



Genesis B. Naparan
Philippines
Ryan G. Tulod
Philippines

Time Management Strategies of School Administrators Towards Effective Administration: A Phenomenological Study

DOI: 10.15804/tner.2021.63.1.05

Abstract

This qualitative phenomenological study was conducted to determine the school administrators' time management strategies and how they helped them have effective school administration. The researchers interviewed school administrators of selected elementary schools in the Western Philippines. The study results disclosed that school administrators developed time management strategies such as delegation of authorities, setting clear priorities, managing distraction, making written plans, and setting time tables. These time management strategies were focused on the administrative supervision of the school administrators. These time management strategies could make the school operation smooth and easy and help them accomplish the administrators' tasks efficiently.

Key words: *Time Management, School Administrator, Effective Administration, Phenomenology*

Introduction

Time decides the importance of achieving the set targets and objectives (Ugwulashi, 2011). Managing time builds one's efficiency, limits burnout, advances progression, and improves individual and expert fulfillment (Gordon & Borkan, 2014). As Nwaiwu (2000) indicated, time is the interim between the beginning

and the end of an activity. It is delicate that it cannot be spared yet must be spent, and once abused, it can never be recaptured. Akomolafe (2013) stated that time management skills are basically for productive individuals.

Time management offers productive outcome and an efficient result which would satisfy the institution's needs (Alugbou, 2005). School administrators play a vital role in running schools (Cadosales, 2011). They are crucial in developing teachers' grit, leading to exhibiting outstanding teaching performance (Baraquia, 2020). They have to work long hours in a day. Thus, the school administrators' time management strategies would help them have effective administration (Akomo-lafe, 2013). For the administration to be effective, time management is significant, exhibited through the relationship between time use and school administrators' school result (Horng, Klasik & Loeb, 2010).

In the study conducted by Horng et al. (2010), school administrators spent 20% of their time helping their teachers, invested 63% of their time in the school office and school building, and spent just 10% of their time doing instructional supervision. They have many time-wasting activities such as phone interruptions, drop-in guests, discussion with colleagues, unscheduled meetings among others, jumbled work area and individual complication, emergencies, ineffective appointment, indistinct correspondence, and guidance, endeavoring a lot at once and assessing time unreasonably, deficient or incorrect or delayed information, befuddled obligation and authority, hesitation and procrastination, absence of self-discipline, and leaving tasks incomplete (Akomo-lafe, 2005; Peeters and Rutte, 2005). These activities would hinder the school administrators from coming up with effective time management.

Time management has also become a problem for Filipinos. According to Palabrica (2011), in addressing time management, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) announced their plans to make Filipinos time – conscious. In this scenario, Filipinos are encouraged to synchronize their clocks and watches with the Philippine Standard Time.

In the research site, it has been observed that the school administrators have many things to perform coherently to their job descriptions. Thus, this study aimed to explore school administrators' time management strategies in the schools within the Tabina district of Zamboanga del Sur for 2019 – 2020. This study described school administrators' time management strategies and how these strategies help them have effective administration.

Method

This study employed a qualitative research design with the use of a transcendental phenomenological study approach. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) claim that qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach. Giorgi (2012) stated that phenomenology wants to understand how a specific phenomenon presents every person's consciousness. This study's participants were the nine elementary school administrators of Tabina district, Zamboanga Del Sur, Philippines. They were purposively chosen according to at least three years of length of service. The data were gathered through one-to-one interviews. All information was recorded and kept confidential.

The data analysis focused on small chunks of data commonly called 'meaning units' such as phrases or text passages. These were then progressively elaborated to pull out a more in-depth understanding. Meanings were condensed, with the researchers trying to stay as close as possible to the participant's actual words. Gradually meanings were sifted and honed, resulting in the emergence of themes.

School Administrators Time Management Strategies

School administrators are looking forward to an effective administration. They facilitate various strategies to ensure everything is working well in their institution. Based on the results, they used these time management strategies: **Delegating authorities, setting clear priorities, managing distractions, making written plans, and setting time tables.**

Delegation of authorities. School administrators delegate authorities to their teachers. It is about entrusting their job to someone else they can trust and can facilitate their duties without their presence to achieve effective results. Moreover, it is also an organizational process wherein the manager divides his work among the subordinates and gives them the responsibility to accomplish their respective tasks. The participants have expressed:

When we say time management strategies, first and foremost, I have a delegation of duties with my teachers through the chairmanship of different committees. It's my responsibility to organize it, but I have many duties, not only at school but also in the District and Division Office. I designate teachers, I assign them to do the tasks on my behalf, my duties and responsibilities so that the flow of the organization is good and reporting is easy. – P1

"Delegating the task to the concerned teachers is very effective and efficient in terms of the things which he/she is good at. If all these things were materialized, our administration and supervision would have gone smoothly." – P3

Another time management strategy that I considered is to delegate responsibility to my colleagues since our works are fantastic. We cannot manage the time if we do everything, so we need to designate our colleagues to lessen our work. When our district supervisor calls my attention, I need to delegate one of my teachers to manage the school. – P8

Setting clear priorities. Setting clear priorities enables the school administrators to accomplish the task according to the objectives of the institution. Setting clear priorities means all people in an organization can move ahead in a meaningful way. School administrators set goals according to priorities. The participants revealed: *“As a principal, I emphasize the top priorities of what is being required.” – P3*

I did it by “First Thing First” meaning I prioritized the first thing that I need to do. For example, I have something to do the next day, so I will number my schedules or my works that are the most important/urgent. I will follow my plan religiously unless there are visitors. I don’t have a specific name for that, but I call it “doing things in chronological order. – P7

Managing distractions. School administrators adopted managing distractions in their time management strategies. They considered distractions as time-wasters that prohibit and hinder them from accomplishing their specific task. Managing distractions are strategies to lessen time wasters, which hamper school administrators to complete their tasks. The participants discussed;

Time wasters could not be avoided, like unexpected visitors that are not in your supervisory plan. Sometimes, you were called for unforeseen meetings in the division office. In the case of unexpected visitors, I control too much talking, especially if it is not so important and to the point. For unforeseen meetings, I delegate my subordinates to attend so that I can focus on fulfilling my tasks at school– P1

There are times that you received phone calls from your friends, but then you should limit the conversation. There are also drop-in guests, and sometimes they are from the division office, so you have no choice but to entertain them but with limitations – P5

Sometimes, I could not finish my plans in a day since there are many interventions you cannot forbid like unexpected visitors wherein your presence is needed – P9

Making written plans. Making written plans is one of the school administrators’ strategies to maximize their time in accomplishing their tasks in a day. Written

procedures are goals set in a day and are written in a notebook, which serves as their guide in accomplishing their mission. The participants have revealed:

One of my time management strategies is to plan the necessary activities in every program. I used to write all the things to be done in a day. – P3

Spending my time doing my duties is not as easy as others have thought because there are many challenges/circumstances that would just come up out of nowhere, interrupting my schedules. When time is on my side, it is still best if I have planned it on what comes first in doing my duties like when I am going to do my instructional leadership tasks and when I am going my administrative leadership tasks.... – P4

I review the list in my notebook, the things to be done in a week. There are urgent, and also for the next day. I numbered them. I also have a list of priorities so that I could not forget. And every time I go, I genuinely arrange the list of my appointments. – P1

Setting a time table. Setting a timetable or deadlines for the tasks is one of the school administrators' strategies in maximizing their time. Setting time table is giving a specific time of accomplishing the tasks. The participants disclosed:

Another time management is being time-bound. Time should be time because it becomes a habit of the teachers to be late as I have seen it. Because I am different, time is time. It also depends on how the headmaster works. I also have this strategy in the program; I have to limit those who have a part in the program, 2 minutes is the longest, and I will give a signal if they go beyond. – P1

I also considered setting a timeline as my strategy in the work because if you don't have a schedule or timetable, you will have no assurance that you can finish your work. – P8

Ways that Time Management Strategies help administrators to have Effective Administration

The school administrators' time management strategies helped them toward effective administration through easy and smooth administration workflow and effective and efficient achievement of targets.

Easy and Smooth Administration Workflow. The time management strategies developed by the school administrators could cause ease and smooth administration workflow. It helps them to accomplish the task efficiently and smoothly. The participants emphasized:

Delegating the task to the concerned teachers is very effective and efficient in terms of the things which he/she is good at. If all these things are materialized, our administration and supervision have gone smoothly. – P3

Time management strategies help me do my duties because there will be backlogs in my work without them. It will help us in carrying out our functions and responsibilities in a smooth way. Time pressure has no place. It is not easy to be a school principal because he has so many things to do, but your work will be easier if you have time management. You are the manager of your time. – P5

Effective and efficient Achievement of Targets. Time management strategies are also useful to the school administrators who become productive and efficient in achieving their targets. Participants have mentioned:

Time management strategies are beneficial to the principals, for, without them, we are like a sailing ship having no compass wherein it cannot reach its destination. – P8

These strategies are helpful because, without them, our school will not be like this. Nothing to boast about, but we have no backlog reports, and our Maintenance and other operating expenses are updated. So, we have seen the impact together with the teachers, stakeholders, and the like. If a principal has no time management, he/she will not be efficient in his/her work. If the strategies are handled carefully, it will bring a good result, and they will not be time-pressured. These strategies help to organize work in such a way that it becomes stress-free. – P9

Discussion

With the number of tasks delegated to the school administrators, they have utilized their time management strategies such as delegating authorities, setting clear priorities, managing distractions, making written plans, and setting time tables. They delegate their tasks to their colleagues for them to accomplish their duties even without their presence. Their unavailability could not hamper reaching their goals since their jobs will continue even without their presence. Ojo and Olaniyan

(2014) considered the authorities' designation an effective strategy in pursuing time management. They said this process is helpful so that school administrators would be successful in leading. Since school administrators cannot do the task or the school's works alone, they need workmates who will also carry responsibility for their success. When school administrators fail to delegate administrative duties, it hampers their effectiveness (Ayeni, 2020). The finding of this study opposes that of Victor's (2017), as he describes that school principals do not adopt delegation strategies in managing their time to have effective administration.

As found in this study, elementary school administrators consider setting clear priorities to accomplish their objectives efficiently. School personnel would be clear rather than confused in achieving the task in a day because priorities are clearly defined and established. Ojo and Olaniyan (2014) propose a progression procedure for managing time, setting clear priorities. Prochaska-Cue, Preston, and Mahar (2007) also stressed that school administrators must set exact preferences at the beginning of the day or the beginning of the school year. Further, Hoover (2007) disclosed that most time management experts recommend ranking to-do items in terms of priorities. He suggested that after organizing the tasks, it is good to start with the first item, which serves as the most important or urgent list and only proceeds to the following tasks after completing the previous one. Hence, he emphasized that functions should be arranged in the correct order of priority.

School administrators are doing their best to manage distractions in the school. It cannot be denied that there are unexpected visitors or drop-in guests, phone calls, unplanned meetings, and other time-wasters, which may hinder them in doing their tasks in a day. When these things happened, they made some adjustments to their plans to meet their needs in a day. When administrators manage their time efficiently and adequately, they are less prone to fall into time-wasters like cyberloafing, phone interruptions, drop-in guests, discussion with colleagues, and unscheduled meetings (Akomolafe, 2005; Bozbayindir, 2019; Hassanzabeh & Ebadi, 2007). The school administrators adopt time management strategies to conduct effective school administration (Victor, 2017).

Written plans are useful to the administrators in managing their time, thereby maximizing their tasks. Written programs serve as their guide in performing their responsibilities and helping them remember the things to be done. Written plans are an effective strategy in dealing with time management. Effective school leaders set goals, aim at continuous improvement and promote empowerment (Cadosales, 2019). They serve as the school administrators' blueprint in accomplishing the daily task and further in the yearly goal. It entails detailed plans and ways of fulfilling these plans. May, Huff, and Goldring (2012) expressed that written plans

enable the school administrators to be directed to the things that they are doing and will be doing.

School administrators used the setting time table as part of their time management strategies. They work with deadlines to ensure that there would be no backlog reports. This strategy helps them to be reminded that the specific activity is scheduled. Alugbuo (2005) revealed that the time table ensures the order of work of the school administrators. It saves time and energy. It provides the right allocation of time for different activities. Altun (2011) added that the time table ensures the school's smooth and orderly functioning, which prevents time wastage and energy.

Time management strategies of school administrators helped them to have effective school administration. These strategies make their job easier and smooth and effective and efficient achievement of targets. Claessens (2007) stressed that developing proper time management, programs, and schools' activities would be sustained successfully. School operation would be done smoothly since all aspects are organized and strategized. To manage their time well, administrators need to have self-control and possess high job satisfaction and commitment (Comert, & Donmez, 2019).

The time management utilized by the school administrators would make them efficient and effective in accomplishing their targets. They would not merely achieve the goals set, but they would do it with quality. In doing so, they would arrive at an effective administration. Managing time builds one's efficiency, limits time wasters, advances progression, and improves individual and expert fulfillment (Gordon & Borkan, 2014). Alugbou (2005) mentioned that time management offers productive outcomes and efficient results to the school administrators, which would meet an institution's objectives. Like doctoral students who need an effective time management strategy in avoiding time wasters and combining studying with scientific activities (Lukianova, Androshchuk & Banit, 2019), school administrators need to manage their time well to accomplish their targets effectively.

Conclusion

School administrators of rural elementary schools spend their time wisely completing their daily, monthly, weekly, and yearly tasks. They have employed different strategies in time management. As revealed in this study, they delegated their tasks, set clear priorities, managed distractors, wrote programs, and set time tables. These strategies would enable them to accomplish their task effectively and

efficiently. Thus, school administrators' time management strategies are inevitable towards effective administration. Since this study is limited only to rural elementary schools' time management strategies, future research can explore high school administrators and colleges. Future research can also explore the time management phenomenon quantitatively.

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