

Review

Lateness: A major problem confronting school administrators in Delta State, Nigeria

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This paper is a review on lateness in public schools, which has posed a major problem to school administrators in Delta State, Nigeria; especially at the primary and secondary school levels. The author delimited his focus on students, staff and supporting staff in the school system. The salient point is that, lateness to schools plagues school administrators, bringing about inefficiencies at work by way of administration. Therefore, this paper highlights the meaning, causes and effects of lateness to schools as related to the school administrator in Delta State, Nigeria. The study also highlighted various remedies to the sordid situation. This review will therefore help school administrators alleviate lateness, a hydra-headed monster plaguing schools in Delta State, Nigeria, and as such bring about easy administration of schools in the region.

Key words: Lateness, school administrators, discipline, environment, punctuality.

INTRODUCTION

Amongst other components of any organisation, human beings are the most difficult to manage. Folks pose the most problems to administrators anywhere in the world, not excluding school organisations as learning factories in Delta State, Nigeria. Many authors have posited as a matter of fact that, it is easier to manage the financial and material components of any organisation than to manage the human component. They insinuate that "it is easier to manage even animals than to manage human beings" (Nakpodia, 2006; Peretomode, 1991; Peretomode, 2001; Ubogu, 2004; Emore, 2005; Ukoshi, 2004). Thus, in the school system, the school head, which is usually the headmaster/headmistress or the principal, is confronted with numerous problems posed by staff and/or students. These problems include: sleeping on duty, negative attitude to tasks, lack of motivation to tasks, sexual harassment, theft, quarrelling, malice, jealousy, envy, absenteeism, lateness, etc. But Lauby (2009) stated

clearly that:

'As a Human Resource professional, I have dealt with a plethora of employee issues: sleeping on the job, theft, sexual harassment... but I have found over the years, that there is one issue that plagues managers more than all these other issues combined... attendance and punctuality. That is, people not showing up at all... people not showing up on time.'

It could thus be deduced from the excerpt that in the school system, which is the focus of this paper, both staff's and students'/pupils' lateness to school pose the greatest problems to school administrators in Delta State. What then is lateness?

DEFINITION OF LATENESS

Literally, the term "lateness" implies a situation where an individual arrives after the proper, scheduled or usual time (Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary, 5th ed., 1995). Furthermore, Lauby (2009) puts it as a term used

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to describe “people not showing up on time”. Breeze et al. (2010) contributed by saying that, lateness is synonymous with “tardiness”, which implies being slow to act or slow to respond, thus not meeting up with proper or usual timing. It is obvious therefore that, lateness could be seen as a system of network breakdown (Peretomode, 1991), a situation of not meeting up with programme... a function of time... time is the criteria and determinant of lateness. Having therefore known the meaning of lateness, the causes of lateness should be highlighted.

CAUSES OF LATENESS

There are numerous causes of lateness to school. Amongst others, the following are the major causes of lateness to school.

Going late to bed

This is one of the major causes of lateness to school. Going late to bed could result in waking up late, as could be deduced from the literal meaning of the saying “early to bed early to rise”.

Watching films and late-night movies

The individual involved in watching films and home videos may be so captivated and hypnotised by it that, he/she forgets that he/she has to be in school; and at sudden realisation, he/she hurries off and likely may not be punctual (Ukoshi, 2004).

The habit of waking up late

Some folks find more pleasure in early morning sleep than the overnight sleep. These kind of people always wake up late to hurry off to school but most times, situation may not really be in their favour, thus they are irresistibly late to school.

Distance/Location of school

The further the location of the school from the student/pupil or staff, the more distractions, obstacles, friends to say high to, hold-ups to beat, go-slows, etc are there that tend to hinder his/her punctuality to school. For instance, consider a situation where an individual working in DELSU Secondary School, Abraka, leaves Eku or Igun every day for work. This individual is likely not to be punctual when compared with some one of the same status living in Abraka, possibly even close to the school;

he is more likely to be punctual because the level of distraction would be lesser.

Keeping friends of different status

Friends and acquaintances that are not of the same status with an individual tend not to understand the responsibilities of the individual, most especially those of lower status. For instance, a teacher spending most of the leisure time with a motorcyclist; the motorcyclist is likely not to motivate the teacher in the aspect of punctuality as compared with a fellow teacher.

Engagement in untimely domestic chores/activities

These activities are necessary but doing them at a wrong timing is what cause lateness to school. In some cases, most parents even oblige their wards to help carry their goods to the market and other such kind of chores before going to school. Activities like these inevitably cause lateness to school, either voluntarily or involuntarily. Furthermore, Oghuvwu (2008) concurred to this when he opined that “lateness is common as a result of students’ involvement by parents”.

Innate anxiety level

Most people always have that relax mind in anything they do; they do not even care if they are running late or not; they just do not beat that their relax temple or mood of doing things. Even when a little hurry could make them punctual, they prefer to be late than beat their innate temple; this is a glaring situation.

Family background

In some cases, the habit of lateness is being copied from family members. For instance, the child that sees the father always going late to work could also either voluntarily or involuntarily learn the habit, thus go to school late also. This is supported by Peretomode (2001) and Egbule (2004), when they elaborated the concept of NATURE-NURTURE as it affects an individual’s habits.

Cultural background

We live in a society where the culture does not frown at, or rather say anything about punctuality as ethics in a work environment, thus to most individuals, punctuality is not really a serious matter, compared with how punctuality is being perceived in Western cultures and developed countries (Breeze et al., 2010).

Religious background

Every individual in this world is loyal or faithful to one religion or the other. Even the atheist is loyal to his own beliefs, thus he/she is his/her own religion. Individuals tend to swallow hook, line and sinker, whatever their religious leaders teach, and those which the religious teacher does not teach is considered less or not important by them. The salient point is that, if religions frown at lateness, it would reduce; and if they do not speak of it or speak encouraging it (they may say, no matter what happens, God will always favour you); the tendency is that lateness would be on the increase, most especially in Delta State, Nigeria, Africa, where religion is tenaciously adhered to because of the fear of witchcraft and wizardry (African Science).

Lack of functional and effective punctuality policy

Obviously, individuals could come late to school, if they perceive that there are no consequences to it. It is a consensus that "if black man no see strong thing, e no they hear". This consensus is more pronounced in Delta State, Nigeria, where the probability of misdemeanour and stubbornness is high. Furthermore, school head's fairness or equal treatment between different subjects, as perceived by individuals, could cause lateness. Individuals are likely to be more punctual, if they perceive obvious "rule of law" in terms of punctuality (Clackmannanshire Council Online, 2010).

Too much body care and excessive facial/body make-up

In some cases, individuals are obsessed by their appearance to the detriment of timely engagements in school. Oghuvwu (2008) agreed to this when he opined that "lateness is common among females more than males". This could be as a result of the fact that, females require more time for their body and facial care and make up.

EFFECTS OF LATENESS TO SCHOOL

There are various effects of lateness to school. Many writers have pinpointed many of these effects. Amongst others, some are outlined and briefly discussed as follows.

Lateness disorganises and causes distraction to the individual and the whole system

The individual that came late to school is both a problem to him/herself, fellow students, teacher, and others in the school system... he/she walks in when teaching is going

on... both teachers and students turn to look at him/her... the system and flow is distracted and distorted... he/she thinks where do I start from to catch up?... asks a fellow student "is he just starting?... how long has he been teaching?... what has he/she taught?... let me see your note. From this simple analogy, it is glaring that the late comer is both a problem him/herself and the entire school system. In addition, according to "Clackmannanshire Council Online", "lateness is disruptive to the individual and to the work of the class and may be an early warning of other difficulties".

Lateness inhibits the process of achieving the goals of the school

The basic reason for the human component is to enable easy achievement of the goals and objectives of establishing the school. Thus, if the employers' goal is to make money, and the individual's contribution to the organisation could bring the school N20 per h. If he/she then comes 30 min late every day, thus N10 is lost every day as a result of lateness. The point is that as small as this, multiplied by the days of the years and a good number of employees with this habit... this would be a very great loss to the school. Thus, Ali (2007) clearly posited that

"... showing up 10 min late could add up to lots of lost revenue for the company (school) and the individual."

Furthermore, ETC's (2009) *attendance and punctuality policy* clearly states that "regular and punctual attendance is of paramount importance in ensuring that all students have full access to the curriculum... valuable learning time is lost when students are absent or late".

Lateness leads to absenteeism and general failure in life

Pupils/students and/or staff could sometimes feel the extent of their lateness and very often they just decide to be absent. This has a very great effect on the individual's academic and other achievements. According to Ali (2007), this could lead to loss of confidence and engagement in premature sexual activity for students, leading to pregnancy, resulting in a phenomenon called storm and stress among adolescents. Also, Catt F found out that "it is always the same group of people showing up early and the same group of people showing up late".

REMEDIES TO LATENESS

1. Schools should operate strict functional punctuality policy. One of the major responsibilities of the school head is to implement policies and/or even possibly make some... as whatever happens in the system would be credited or blamed upon him. Thus, the school head

needs to carry out the function of maintaining punctuality policy without favouritism.

2. Staff and students in the school system should be sensitised and made aware of the effects of lateness to them and the entire school system, and also the benefits of punctuality to them first and then to the entire school system. This should be carried out by both school heads, governmental and non-governmental agencies, religious bodies, and other such bodies and individuals.

3. The school administrator must teach punctuality by example... he/she must act as a model for all to copy.

4. School administrators should impose compulsory beginning and closing of the day meeting of staff and students. In the meetings, there should be strict attendance register.

5. School administrators should build in staff and students, the virtue of "time-consciousness". For instance, putting wall clocks in conspicuous locations for all to see could instil the time-consciousness attitude in individuals in the school.

6. As an individual, try to be 15 min early to school, as this could help you make friends and say hello to already-made friends; get one's self prepared for the day's activity; possibly even read a book, and most importantly could help make up for unforeseen causes of lateness, and still be punctual.

7. There should also be activities /acts to motivate and reinforce punctuality. For instance, awarding prizes for punctuality could go a long way in enhancing punctuality.

8. Parents and school administrators should join efforts in enhancing punctuality. UK Government (2010) stipulated that "on the first day absence, contact should be made with parents of the child to find out why the child is absent".

9. Truancy patrol... is a situation where members of the community are sensitised to seize or report students found outside the school environment after stipulated times. In this kind of situation, the pupil would likely be punctual since the only convenient environment would be that of the school... if he/she comes late, would be punished... he is then forced to come early.

10. Parents involving students in domestic activities should be mindful of punctuality.

11. Government on its part, should improve transportation and other economic activities in the country... as some students walk/trek to school, as a result of fair... even those that have the fair, sometimes no transport service or no good roads, causing hold-ups and go-slows.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Conclusively, lateness among students, staff and supporting staff in public primary and secondary schools in Delta State is a major and continuous administrative problem, and there is need for students and parents to

help identify and proffer solutions to this quality and disturbing problem that could lead to students' drop-out from school, and also inefficiency and ineffectiveness on the part of the school administrators, by way of school administration and management; knowing fully well that lateness could be reduced by providing free education counselling and discipline among students, in addition to the use of electronic systems, truancy sweep by school heads. It should also be noted that, lateness is common among female students, and as such they should be of more concern to the school administrator in Delta State. Finally, the remedy to any situation is in the situation; thus, the school administrator, should study the peculiar situation and respond as the situation suggests. The fact is no two situations are the same, no matter how similar.

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