

Chapter Two

Managing Time

This chapter considers some of the problems in time scheduling encountered by multi-functional educational administrators, and proposes strategies for establishing priorities and organizing one's working day, strategies that can lead to less stressful, more rewarding occupational experiences.

Time is at a premium for all administrators in high posts, much more so for senior educational administrators in small states. Unlike their colleagues in large organizations where roles and duties are well defined and evenly distributed among a number of officials, senior administrators in small states fulfil a multiplicity of roles and are required to cope with a variety of commitments often totally unrelated to each other. As a result, their routine work is much less organized and much less formalized than the literature on educational administration and management tends to suggest.

The Multiple Facets of the Job

The nature of the senior education administrators' work is varied and diffused. They have to switch from one activity to the next, from giving attention to one task and quickly moving to another. They have to change from one role to another, simultaneously dealing with people often with contrasting concerns. Consider, for example, domestic demands on education officers in a small educational set-up. As a matter of routine, they may be required to:

- a. Propose and formulate educational policy,
- b. Set specific objectives for the subject or subjects for which they are responsible,
- c. Plan curricula and up-date syllabi,
- d. Review textbooks and select teaching aids,
- e. Monitor the teaching of a subject or several subjects at a variety of levels,
- f. Inspect and report on schools and school personnel,

- g. Set and vet examination papers and monitor scripts,
- h. Be responsible for the printing of examination papers and their safe keeping,
- i. Organize in-service courses,
- j. Lecture in pre-service teacher education courses,
- k. Sit on intra-departmental and inter-departmental committees, disciplinary and interviewing boards,
- l. Trouble-shoot and deal with complaints by employees, parents and students,
- m. Issue circulars and deal with correspondence,
- n. Run an office on a day to day basis.

From time to time, some education officers are required to look after the department's special foreign commitments. For instance, they deal with aid agencies on an international or a regional level. They have to answer requests for information from overseas organizations. Their seemingly endless questionnaires are most time consuming, especially when several organizations seek similar data without attempts at co-ordination to avoid duplicated work. In addition, senior officials are involved in the recruitment of expatriate staff; specifying needs, identifying resources, vetting applications, interviewing candidates (sometimes in foreign countries), shortlisting, selecting and issuing contracts. Dealing with foreign individuals or organizations entails great tact in order not to anger the locals who might think that foreigners are getting special treatment, and not to offend the foreigners who might feel alienated simply because they do not understand local practices.

One hopes also that senior education administrators will find time to travel abroad for conferences, training courses and meetings at regional and international level. Those in small archipelago states have the added burden of travelling from one island to another, consuming time they often can ill afford.

Apart from performing administrative tasks, they are expected and need to keep in touch with professional developments in their special subject and with educational trends in their own country and abroad.

They have to perform these variable tasks amid interruptions by the phone, visits by unscheduled callers and demands for attention by their equally harrassed superiors and colleagues. It is not surprising, then, that most senior education administrators in small states consider their work as extremely fragmented and diffused, as well as

most demanding and stressful.

One can rightly argue that the diffused nature of the education administrators' work is not exclusive to those in small states. Their colleagues in large states also have to deal with a multiplicity of roles and to handle many routine chores simultaneously. However, as argued earlier, the load and the diversity imposed on the individual education administrator in small states becomes more extensive when

- a. The number of qualified officials with expertise is limited relative to the diversity of their work,
- b. The support staff and facilities to handle the more routine and mundane assignments are also in short supply,
- c. Most of the officials lack the training to deal effectively with the specialized, multifaceted nature of their work.

* * * * *

* **Increasing Pressures** *

* As the twenty-first century comes ever closer, the challenges and *

* opportunities which are emerging in the management of education in *

* all parts of the world are of increasing complexity and diversity. *

* Managers and administrators of education — whether their work is *

* based in the classroom or lecture room, in the study of the headteacher *

* or college principal, or in the local authority office or national depart- *

* ment — all face major and generally increasing pressures. These result *

* from a number of factors: the ever-widening horizons of education *

* itself, the rapidly changing economic, social and political context of *

* educational management, and the continuing significant change in *

* social expectations concerning the education service. To all who are *

* concerned with maintaining, developing and improving understanding *

* in educational management, and thereby improving its practice, the *

* challenges and opportunities are both daunting and exciting. *

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* Hughes, M. (1985) "Introduction" in Hughes et al, (eds) *

* *Managing Education*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston Ltd., London. *

* *

* — To what extent do the pressures identified by Hughes influence the *

* development of your area of responsibility in the educational *

* system of your country? Do your colleagues readily acknowledge *

* the existence of these pressures? How do they attempt to face them? *

* *

* * * * *

Unscheduled Routine

The work routine of senior education administrators can be fragmented. It becomes difficult to schedule a pre-determined timetable

for a day's work. Long-term time-management becomes an almost impossible goal since work-patterns are invariably dictated by arising circumstances and the demands of other people. Even the most determined senior administrators soon discover that they have to adjust their set time-tables to the day's interruptions. Moreover, when a management-by-crisis style predominates within an organization it becomes extremely difficult for an individual to adhere to a rigid schedule, ignoring the demands and work pattern of others.

 *
 * **A Day in the Life of a Deputy Permanent Secretary** *
 * *
 * *A page from his Diary* *
 * *
 * *Tuesday 6th August 19.....* *
 * *
 * 07.00 — *
 * 07.30 — *
 * 08.00 Minister: Cabinet Papers Briefing *
 * 08.00 — *
 * 09.00 — *
 * 09.30 — *
 * 10.00 CEO(s) — Brief me on student strike at Swaning Hill *
 * 10.30 — *
 * 11.00 Director (USAID) Re: Project Development *
 * 11.30 — *
 * 12.00 — *
 * 12.30 Lunch with Development Bank Team *
 * 13.00 — *
 * 13.30 — *
 * 14.00 Secondary Working Group Meeting: Conference Room *
 * 14.30 — *
 * 15.00 — *
 * 15.30 — *
 * 16.00 Polytechnic Staff Grievances: Re New B. Ed Course *
 * 16.30 — *
 * *
 * ***What Actually Happened!*** *
 * 07.20 Arrival at the Ministry. Fairly empty. (Most staff arrive at *
 * 7.30 or thereafter — my Secretary among the latter.) *
 * *

* The 'in-tray' has only six files which is a good sign. I pull out *
 * 'Things to do Today' pad and scribble the following: *
 * *
 * 1. Ring DPSM — Re Vacant Post in CD&E Dept. *
 * 2. Check Minister's Speech - Ring George. *
 * 3. Make appointment to service car, etc. *
 * *
 * 07.30 My Secretary arrives. Exchange greetings. "Sorry, Sir, my *
 * daughter is not well this morning and I would like to take her *
 * to the doctor at about 9.00 a.m." Agreed. *
 * A quick glance at the Cabinet Papers — only three and *
 * nothing controversial! *
 * *
 * 07.45 Perm Sec's PA peeps through the door "just to remind you *
 * that you are acting as from today". Where is the Permanent *
 * Secretary? — "Oh, terribly sorry, Sir, didn't he tell you? He *
 * is off to India again on a recruitment mission you know — *
 * Secondary Teachers!" *
 * *
 * 08.00 Minister summons for briefing. Good session, but reminds *
 * me that we still have to present a cabinet memorandum on *
 * *Gratuity for Temporary Teachers who Serve for Over Five* *
 * *Years*. Will do. *
 * "By the way, what is the latest about the Swaning Hill *
 * problem?" *
 * *
 * 09.05 Return to find an old lady with a girl (18 years?) sitting in my *
 * Secretary's office — minus the Secretary. (oh dear, what *
 * now?) "Your Bursary Secretary is refusing to grant a bursary *
 * to my daughter to study Law at the University." Asked her to *
 * wait. Back in my office — with the door shut — buzz Bursary. *
 * Sec. — "Mrs Pale is here, please brief me"! "Daughter's *
 * grades are too low for Law degree, and we have offered her a *
 * bursary to do Diploma in Secondary Education!" Thank you. *
 * It took 20 minutes to explain to her why her daughter could *
 * not be offered a bursary to study Law. Phone rings — CEO *
 * (NF) — "Please talk to PS Local Government — My DAEO *
 * in Central District informs me that the DC still refuses to let *
 * us use primary school classrooms for literary groups!" *
 * Advised him to talk to DC first before I go to the top! *
 * *
 * 10.00 Mr K. arrives — The Swaning Hill strike is almost over. The *
 * students will get thicker slices of bread in future. Took *
 * advantage of his presence to discuss our strategy of phasing *
 * out boarding in Junior Secondary Schools. *
 * *
 * 10.40 Dashed to PS's office to check his 'in-tray'. Attended to a *
 * couple of letters and left the rest for later. *
 * *
 * 11.00 Director USAID. Fruitful discussion on Primary Education *
 * *

- * Improvement Project. The Americans are willing to continue *
 * with the project for another two years. *
 * * * * *
- * 11.05 Got rid of him. My Secretary has returned and informs me *
 * that several people called during my meeting with USAID. *
 * Anything urgent? Not really. "By the way, Sir, the In- *
 * Service Team would like to see you for a few minutes to get *
 * your views on the staffing of the new Teacher Centres." "I *
 * will give them 10 minutes." *
 * * * * *
- * 11.40 They arrive. The paper they prepared was very good. Phone *
 * rings. "Sorry to interrupt, sir, it is the Minister from Cabinet *
 * room!" "How quickly can you get the latest figures on *
 * expatriate teachers in the system?" "Give me five minutes." *
 * Ring Eric (Planning Unit). "Please help!" [Thanks to our *
 * new computer system — within three minutes I have the *
 * information.] Minister will be impressed. *
 * * * * *
- * 12.15 Got rid of the In-Service Team. Summoned the Planning *
 * Officer who serves as Secretary to the Secondary Working *
 * Group, to brief me on one or two matters on the agenda of the *
 * scheduled afternoon meeting. *
 * * * * *
- * 12.20 Phone rings — Minister again "Could you and the Director *
 * of Unified Teaching Service (DUTS) please come and give *
 * me thorough briefing on some of these figures?" *
 * "Straightaway, Sir?" "Yes, please." *
 * Instructed my Secretary to get the DUTS to come *
 * immediately — only to discover that he has accompanied the *
 * PS to India. "Get his deputy, then, and also the Principal *
 * Planning Officer." I am three-quarters of an hour late for my *
 * lunch engagement. *
 * * * * *
- * 14.00 Secondary Working Group Meeting (see attached minutes). *
 * * * * *
- * 16.50 Back to office — most staff already left at 4.30. A note on my *
 * desk written by my Secretary: "Principal of Polytechnic *
 * would like to discuss with you the staff's grievances *
 * concerning the new B Ed programme. Will ring you at home *
 * around 7.00 p.m.!" *
 * Looked at my "Things to do Today" pad! Why do I bother! *
 * But I must ring George about that speech! *
 * * * * *
- * Swartland Jakes (1989), *How Do Ministries Really Work: A* *
 * *Case Study – Botswana*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London. *
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Experienced senior education administrators learn to stall or change activities quite effectively. Occasionally they can be tempted

to deal with the more incidentally pressing matters to the neglect of long-term and important ones. The wise senior education administrator learns to suppress such temptations since crisis-management generates tension and hasty decisions which in turn lead to even greater administrative friction and stress. Stress is a constant hazard for senior education officials in small states. For example, the unscheduled structure of their work can become a major source of frustration when at the end of a hard working-day they can list numerous minor tasks but cannot identify any seemingly tangible results or report significant in-roads into their long list of scheduled projects. The demands on the physical and mental resources become draining when they lack competent assistance and the support of personnel who understand and mitigate their problems. Stress and frustration become most acute when several officials have to share and therefore compete for scarce support services and common resources.

Approaches to Time Management

A particular approach to introduce a measure of organizational structure in the seemingly unscheduled working day of the multi-functional senior education administrator is to allocate timeslots of 80 or 90 minutes to different tasks. Specific periods during the week are assigned to planning meetings, school visits, correspondence, appointments, and the essential ‘miscellaneous’ label slot. Using this technique, an official’s weekly schedule would look something like this:

	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>
Time-Slot 1	unfinished tasks from previous week	school visits	misc	misc	review of week’s work
Time-Slot 2	appointments	correspondence	school visits	appointments	correspondence
Time-Slot 3	planning meeting	appointments	misc	misc	school visits
Time-Slot 4	misc	misc	misc	misc	misc

misc = unplanned miscellaneous slots

A few precautions will make such a time-management schedule both practicable and effective.

One cannot design a schedule without consulting colleagues, especially those who are directly involved, say, in planning meetings. But once a schedule is established it is important to make every effort to follow it, encouraging colleagues and, if possible, superiors to assist you. For example, you and your colleagues will agree to allocate specific days and times for weekly, fortnightly and monthly meetings to deal with particular issues, such as planning, co-ordination, finance, personnel, support services, controlling. Secretaries, in particular, should be trained to stick to the schedule, especially in allocating appointments and dealing with correspondence. Equally important, they must be supported when persistent or influential callers attempt to see you 'urgently' or when 'urgent' matters have to be attended to. Experienced administrators know that 'urgency' in their job is a relative word.

At first the schedule may appear impractical and unlikely to be kept over a long period of time. Without doubt, there will be many occasions when one is compelled to depart from it either by choice or due to circumstances beyond one's control. However, as colleagues become accustomed to one's routine and as others develop their schedule, the pattern becomes supportive and reinforcing. It will become known, for example, that a particular senior administrator will see people only on such days and at such times, and visitors will make the effort to see him/her at the allocated times. Many education officials appreciate the value of effective time allocation from their teaching days and their use of time-tables, yet they seem to find it difficult to adopt a similar technique when they move to the office.

Another precaution for success is to consider the demands and requirements of others. If schools finish classes at 3.30 p.m., one needs to allow a slot for late appointments which make it possible for teachers or heads of school to travel after school hours rather than earlier when they would have to leave classes without teachers. If some office staff are allowed to leave early on Friday afternoons to travel to distant homes for the weekend, attempts to hold planning meetings or office reviews late on Friday will be quite inappropriate when several people are anxious to leave.

A third precaution is not to follow the schedule slavishly. It should be regarded as a structured guide and not a dictate of one's working day. This factor becomes particularly important when some of the senior administrators' tasks, such as when visiting schools, require an

element of spontaneity. It is not a practical or a tactical approach if everyone knows that your 'surprise' visits to schools occur on Monday and Thursday afternoons! The schedule may have to be reviewed and altered from time to time as job demands change.

Office Equipment

The efficiency and productivity of senior education administrators can be further improved with the adoption of modern office equipment when finance and resources allow. In this respect, many senior education administrators are catching up with their colleagues in industry and are utilizing office-equipment to an ever-increasing extent.

With the electronic revolution, telephone answering machines, dictaphones and personal computers are easily accessible. They are relatively cheap and no longer regarded as luxuries. Used judiciously, office aids contribute immensely to the avoidance of unnecessary interruptions in one's routine and in many ways make up for the shortage of staff. For example, all in-coming calls are recorded on the answering machine to be sorted, prioritized and dealt with at the appropriate time. Many executives save considerable time in dealing with correspondence, dictating memos or composing reports, by utilizing dictaphones, even outside office hours, sometimes while travelling. Personal computers have become invaluable office equipment for word processing as well as storing and retrieving data and information. It will be necessary, however, to prepare and train support staff in the use of office aids. As in many cases of innovation, the staff may regard the introduction of such equipment as an intrusion on their work, or interpret it as lack of confidence in their competence or, even worse, as a threat to their job. It is often necessary to reassure them that the new equipment will not jeopardize their job.

The senior education administrator must know, of course, what office equipment is available locally and from where to obtain the best independent advice without any obligation to buy. Some government organizations have a purchasing advisory board, but senior officials may do well to look for the relevant information themselves by approaching local agents and writing to foreign companies requesting information and catalogues. Of course, catalogues do not always give all the necessary information or the most reliable evaluation. Wherever possible, the equipment must be seen in action and the opinion sought from people who have used the equipment over a

period of time. Here, the advice of friends in industry or from colleagues overseas will become a valuable asset.

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- * ***Self-Evaluation: How good a time manager are you?*** *
- * a. As an important and relatively well paid executive are you able to *
- * identify clearly: *
- * i. the duties for which you are solely responsible? *
- * ii. how you came about to have these duties? *
- * b. Can you estimate the time various tasks take to complete? *
- * c. Do you normally complete your assignments in time? *
- * d. Are the results what you really want them to be, or would they be *
- * better if you had more time? *
- * e. Are you able to resist getting involved in work that actually is the *
- * responsibility of others? *
- * f. Are you spending too much time on pressing low level tasks and *
- * hardly any on the really important ones? *
- * g. Can you delegate and should you be delegating some tasks to others? *
- * h. Do you work to a plan, however flexible, rather than letting work or *
- * others dictate your timing? *
- * i. Can you find the time to think, plan and speculate about alternative *
- * strategies to your assignments? *
- * j. Do you enjoy being busy and would feel lost and frustrated if you *
- * weren't? *
- * k. Do you feel you are indispensable? *
- * *
- *****

Loneliness at the Top

A major problem faced by senior administrators stems from the fact that they have to work at the top on their own. Their high position in the hierarchy, the need to direct, to evaluate other people's work and to reward and criticise ensures that job isolation becomes built in. Very often they are reluctant to share their occupational problems; they find it even more difficult to share their personal concerns. In these circumstances senior education administrators can easily develop symptoms of loneliness, stress and ill-health, factors which, if left unattended, would influence and reflect negatively on the quality of their work. This in turn would result in more loneliness, stress and ill-health.

The higher senior education officials advance to the top, the more isolated they tend to become. The very nature of their work which involves complex variables, the needs to exercise expert skills only

they possess, and the handling of confidential information means that they have to act on their own, even when they would prefer to share the decision-making process. Unlike their counterparts working in big administrative set-ups, they cannot share experiences with colleagues in similar positions. On the other hand, they may feel ill-at-ease discussing problems with their subordinates. This may suggest weakness or managerial incompetence to the very people who probably pushed the problem upstairs in the first place. Furthermore, many senior education administrators are reluctant to discuss their work with family and friends, with the result that as their work load increases and consumes more of their time, the interaction with those close to them is progressively reduced while their sense of loneliness and isolation increases. The vicious circle becomes difficult to break. Continuous overwork, a constantly high degree of concentration, less time to relax, isolation from colleagues, friends and family breeds further stress and work fatigue.

Wise administrators who wish to stay healthy and sane will find time to relax, to share discreetly the problem-solving and decision-making process with colleagues, even when these are their junior, to spend time with their family and friends. Some do not find it difficult to share the joys and frustrations of the job with those close to them without breaking confidentiality and without burdening relatives with their occupational worries. Yet, to many, this is not easy. Traditional civil-service attitudes often prompted by the colonial mentality of keeping information from the 'natives' often abhor the sharing of power and reinforce the isolationist approach. Senior education administrators in small states, who are already prone to occupational and professional isolation, will preserve their own health and the wellbeing of their organization if they can share their occupational worries with 'significant' people around them.

In managing time and setting priorities, the senior educational administrators will do well to include in their time allocation enough space for relaxation, for free-time, for socializing with colleagues and friends, for doing things that are different from the routine. Maintaining a social and friendly attitude with colleagues reduces tension and cultivates a collaborative working relationship which facilitates discussion and sharing of problems. In such situations, trusted friends and colleagues act as sounding boards for one's ideas, even if they may not be conversant with the full extent of the issues. Friendly and supportive colleagues become invaluable assets when senior administrators have to share limited resources.

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*
* ***Stress: Positive and Negative Aspects*** *
* As it becomes clearer what stress is, it is also important to know what *
* stress is not. It is not just the well-publicized, male dominated *
* 'executive stress', but a disease which afflicts teachers, secretaries, *
* principals, inspectors and caretakers alike. Stress is also not merely *
* nervous tension, nor is it always the result of physical harm. For *
* example paying a compliment to a teacher or a student produces stress *
* without causing adverse effects — creating a feeling of euphoria rather *
* than distress. Finally, stress is not something to be avoided; it can be the *
* spice of life, if one handles it wisely. *
* *
* Gmelch, Walter H, (1988), "Coping in a World of Tension: The *
* Effective Educator", *CCEA Studies in Educational Administration*, *
* No. 48. *
* *
* — Do you accept the 'positive' type of stress? How often do you and *
* your colleagues compliment each other on work well-done in order *
* to reinforce 'positive' stress and reduce distress? *
* *
* *****

Making Things Happen

The constant change of roles and the variety of tasks of senior officials are most demanding but have their positive side. The varied experiences broaden their vision and improve their knowledge, skills and long-term performance within the educational system. This aspect certainly ensures that they do not suffer from dull moments at work. Indeed, the job of senior education officials in small states can be most exciting and rewarding, especially when they get the satisfaction of starting and completing a project, when they overcome the difficulties and resource limitations to achieve an educational gain for their sector. Evaluating and dealing with important and complex issues, employing one's experience and expertise, charting and executing policy, being in control and bringing into effect one's ideas and ideals, are factors which can provide a sense of satisfaction and pride in one's occupation.

Setting priorities, allocating time wisely, and utilizing their energies efficiently will render the job of senior education administrators more productive, less stressful and possibly more enjoyable. The world of leading education administrators in a small state can be most rewarding as well as most demanding.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

Activity One:

- a. List the routine and the unusual chores you carry out in the course of a week's work. Group them under different headings, which may include:
 - planning or review meetings,
 - consultations with colleagues,
 - handling correspondence,
 - visits to schools/other departments,
 - sitting in committees,
 - holding appointments,
 - miscellaneous, unplanned activities.
- b. Allocate a percentage of your working week to each category;
- c. Divide each working day into 60 or 80 or 100 minute time slots, and design your own time-management schedule;
- d. Persuade two or three of your colleagues to design their own time-management schedules in order to compare them and attempt to align them;
- e. With your colleagues, discuss the utility of designing and adopting a time-management schedule.

Activity Two:

- a. Seek information about the availability, cost, and technical possibility of installing the following office equipment:
 - i. telephone answering machine,
 - ii. electronic typewriter with memory, storage facilities,
 - iii. dictating machine,
 - iv. personal computer/wordprocessor, database.
- b. Apart from the technical aspects, look into the possibility of installing the above office aids, taking into account:
 - i. power availability,
 - ii. other officials' reactions,
 - iii. junior staff's reactions, especially their willingness and competency to operate the equipment,
 - iv. costs, including upkeep and maintenance.
- c. Look into the advantages and disadvantages of buying a personal organizer of the Filofax type.

Activity Three:***Case Study: Wednesday Afternoons***

Since your appointment as Head of Personnel Section, it has been a hectic eleven months. The working day appears to be shrinking as you get to grips with the multitude of problems, each more urgent than the next. Your day appears to be taken up by endless interviews and appointments with teaching and non-teaching personnel. Everyone seems to have been waiting for you to get promoted in order to bring problems before you and all seem to expect you to solve them overnight.

You find the work exciting and in many ways most rewarding, especially when you manage to solve problems for people, many of whom are acquaintances or friends. It has become increasingly clear that your new post places you in the most favourable position of being known among your subordinates as well as superiors in the department, a factor that certainly will be a great asset when you seek further promotion.

But that can wait. At the moment you have great plans for your present job. You find the personnel section in a shambles and you aim at getting it ship-shape. You see the urgent need for a proper 'consultation' process whereby employees of the Ministry of Education are aware of their rights and obligations. There is a demand for a proper cross-referenced filing system. Because of the small number of personnel employed by the department, the installation of a computerized record keeping system need not be expensive and will not take too long to set up.

Furthermore, there is a far more urgent question that needs attention. As an ex-education officer you are fully aware of the mismatch that exists between many young teachers and the subjects they teach. Although many are better qualified and better trained than their colleagues, they cannot be allocated to teach their specialist subjects since the seniority system gives preference to the older teachers. As a result, there is a great malaise in the Department. Many young teachers are becoming frustrated, and quite a number are moving to other, more occupationally satisfying jobs. You believe you have a feasible plan to solve this complex but urgent problem, but cannot find the time to think it out properly, to put it on paper and present it to your superiors.

You are also aware that such a plan will be most unpopular with the older and influential teachers and certainly will require protracted negotiations with the unions. In the process your present popularity

may be shortlived.

In order to rationalize your time in the hope of working on your plan, you have allocated Wednesday afternoons to this task — seeking out files, collecting data, building up a case to support your plan. The instructions to your secretary have been explicit: “No appointments, no phone-calls, no visitors, no other assignments for Wednesday afternoons!” They have been followed except for the last few Wednesdays.

Two people have noticed that you are free from appointments on Wednesday afternoons. One is the Director of Education himself, who has twice asked you over to his office to discuss important problems, but which could have been tackled at any other time. The other person who is utilizing the Wednesday afternoon slot is your assistant, an old friend and faithful colleague, who avails himself of your relatively ‘free’ time to bring you complex problems that do need attention and uninterrupted thinking. You admit that you find the two encounters occupationally and personally rewarding, but they are also interfering with your long-term plans for the section. You need a solution to the Wednesday afternoons problem:

- a. Do you temporarily forget your plan and concentrate on building a strong relationship with the staff?
- b. Would you cultivate the friendship with the Director in order to become more influential and consequently be in a better position to implement your plan?
- c. Would you explain to the Director and your assistant your commitment for Wednesday afternoons and hope that they would understand the situation?
- d. Would you go on as you are in the hope that you would be able to stall the unwanted interruptions and eventually complete your task?
- e. Or would you resort to some other solution for this problem?

You may wish to discuss this problem with your colleagues and see how they would approach it.