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# TIME MANAGEMENT AND THE ADULT EDUCATION ADMINISTRATOR

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## Abstract

This article shows that many people are not time literate and therefore do not make up their minds on what to do and at what time. They are not able to prepare simple schedules to guide their activities nor do they have the resilience to tackle time-saving ventures. This work therefore takes a look at the characteristics of time showing that its fleeting nature can still be put to use by a determination to take up meaningful activities. How one can manage his time is considered and the adult learner's view of time is expounded leading to the role of the Adult Education Administrator in time management. He is expected to be a motivator to adult learners, a trainer of managers through workshops and seminars and a moderator when industrial disputes with their attendant time wastage arise. The Adult Education Administrator functions in totality as one who maximizes the use of time to the advantage of all and sundry to the betterment of the entire humanity within the limits of our imperfect state.

## Introduction

There is a satisfaction one derives from making wise use of the time which one has on hand. It has also been acknowledged that many have lived out their life-span without making a mark on their society due to poor time management. When properly put to wise use, time may mean a lot to an individual and a whole society. The vicissitudes of life have become a part of the human experience that may make or mar one's life. The Bible Book of Ecclesiastes Chapter three, verses 1-4 reported that a wise king named Solomon who ruled his kingdom for about 40 years was inspired to write: "For everything there is an appointed time, even a time for every affair under the heavens: a time for birth and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot what was planted; a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to break down and a time to build; a time to weep and a time to laugh."

This expression has informed virtually all man's activity under the sun and pronounces the fleeting nature of time. Man is thus time conscious. With each tick of the clock, man progresses a step farther down times corridor. He is wise, indeed, if he makes proper use of his time. In most places loss of time may be seen by the way people approach their individual affairs. Many are reluctant to enroll in adult literacy classes because they feel they cannot utilize the little time they have for such a venture due to the lack of appreciation for its value. Some others spend their time in nonproductive ventures, watching television and video ceaselessly throughout the day. Others lack the motivation to involve themselves in programmes that should enhance their output or input so as to contribute meaningfully to national development. We may also observe the time lost to trade disputes which appear to be characteristic of the Nigerian workforce and the civil service. It is also true that many young adults have

experienced the frustration associated with educational programmes that span their normal duration by two years or three years, as the case may be.

The 70 years of the normal life span is far too short a time for a person to take in the abundance of knowledge and to enjoy all the other good things the Creator of man has provided for him on this earth. Yet, it does not appear to be an overstatement if the point is made that many people are time illiterate and so they are bad time managers. Sure it would require an astute time manager to awaken in such time illiterates a consciousness that time can be managed effectively and satisfactorily. The starting point is by pointing the characteristics of time.

### **Characteristics of Time**

#### ***Time is Uni-Directional and Measurable***

One important characteristic of time is that it can be measured and in fact can be controlled. It can be utilized to advantage or disadvantage.

The Watchtower Society (1990) acknowledges that time is universal and that no man living is able to say what it is. It is as unfathomable as space and no one indeed can explain where the stream of time began or where it is flowing. This knowledge belongs to the limitless wisdom of the Creator of man the only one described as living from everlasting to everlasting. Even then, there are specific characteristics of time that can be understood.

Time is measurable. Its apparent rate of flow can be measured in mini-seconds, seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, years, decades, centuries, millenniums et cetera, but it flows or moves in one direction only, always towards an individual and past him. Like traffic on a one-way street, time moves relentlessly in that one direction - onward, ever onward. Whatever the speed of its forward movement, time can never be thrown into reverse. And so, we live in a momentary present and exit. Even then this present is in motion too, flowing continually into the past and there is no way of stopping it.

#### ***Time, the Past and the Future***

The past is gone; it is history and it can never be repeated. Any attempt to call back the past is as impossible as trying to make a waterfall tumble uphill or an arrow fly back to the bow that shot it. Our mistakes have left their mark in the stream of time. In like manner, a man's achievements in the past have made their lasting impressions that may add impetus to his further efforts. Thus time as it affects the past has been won or lost; there is no control over it anymore.

The future is different however. It is always flowing towards us. Those who are educated, especially enlightened in heart can identify impediments that loom ahead of us and prepare to meet them. There is no need to look to the future with any iota of pessimism as a result of negative past. No; one has to develop a resilience to meet the future and with optimism face it. Should one get engrossed in brooding melancholy about the past one only does oneself harm for one can never reverse the past nor retrieve it to effect some corrections. What one has is always now and a decision made now - positively, can always have implications for the future and some impressions on

the lost past. The future has a beginning point; and that beginning point is now or today. How then can time be managed viewed against the simple futurity in time?

### **Time Management**

There is an old saying that "a watched kettle never boils." It is true that when we are watching time, when we are conscious of it, when we are waiting for something to happen, then it seems to pass ever so slowly. However, if we are busy, if we are interested in and preoccupied with what we are doing, then it really appears that time flies. Moreover with older people time seems to pass much more quickly than with young children. This is because one year added to the life of a one-year old means a 100 per cent increase in life's experiences. One year added to the life of a 50-year-old means just 2 percent more. To the child, a year seems a long, long time. The older person, if busy and in good health, finds that the years seem to fly faster and faster. On the other hand, young people still have the seemingly slower, formative years with them. My father used to tell us his children: "What you are to do get done today and do not say tomorrow, please, for there is always danger in delay."

In managing time therefore it is always necessary to keep one's mind in clear focus. What one wants to achieve must be clearly defined and urgent action must follow. So the first step in time management is to realize the fleeting nature of time and to start to manage it immediately. Lee Ah Bah (1982) advises on what one should do in this respect with the poem:

### **Salutation of the Dawn**

Listen to the exhortation of the dawn;  
    Look well to this day!  
For it's life, the very life of life!  
    In its brief course, lie all the  
Verities and Realities of your Existence.  
    The Bliss of Growth,  
The Glory of Action  
    The Splendor of Beauty  
For yesterday is but a dream,  
    And Tomorrow is only a vision  
But today, well lived, makes  
    Every Yesterday a Dream of Happiness  
And every Tomorrow a vision of Hope  
    Look well therefore to this Day,  
Such is the Salutation of the Dawn."

*Adapted by Lee Ah Bah from the Sanskrit*

Planning of time is vital if one is to achieve the most within the available time. Stephen et al (1989:50) stated the truth that

- Failing to plan is planning to fail

- Plan Each Day, Each Week, Each Semester
- You can always change your plan, but only once you have one.

In time management, the next vital thing is to avoid procrastination which has been described by Young (1742) quoted in *Awake* (1995) as the thief of time. If one decides to put a matter off - postpone what one could or should do now then, the individual procrastinates. In other words one may put off for tomorrow what one can do now, today. A procrastinator delays action when it is action that is needed. It is possible to take decisive action though and avoid procrastination. The *Awake* (1995) isolated some reasons why some procrastinate and associated them with, habit, attitude and fear.

On habit the *Awake* said some feel it is better to wait until the last minute so that they will have more motivation to finish it. Some also find some excitement in waiting to do it at the very last moment or that if a boss reminds him of something a couple of times then that signifies that he wants that assignment done. Along the line of habit too, some say that only crises things get their attention.

Coming to the matter of attitude it has been observed that some lack the desire to do anything feeling that it is only when the need arises that they can do them. Others shun what is important and claim that they have no self-discipline.

The last factor responsible for procrastination has also been identified and associated with the negative emotion of fear. Fear may be expressed in various ways. When one says: "I am not sure I can do it. I don't have enough time to do it. It's too big a project. I need help. What if I don't succeed or finish? I'm afraid I'll be criticized or embarrassed," then we can associate such expressions with fear. It is therefore clear that different people procrastinate at different stages. Some procrastinate before starting because they see the project as too big. Others begin but about halfway through, enthusiasm wanes, and they put off finishing it. Still others get close to completing it but start another project, leaving the first unfinished. Fiore (1995) was quoted by *Awake* as saying that there are three main issues that are at the bottom of most procrastination problems: feeling like a victim, being overwhelmed, and fear of failure. The truth is that whatever one imagines to be the reasons for procrastination if one can put one's fingers on the causes, one will be closer to the solution. Of course, there is no overstressing the fact that most adults have the problem of time management: they tend to procrastinate. It is therefore vital for an informed individual, and adult educator, to sensitize the procrastinator to the need to use his time wisely, from now. It is necessary to set priorities in one's schedule and take up the matters as set without delay.

### **The Adult Learner and Time**

The adult learner is one who falls into the category of those who by culture are termed adult. According to Okedara (1981:10) quoting Webster's New College Dictionary, an adult is a person who has reached maturity. He states that according to civil law, the term applies to males after the age of fourteen and to females after twelve. Some countries limit adult age to 18 while others are 21. Social responsibility may

determine this adult categorization as some level of intelligence beyond one's age may also come into consideration and for this reason Edward (1981:256) opines that a person who passes from dependent status to an interdependent or independent role may be termed an adult.

The adult is a unique learner. He has many matters competing for his attention and he may abandon his learning no matter how well intentioned, for his priority. To the adult, time is very important and may determine what he gives his attention to. He has had some experience in life and will, to a large extent, be guided by what his experience dictates to him.

Thomas (1981:93) describes the adult learner as distinct from the young learner in the following expressions:

*Some believe they are too old to learn, they are worried about whether they can keep up, whether others will laugh at them if they make mistakes; some have never been to school before, they do not know what to expect; some have been to school but have bad memories of the experience; possibly they couldn't cope, or failed an examination or were severely punished; most of them probably work on a farm, or in the home, or in a shop, or in a factory. Going to an adult class is not their main "occupation." Many of them are married, many are fathers or mothers, they have responsibilities at home and may be worried about problems such as a sick child, shortage of food, family arguments, or lack of money to pay school fees; some have community responsibilities, such as being a committee member of a cooperative or a local councilor, or a member of a women's club, or a church worker, or an officer of a trade union.*

These responsibilities, as outlined above, to home and family, to work and to the community often interfere with adult's learning. They call for time and may scare the adult learner from participating in learning experiences or being distracted. They may prevent him from attending one or more sessions or lead to his dropping out. They may cause him to be late and afraid to come if the teacher has been conscious about punctuality. They may interfere with his ability to concentrate while in class; his mind may be working on personal problems rather than the learning task at hand. Finally, he may be tired when he comes to class, he may find it hard to pay attention.

All the competing activities take the time which is not always available to the adult learner and therefore may cause him to abandon his studies. The various reasons for procrastination too have not really helped the adult learner. However, the adult educator has acquired the mastery of himself and the best method of handling the adult learner. By virtue of his training he can help the adult learner maximize his time and look at the past with some respite and satisfaction.

Most adults therefore tend to perceive themselves as incapable of handling many of competing activities which devolve on their time. As they watch helplessly time is moving - life is wasting as old age stealthily keeps on approaching. Some are unable to start off something. They keep procrastinating - deferring what ought to be

done immediately never making up their minds and engage in meaningful projects that will improve their lives and add to national development.

### **The Adult Education Administrator's Role in Time Management**

It is necessary to remind the administrator of adults that his function is basically that of an incendiary. In this respect the incendiary carries out the function of setting the mind ablaze, as it were, making the mind to burn. The adult should be helped to appraise his circumstances, set his priorities and engage in meaningful life-sustaining, life-fulfilling activities. Because many adults tend to perceive life negatively, a more positive perception can be inculcated in them by mutual appraisal of their circumstances. Many adults waste time by feeling that for them the light of life is over.

The adult educator must also play the role of a motivator to adult learners to enable them maximize the future starting from NOW. Okeem (1987) stated that adults need motivation, incentive; morale-boosting mechanisms which can sustain interest in learning and enhance learning experiences in adults. Still stressing the importance of motivation in learning for adults Thomas (1981) states that the adult educator must continually find out what adult education programmes are needed, not only by the individual but also by the community and by the nation. He must then devise ways of attracting and recruiting participants for each adult education project planned to meet these needs. Knowledge of motives of present and potential students assists the administrator in continuing effort of the student. The time of the adult learner is at the back of the mind of the administrator to ensure that he does not waste time which is vital for human development and national development.

The adult education administrator should by his training have developed: a proper perception of this life, a realistic appraisal of factors affecting life to be a remover of stumbling blocks along life's path, a motivating attitude to give some meaning to the weary and confused over life's perplexities, a moderating attitude in an impassioned environment such as obtains in political upheavals and trade union disputes. The adult education administrator is able to weigh the pros and cons of a matter and proffer realistic solutions. These ideas are not easily attained but may prove to be goals to which he may aspire and attain through practice. The administrator realizes the time wastage involved and therefore is quick to act as a moderator by organizing seminars, publishing articles in journals and newspapers to sensitize people to the cost implications of the prevailing status quo. This way he will have saved the time that would have been lost. He can in some of these instances act as a political educator.

As a time manager, the adult educator realizes the waste of time involved, for instance, when workers embark on industrial dispute. Since the adult educator trains people to contribute to national development he is quick to advise against any action that would amount to setting the hand of the clock back. He can organize workshops or seminars for workers to sensitize them to the cost implications of strike and the loss of time to human organisms who one way or another are affected by strikes. The overall effect of strikes may not be appreciated by parties to the disputes that lead to

strike - the government and the workers as in the public sector and the management and staff in the private. Life has even been involved. A typical instance is where schools are closed down because of strike by tutorial staff in the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. Students who should bend over their books and prepare for the future have increased their travel and not a few have died in accidents. That apart, a student who should graduate in a four year programme but graduates in six years has two wasted years in his life-span.

Workers are not the only individuals involved in such time wastage. A responsible government which is sensitive to the welfare of its citizens will not wait until its workers embark on strike before increasing their salaries. Such a government monitors its economy and identifies when inflationary trends appear to decrease the purchase power of its currency. At such times it is willing to increase the pay of the workers without their asking. Both actions require workers education and political education. This way a balance is maintained and national development is fostered. As Nwabueze (1980:70) succinctly puts it:

*Nigerian unions, like their counterparts in other countries have been accused of demanding wage increases which generate inflation, disrupt business budgets and lead to government's inability to finance development programmes. A typical and more dramatic example of this sort of accusation was made in 1963 when, in response to trade union demands for pay increases, the federal government appointed the Morgan Commission to review the adequacy of wages and salaries and conditions of service of the junior employees in the public and private sectors of the economy. The then Minister of Finance, the late Chief F.S. Okotie-Eboh, opposed any increase in purely cash income arguing that such increases in salaries and wages would only benefit a small section of the one vast population in paid employment.*

After analyzing the implications to the overall economy, Chief Okotie-Eboh, according to Nwabueze (1980) opined that any increase in wages could only be financed if government would curtail social services or reduce savings and capital expenditures. In his view, the creation of paper money to finance increase in wages would be undesirable because of its obvious inflationary effects. The alternative of financing the increase in wages through increased taxation, Chief Okotie-Eboh stated, would be self-defeating.

On the other hand according to Nwabueze, experience has confirmed that wage increases have chronically lagged behind increases in cost of living. Government wage review commissions were all appointed in response to workers' agitation against drastic erosion of their standard of living by steep increases in the general price level. The Morgan Commission of 1964, according to Robin (1974) was followed by six years when the money wage remained unchanged while the rise in prices wiped out the real gains that the settlement of the general strike of 1964 brought.