

## Time Management in Higher Education in the Beni Town, DR Congo

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### Abstract

This article explores a study on how time management is dealt with by deans of faculty in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, specifically in Beni town. Research shows that people are not productive in their services because they lack good time management which remains an important factor in building work productivity. Findings discussed in the perspective of theories prove that deans of faculties in Beni city lack best quality of time management. Their way of scheduling is limited to activities listing and mapping, regardless of effectiveness and institutional goal achievement. To avoid negative consequences on faculty deans' productivity, this article suggests different techniques to manage time to become effective and reduce job stress and conflicts within educational systems they belong to.

**Keywords:** *Time management, productivity, Higher education, effectiveness, efficiency, and deans of faculties*

### Résumé

Cet article explore une étude sur la façon dont la gestion du temps est traitée par les doyens de faculté en République démocratique du Congo, en particulier dans la ville de Beni. A travers les théories expérientielles, il est montré dans cet article que les responsables des facultés ne sont pas productifs dans leurs services parce qu'ils manquent d'une bonne gestion du temps qui reste un facteur important pour la productivité dans le travail. Les résultats discutés dans la perspective des théories prouvent que les doyens des facultés de la ville de Beni manquent la meilleure qualité de gestion du temps. Leur façon de planifier est limitée à la liste des activités et à la cartographie, indépendamment de l'efficacité et de la réalisation des objectifs institutionnels. Pour éviter des conséquences négatives sur la productivité des doyens des facultés en ville de Beni, cet article propose différentes techniques pour gérer le temps afin de devenir efficaces et réduire le stress professionnel et les conflits au sein des systèmes éducatifs auxquels ils appartiennent.

**Mots-clés:** *Gestion du temps, productivité, enseignement supérieur, efficacité, efficacité et doyens des facultés*

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### 1.0 Introduction

Africa is getting into deeper mediocrity and lack of development due to several foundations among which time management is at the chief ground. All over the African territories, realities prove that people rely more on receiving than serving. For instance, in many Congolese organizations, people claim salaries and increments, yet reports are not submitted on compulsory time and even quasi do not even exist. In addition, the time to sit in offices takes a considerable expanse than work concentration. In this regard, the current study explores an investigation of time management as a factor influencing work productivity. The investigation targets university academic departmental leaders or deans of faculties in the DRC higher

education context. The present research aims to get a deep understanding of how faculty coordinators manage time.

Contextually, at university as in some other organizations, each person in their position is assigned a responsibility that needs to be fulfilled and recounted. As previously mentioned, this work is specifically limited to people working in higher learning institutions. It addresses the assignments and achievement of responsibilities with regard to time management. The way higher education is structurally organized in DRC proves that accountability should not be a problem in any case because there is a great interdependent connectivity in the organizational structure. However, it happens that the connection within the accountability is disrupted from one service and this does not allow high-quality achievement. According to the higher education management guide, the rector is the first personality at the university whose responsibility is to administer and control the policy of the institution (Commission Permanente des Etudes, 2014). The academic dean, however, manages academic affairs and supervises academic departments to ensure the implementation of the academic program. He/she is considered a technical agent in the higher education institution who combines reports from other academic departments and submits the succinct report to the university management comity and the Ministry of higher Education. Besides, the chairpeople or Deans of faculties have the responsibilities to contact teachers, elaborate on the need for resources in their faculties; ensure that teachings are going well; organize meetings with teachers or with students; manage and control academic events as planned on the academic calendar; plan academic activities related to their faculties; and give report to the Academic Dean. Apart from these responsibilities, as it is suggested in the international context to university professors by Li, Liu, & Wang (2016) deans of faculty are also expected to fulfill administrative duties, teachings, and scientific research. The “Commission Permanente des Etudes (2014) stipulates that these responsibilities require proficient time management for them to work productively.

The core problem this paper addresses is that most of the Deans of faculty are not able to fulfill their duties because they lack proper time management. Many courses are postponed because human resources' needs are not elaborated on time and also because teachers are not contacted on time for better preparation. In addition, their time is not well managed to evaluate the evolution of courses to find out challenges and overcome them. Deans of faculty are not aware of the end of the course so to organize course evaluations and payment. Besides, some deans of faculty have no enough time with finalist students to ensure that research and final papers are moving forward. Moreover, instead of working on reports, some deans of faculty spend time chatting on social networks. It is worth mentioning that visits within their offices are not well managed. It is also noticed that deans of faculty have no daily or weekly plans that can help them manage time efficiently to reach high-quality work achievement.

The problem addressed above leads to asking the following questions to understand how deans of faculties manage their time, cox out some roots of time mismanagement, and seek ways to deal with them to improve quality-productivity in their work:

- How do Deans of faculty manage their time?
- What are the factors hindering their time management?
- How do they get out of time management challenges?

## State of research

### *Time management and its usefulness*

Across the world, only capital and knowledge are not sufficient for job success. One effective factor for success is proper use of time known as time management. This concept means controlling and planning the person's time (Khodaveisi, Bahar, & Ahmadi, 2015). Claessens et al. (2007) quoted by Grissom, Loeb, & Mitani (2013) describe time management as an effective use of time while performing certain goal-directed activities. In this understanding, these authors emphasized time which is valuable for the achievement of a goal to reach for each daily activity. Likewise, Ekanem (2015, p. 144) regards "time management" as "the art of arranging, organizing, scheduling and budgeting one's time to generate more effective work and productivity". Ekanem's (2015) understanding of time management is that administrators need to make a mindful decision to decide what is important and then plan out time and arrange activities according to their importance and prioritization. Opposing the thoughts stated above, the term time management is considered a misnomer because one cannot manage time, but he or she can manage activities in relation to time (Rupured & Chapman, 2008). It is shown here that, a human being is given only 24 hours which includes all events. Therefore, it is essential from those 24 hours that each event is assigned a time (Rupured & Chapman, 2008). In this regard, time is valuable and limited. Thus, it needs to be protected and used prudently (Rupured & Chapman, 2008). Li, Liu, & Wang (2016) keep up supporting that the limitation of time is because even if one sacrifices his / her normal life, and works in space-time, still he/she cannot meet the demand of the workload. Besides, time management refers to "a range of skills, tools or techniques used to accomplish specific tasks, projects or goals. It comprises activities such as planning, allocating, setting goals, delegating, monitoring, organizing, scheduling, and prioritizing" (Krishnan, et al. 2015, p. 139). This definition meets the understanding of Ekanem (2015) in a way that both emphasizes making a schedule or planning activities using specific tools to allow an accurate accomplishment of specific tasks.

Regarding the usefulness of time management, research proves that time management has a significant meaning on human resources' productivity (Liu, & Li Wang 2016; Rupured & Chapman, 2008; Ugwulashi, 2013; Grissom, Loeb and & Mitani 2013). Hence, considering time management attentively helps people save time, and work smarter, not harder (Manktelow, 2009). Time management is viewed as a key to helping administrators accomplish effective activities at the right time and to save resources, space, and conflict resolution (Ugwulashi, 2013). Ugwulashi (2013) illustrates the case of employees at the UPH in Nigeria, who demonstrated great cooperation and interdependence as they focused on time management to increase transparency in the achievement of duties. This helped them reduce conflict among workers. In addition, time management is about working actively to create efficiency and effectiveness in a way that makes the targeted results more likely to be achieved (Krishnan, et al., 2015). When time is managed effectively and efficiently, it helps the employee to work with eagerness and courage to accomplish important activities (Krishnan, et al., 2015). Grissom, Loeb and, and Mitani (2013) say that time management reduces job stress, inconsistency and predicts factors that may influence job performance. It is proved by Grissom, Loeb & Mitani (2013) and Rupured & Chapman (2008) that people who manage time better report lower emotional exhaustion. Rupured & Chapman (2008) emphasize that time management makes people more productive; helps them have more energy for things they need to accomplish; makes them feel better about themselves; and gives them time to relax. Furthermore, time management ensures that employees are well prepared, organized, and focused to manage their daily lives and job assignments to achieve better achievement (Cyril,

2015). Ekanem (2015) supports that time management in a school system is critical in that, it develops processes and tools for increased efficiency and ensures daily attainment of school goals. Li, Liu, & Wang (2016) argue that time management helps deploy skills, techniques, and means, and maximize time value to help individuals efficiently complete tasks and achieve goals. Ugwulashi (2012) adds that time management creates self-assured behaviors on what is to be done and when it will be done.

### ***Time management and educational quality***

Educational system is driven by goals that need to be achieved (UNESCO, 2005). Research proves that time management has a specific role in quality education as an input factor that enables the achievement of educational goals (UNESCO, 2005). In this regard, time management is used as an effective tool for capacity building in education and inspection and supervision of a school system's quality (Ugwulashi, 2012). Grissom, Loeb, and Mitani (2013) demonstrate that time management is linked to faculty outcomes in the sense that, when activities are organized and planned appropriately, individuals become more productive and achieve more. Hence, quality in efficiency occurs. In addition, Cyril (2015) draws a link between time management and the process dimension in showing that, the efficiency and effectiveness in which resources are used and managed depend on setting time for priorities and important matters. Correspondingly, Grissom, Loeb, & Mitani (2013) assert that time management practice is the best way to manage resources appropriately, especially now that the quality and cost of education are time-dependent. Besides, professionals with better time management skills allocate their time across different activities within the educational system to discover strengths and weaknesses for better improvement (Grissom, Loeb & Mitani, 2013). Therefore, time is an important resource in educational quality, which helps educators assess the leadership and the management of available resources regarding decisions and delegation of authority of leaders to subordinates. For this reason, time management determines the extent to which leaders cooperate with their subordinates to interdependently achieve educational goals (Gorobets & Badrtdinov, 2016).

### ***Time management robbers***

Time management is influenced by various phenomena which are categorized into two types. On one hand, Rupured & Chapman (2008) outline five factors related to external time wasters. The first is related to telephone talk. When people have no schedule and focus while talking on the telephone, they waste their time talking about things that are not important and some tend not to limit conversations. The second factor is linked to unexpected visitors who cause prompt interruptions. Time is wasted when one does not establish blocks of time when he/she is available for visits and when he/she does not set agreeable times and limits for visits. The third factor is related to the management of meetings. When the purpose, time, and agenda of the meeting are not clearly and timely defined and respected, the meeting may last and break the occurrence and achievement of other activities. The fourth factor is mail and e-mail. This is an external time waster in a way that people do not allocate specific time to view and respond to emails and they accumulate to the point that it becomes overwhelming to sort. Rupured & Chapman (2008) advise that it is necessary to turn off instant messaging features on e-mail and handle each item only once, if possible. The last external time waster Rupured & Chapman (2008) point out is family obligations. This can be handled if one establishes a master for each family member to post time commitments; makes each family member responsible for consulting the master calendar for potential conflicts; and creates a central area for posting communications such as appointment reminders, announcements, and messages.

On the other hand, multitasking and lack of self-discipline are considered individual-related time wasters (Rupured & Chapman, 2008; Manktelow, 2009). People plan a lot of activities without thinking about the importance, priority, and time each activity may take and be accomplished productively. Self-discipline is an individual decision to release oneself by organizing workload, delegating authority, and planning events with all inner decisions of implementation (Rupured & Chapman, 2008). Grissom, Loeb, and Mitani (2013) sustain that poor time consciousness and lack of concentration have a negative influence on time management. Besides, some people lack professionalism since they neglect self-coaching and development (Manktelow, 2009).

### ***Consequences of time mismanagement***

When time management is not well dealt with, it develops negative effects such as lack of efficiency, lack of performance, and poor social consideration (Khodaveisi, Bahar, & Ahmadi, 2015; Grissom, Loeb & Mitani, 2013; Rupured & Chapman, 2008). For instance, Grissom, Loeb & Mitani (2013) prove that job performance is a function of a large number of factors among which time management is a label. These researchers show that when time is mismanaged by an individual, it hinders the achievement of activities within the whole system and leads to poor outcomes. Besides, Khodaveisi, Bahar, & Ahmadi (2015: 64) state, “the poorer time management, the higher job stress”. They explicitly assert that, when time is poorly managed, it creates not only a lot of stress to individuals, but also reduces self-esteem, confidence, and consideration within the working community. Furthermore, time mismanagement is a predictor of failure in job performance and leads to job firing (Khodaveisi, Bahar, & Ahmadi, 2015).

## **2. Methodology**

Based on empirical theories and research questions posed in this article, the qualitative approach was chosen and mainly founded on two methods. On one hand, the passive participation method consisted of observing deans of faculties’ behaviors and practices within their offices. The unstructured interview, on the other hand, was to get a clear understanding of those behaviors and practices (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Solely, both the observation and the unstructured interview were specifically done in academic department offices where I observed how eight deans of faculties deal with their time management using available resources within their services. The choice of these deans was based on gender and faculty. Therefore there were two female deans and six male ones. One lady from the faculty of theology, one lady and two men from the faculty of law, two men from the faculty of economics, one man from computer engineering sciences, and one man from the faculty of Agronomy. As far as the interview is concerned, two female deans and five male deans were interviewed in different moments. To get them, I got a permission research letter from my institution to give to the Academic authorities of the two universities hiring my informants. The main aspects I witnessed and recorded were visit management, phone calls, chats, scheduling, planning, prioritization, activity achievement, all office entries and conversations, and how focused deans were. Important data recorded from these informant deans are thematically analyzed in relation to empirical theories. Therefore, the point below presents the findings and the discussion around them.

## **3.0 Findings and Discussion**

Observations made in deans’ offices and interviews done with them have revealed a certain number of similarities and dissimilarities in terms of time management. Hence, by analyzing the data the themes below have been identified and discussed according to the literature.

### ***List-based planning (LBP)***

Time management addresses scheduling as an important tool to develop quality in a school system (Krishnan, et al., 2015; UNESCO, 2015). With regard to deans' declarations, it is noticed that the understanding of time management is generally activity listing-related. Illustratively one respondent in the economic department revealed that what helps him in managing daily activities is that he always makes a list of activities in a notebook or on sticky notes. For him, scheduling implies listing activities to be done during the day. Similarly, two other informants from respectively Agronomy and law departments supported that listing activity on a plan sheet is helpful because that is used as a "memory guide". This declaration is supported by Ekanem (2015) who stipulates that listing activities helps not only to forget but also to make happy when seeing a great number of listed activities. It is worth highlighting that the LBP is easier to quantitatively assess since at the end of the day, the user immediately counts the number of activities done and postponed and may therefore determine whether the day was successful or not.

### ***Scheduling map style***

To manage time, individuals have different ways to make a schedule. Among the informants throughout this study, one has revealed a new way of planning daily activities. The analysis made up of the explanation of that style has brought out a concept of "scheduling map style (SMP)". A map is "a drawing of a particular area that shows its roads, [...]" (Mayor, 2010: 544). Likewise, the SMP is related to the drawing of how the day will be spent taking into consideration tasks and directions or ways to go through. This style is interesting because it specifies tasks with particular places of execution. The respondent revealed that the SMP helps him determine which task will be done in which place.

Nevertheless, both the LBP and SMP implemented by deans of faculties in Beni town lack two dimensions, the timing and the level of significance of tasks (Manktelow, 2009; Rupured & Chapman, 2008). The timing has been known as the key to limiting the realization of each activity within the planning (Rupured & Chapman, 2008). When each activity is assigned a time, it helps to concentrate on something to accomplish it. Similarly, the timing is crucial to make the activity happen efficiently and meet the workload for better outcomes (Wang, 2016).

Furthermore, the significance level of tasks refers to whether the task is a priority or an emergency. As stated in the previous chapter of the state of the literature, time management is a mindful decision about the arrangement of activities according to their importance and prioritization (Ekanem, 2015). So far, listing activities is not yet an efficient formula to manage well one's time because it may tentatively lead to the instability of an activity mindset. The LBP and the SMP are risky for poor activity achievement.

### ***Accidental activity planning style: AAPT***

The concept of accidental activity planning style (AAPT) is connected with a day without a plan. Before describing how AAP works for some of the Beni city deans of faculties, it is worthy to show that minding activity scheduling depends on circumstances and feelings. It happens that when someone is extremely tired, he/she is not able to think about the future. Others when they feel they have accomplished daily tasks, they feel it will be the same for the future. In light of the above, one informant said, that once she has accomplished her daily workload, she does not think about what will be done the next day because, for her, people never know the situation of tomorrow. Another also showed that once one arrives at work, one may then think about what to do because the time at home is devoted to family and friends. Hence, these types of people reflect the activities of the day at the spot regardless of their

importance or prioritization. Nevertheless, the woman argued that sometimes she completely ignores some important accountable activities and consequently she feels frustrated though she can decide to postpone them for the next day.

Aligning with Ekanem's (2015) reflection, this model of scheduling seems to lead the user towards a certain number of irregularities, lack of accountability, and job risks. For accountability particularly, one may tend to accomplish what is interesting and not what is important and related to his/her mission within the institution.

### ***Time management challenges***

It is noticed that deans of faculties in Beni are not raw beginners in terms of time management. This has been shown in the findings developed above that they have already stepped on to make it realistic in their working careers. Nonetheless, their level of time management implementation reports some difficulties which are mainly intra-dependent and extra-dependent.

***Intra-dependent challenges*** are difficulties relating to individual users of time management. These types of challenges are typically considered self-related time wasters (Manktelow, 2009). The attitude and behaviors reported by deans of faculties reflect a kind of hospitality towards colleagues and visitors. For instance, "*You cannot ask anybody to go out when they come to see you. They come to your office because they have a problem and believe you have a solution. Therefore, you need to stop what you are doing and talk to them.*" declared a respondent in the interview. With regard to this declaration, stopping one's occupation shows respect towards visitors and colleagues and reduces potential conflicts among friends. In this perspective, research supports hospitality in a shaping manner. Hence, it is sustained that one stops working when visits occur (Manktelow, 2009). However, minding the goals for one's work obliges one to regulate visits.

Besides, leisure activities seem to have an important place than work time for some people (Monostori, 2009). This difference is recorded in a way that some deans of faculties find it better to relax before and during break time. This has mainly been remarked on by deans with AAP. For them, as they have no starting point, they engage in leisure. For example, the informant said when she has no work-related activity she prefers surfing the internet and reading family news. Another said he is more preoccupied with news related to politics and listening to music. For the latter, earphones are always in the ears and his machines always post only music and video applications. Both the former and the latter allocate great significance to leisure and neglect work-related activities yet for the others work time is more important since it is remunerated and calls for accountability. A survey conducted in 27 European countries similarly shows that "the number of hours spent at the workplace is a function of both obligations and preferences" (Monostori, 2009: 87). Some people prefer to spend time on leisure and others on work. It is revealed that those spending time on leisure demonstrate poor satisfaction with their jobs and complaints.

Further, when one feels he/she is used to doing the same work as described in the job description, he/she does not find it important to plan activities. He/she feels it is a routine. This derives from what a dean has reported. For him, making a schedule of activities implies ignorance of one's job description. As one masters his/her job description, he/she does not need to rely on activity planning since he/she knows what is to be done daily and monthly. From this point of view, a conclusion can be drawn that the job description also serves as a tool for time management because it describes daily and monthly activities. This constitutes one dimension of work knowledge and organization. However, it does not include extramural

activities and specific timing in terms of time management (Ugwalash, 2013; UIC Human Resources, 2009).

**External threats** constitute external challenges that have negative effects on time management. Among external threats recorded by participants, security, unexpected visits, and tasks, lack of time management resources, and unclear academic scheduling have been accused. These are not different from what is so far developed in previous studies. Manktelow (2009) maintains that security as well as unexpected talks and visits are time wasters difficult to control. Moreover, it is advised that, before hiring a candidate for a job, the employer ensures the preparation and availability of all resources which can help in efficient time management (UIC Human Resources, 2009). However, it appears that most Congolese employers let their employees fly on their own in terms of resource provision helping them manage their time.

### ***Strategies to improve time management***

As shown above, deans of faculties in Beni still have great limits in terms of time management. Therefore, to respond to the challenges previously outlined, some suggestions are provided in this section. Manktelow (2009) summarizes them into two main practical techniques helpful to manage time efficiently. The first requires the use of modern technology and the second is classical. Within this study, I exclusively consider classical tools.

Considering classical tools, Manktelow (2009) articulates that it is important to find out how one spends his/her time by making an activity log which consists of analyzing the use of time daily. That is, it is useless to think about how long one spends time on unimportant things or things that do not contribute to success at work. Activities like chatting with colleagues and having more time on Google and social networks (Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Skype, and so on) are not paid for by the employer, so they need to be eliminated. In addition, it is essential to schedule the most challenging tasks for the times of the day when one is still highly energetic. Similarly, it is better to minimize the amount of time spent on legitimate personal activities. Besides, Manktelow (2009) suggests making a “To-Do List” for the sake of not forgetting something important. This strategy is the key to efficiency and it consists of writing down all of the tasks one needs to complete within a period. If the tasks are large enough, it is necessary to break them down into their components. Through the present strategy, components that are prioritized are fundamentally important to efficient work. The key points to remember in this strategy are to carry out all the necessary tasks and not waste time on inconsequential activities; to not get stressed by a large number of unimportant tasks; and to draw prioritized To-Do Lists (see Figure 1 in the appendix) from A (very important) to F (unimportant). After jotting down different tasks, Manktelow (2009) advises to redraft them into the order of importance and benefits.

Furthermore, Manktelow (2009) utters that time management targets not only effectiveness but also efficiency. As day-planner and To-Do Lists are limited to only efficiency, the Urgent/Important Matrix established by Convey in 1994 is a solution to both effectiveness and efficiency. This technique consists of distinguishing clearly what is important and what is urgent. It is conspicuous that important activities have a strong influence on institutional goal achievement. Urgent activities demand immediate attention and are usually associated with the achievement of someone else’s goals. The Urgent/Important Matrix is considered a powerful way of thinking about priorities and helps overcome the natural tendency to focus on urgent activities, to keep enough time on what is important (see Figure 2 in the appendix). Here are the steps Manktelow (2009) advocates for the use Urgent/Important Matrix: a) listing all activities; b) assigning importance to each of the activities on a scale of 1 to 5 or A to F; c)



evaluating the urgency to each activity; d) plotting the listed items on the matrix according to the assigned importance and urgency; e) and scheduling activities according to how they are presented in their importance and urgency in quadrants. The quadrant makes activities with lower importance and lower urgency visible. In this case, it is advised to drop them out.

Concerning interruptions produced by phone calls, emails, unexpected conversations, colleagues' visits, and other disturbances, Manktelow (2009) suggests knowing what they are and whether they are necessary. So far, some solutions are recommended: a) Keep an Interrupters Log (see figure 3 in appendix); b) from the Interrupters Log, analyze and conquer what is valid and what is not; c) put your phone to work for you, that is, dealing with calls by priority at times that suits for you; d) catch the breath by rushing towards the person who is coming to you so that they may feel their request is urgent. Rupured & Chapman (2008) support this strategy by recommending that if one comes to your office when you are concentrating on important matters, it is better to stop working immediately and talk to them standing up. It is also better to ask them to get straight to the point and if a solution cannot be reached it is advised to schedule a time for the discussion. e) Manktelow (2009) continues suggesting that it is significant to learn to say "No" courteously and sincerely followed by a short explanation; f) and to communicate your availability to receive people.

#### **4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

Time management is the single-mindedness within this article. It has been shown as the way people control and plan or organize activities according to their importance, priority, and urgency to achieve a goal. By contextualizing the study in the Beni city institutions, three questions channeled this research. Firstly, they aimed to understand how deans manage their time. Based on findings from the interview and the observation, three techniques have been discovered as preferable by the Beni institutions' deans of faculties. They include the listing-based technique constituting making a list of activities as brainstorming, the map scheduling aiming at drawing activities according to their directions, and the accidental planning targeting. Secondly, factors influencing deans' time management are outlined into two dimensions including intra-challenges and external threats. Concerning the last question of understanding strategies to improve time management, findings prove that deans still find time management complex. Therefore, suggestions from experienced researchers are provided.

To be productive in Beni city institutions, it is recommended that deans of faculty get trained in time management. In addition, they should learn to communicate their planned activities to their hierarchy and colleagues to avoid conflicts, unexpected meetings, and interruptions. They should also analyze and monitor how they always spend their day times thinking about issues that hinder the accomplishment of activities. Finally, school leadership should provide faculties with the necessary resources.

The present research attempts to explore a reflection on how teachers should manage their time to be productive in their working careers. Knowing that time management is not the only dimension of productive work, further research should be conducted on work organization.

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