.

### **Avoiding being a workaholic**

#### ***Activity 5.6***

- (1) What is meant by the term 'workaholic'?
- (2) What are the characteristics of a workaholic?

15 minutes

### **Comments**

A workaholic is one who tries to do too much, but achieves very little in the end. This is usually caused by a lack of planning and poor budgeting of time, resulting in the workaholic having far too much to do. In addition to the characteristics of workaholism you have identified in Activity 5.6, consider the following:

- over-dedication to work
- compulsive belief in task completion
- pushing oneself to the limit
- having a disorderly work desk
- directing subordinates so that they are always running here and there
- carrying piles of work home

- panicking over every emergency
- never taking a vacation
- never meeting deadlines.

If this profile fits you, you may need to look at your planning and determine which tasks need to be completed in a specified number of hours. You can only be on top of the situation if you manage your time carefully.

### **Being aware of myths on time**

Many people believe that working hard will of necessity lead to the attainment of the desired goals. However, as a head you will appreciate that you become less efficient if you spend too much time on one task. The fact is that work tends to expand to fill up the available time. You are sure to have experienced it at your work place, where eight hours of work can easily stretch into twelve hours. You will find that the less time you assign to a task the more work you get done. There is, in fact, no direct relationship between hard work and positive results. What is true is that time spent on planning can save several hours' work. Furthermore, some people believe that the most active person gets the best results. It is, however, true that many active individuals have no objectives and plans and therefore do not get results. To become an effective time manager avoid these myths or misconceptions.

### **Time log or inventory**

Before you can begin to manage your time effectively, you must know how you are using it now. A time log will help you discover where your time leaks are and help you start plugging them.

#### ***Activity 5.7***

- (1) List all the activities or tasks that you perform in a day or a week.
- (2) Allocate time to each activity or task.
- (3) Objectively analyse whether you are using your time effectively.

30 minutes

### **Comments**

After logging your activities for a day or a week it is likely you will discover a few surprises in the manner you have been using your time. It should have helped you to:

- discover the areas you are most effective in your use of time
- identify the areas where you are least effective
- determine the areas that need improvement
- discover that perhaps far too much time is being spent on one task
- discover that after all, many of your meetings and visitors are not that important.

You should take the initiative to identify areas where you can save time and make the best use of the time that you save.

### **Implementing a time management programme**

Having read this unit, and undertaken the activities, we hope that you have not only realised the advantages of a properly planned and budgeted use of time, but that you

are going to start a programme in your school that is aimed at a more efficient use of time. In initiating such a programme you may need to consider the following:

- selling the idea to all your staff
- convincing all your staff of the benefits
- setting objectives in full consultation with your staff
- setting strategies for implementation and evaluation
- instituting follow-up strategies to check implementation by everyone.

### **Evaluation**

Once your time management programme is in place, you will need to monitor its implementation and assess whether, in fact, time is being utilised in an effective and efficient manner. This may be done through:

- meetings with members of staff
- questionnaires
- comments deposited in the school suggestion box
- time logs compiled by your individual members of staff.

### **A warning**

Occasionally you find managers who are the opposite of workaholics; they are so expert at delegating that they are, in fact, quite idle. Signs of this are likely to include frequent absences from school, a very clear desk, and they may spend a lot of time with casual visitors. To maintain this position, such people usually have an autocratic management style.

### **Summary**

We hope that through this unit you are now a strong believer in time management, and that you are in a position to identify what constitutes time wasters and time savers in your job. The extent to which you are an effective school head, will depend on your ability to plug time leaks, and to make the best use of all your available time.

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