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THE IMPACT OF OFFICE ERGONOMICS ON THE JOB PERFORMANCE OF THE EDUCATIONAL MANAGER

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ABSTRACT

Educational Managers are Chief Administrators of any secondary school and they are faced with a lot of challenges in their job performance. Hence, the questions of how managers/office workers are affected by features of the physical environment in which they work have preoccupied managers as well as other still improving in their productivity, and occupational health and safety are major concerns in organizations, especially in developing countries. Some of the common problems are improper workplace design, ill-structured jobs, mismatch between worker abilities and job demands, adverse environment, poor human-machine system design and inappropriate management programs. This leads to workplace hazards, poor workers' health, mechanical equipment injuries, disabilities, and in turn reduces worker productivity and product/work quality, and increases cost. In an educational institution, an optimal physical environment design is where the workstation environment supports the needs of the workers and where a worker operates in a conducive environment to the individual's abilities (Makhbul, Idrus & Rani 2007). This can materialized if organizations are able to match the work processes with the individual who performs the tasks. This is the goal of ergonomics.

Keywords: Ergonomics, Workplace, Educational Manager, Occupational Health, Work - related stress.

INTRODUCTION

According to Makhbul, Idrus & Rani (2007), ergonomics is a science that is concerned with the 'fit' between people and their work. It puts people first, taking into account their capabilities and limitations, and aims to make sure that tasks, equipment, information and the environment suit each worker. Workstation designed from an ergonomics perspective can effectively enhance productivity and minimize stress through the interaction between the various system components (Dempsey 2004). People are an essential part of every business process and critical to delivering quality products and services. Educational managers who report discomfort and stress at work will have their productivity affected, because being too hot, too cold, too draughty or harassed through lack of privacy or distraction will affect their ability to perform their work properly and optimally (Leaman 2005). These conditions lead to workplace hazards, poor workers' health, disabilities, and a reduction in workers' productivity and products' quality. Furthermore, work injuries have been suggested to be associated with psychological distress, decreased participation in daily living activities and have negative effects on family well-being (Kirsh & McKee 2003).

It is especially costly when a person becomes injured or ill as a result of work related stress given both the direct costs and the loss of the valuable services provided by the person. According to Fernandez (2011), the single largest class of injury claims in the office is Work-related Musculoskeletal Disorders (WMSD's), and recently there is an observed rise in the reported cases of Work-related Musculoskeletal Disorders (WMSD's) mostly in the developing countries. Ergonomics is a tool which school owners and principals use to help prevent these injuries in the office in the developed nations (Das 2007) Das & Sengupta 2005; Das & Shikdar 2008; and Ryan 2010). It reduces the risk of injury by adapting the work to fit the person instead of forcing the person to adapt to the work. In addition to injury prevention, ergonomics is also concerned with enhancing work performance, by removing the barriers that exist in many work places that prevent

educational managers from performing to the best of their abilities. This paper is an attempt to examine ergonomic factors that contribute to the outcomes of work related stress in secondary school.

Literature Review

Derived from the Greek words ergo (work) and nomos (natural laws), ergonomics literally means the laws of work. According to Rowan & Wright (2005), ergonomics refers to the complex relationship between workers and their work that permeates in every aspect of the workplace. Ergonomics defined by Fernandez (2011), is the design of the workplace, equipment, machine, tool, product, environment, and system, taking into consideration the human's physical, biomechanical, and psychological capabilities, and optimizing the effectiveness and productivity of work systems while assuring the safety, health, and well-being of the workers. Wilson (1995) simplifies the definition by saying that ergonomics is the practice of learning about human characteristics and then using that understanding to improve people's interaction with the environments. In a nutshell, ergonomics encompasses the relationship between humans, machines systems, job design and the work environment. By approaching work practices (stretching, reaching, or sitting) from an ergonomically correct point of view, a worker actually becomes stronger, healthier and more productive. If management does not address ergonomics discomfort, a worker will act on a subconscious level, adapting his/her behavior to lighten the pain. When someone adapts behavior to avoid pain, it generally becomes both performance and safety issue. It is commonly seen that work stress is caused by the work design and workplace environment. Smith (2004) stated stress as what happens when the body does not adjust to some new or additional internal or external stimulus. Ket de Vries (2009) pointed out that stress is a result of the imbalance between the demands of the environment and the ability of the individual to adapt. The nature and effects of stress might be best understood by saying that some environmental variables (stressors), when interpreted by the individual (cognitive interpretation), may lead to stress (Dua 1994). Whatever interpretations given by the scholars or researchers, the experience of stress in the workplace has undesirable consequences both for the health and safety of individuals and well-being of their organizations. Work stress can affect workers in many ways; from lowering resistance to illnesses and depriving them of sleep, to interfering with their concentration so that more injuries and accidents occur (Adeyemi 2013). Measures of distress can be psychological (anxiety, depression, irritability), physiological (high blood pressure, high muscle tension levels), or behavioural (poor work performance, accidents, sleep disturbances, substance abuse).

In light of the above, stress is an unignorable workplace problem. The interaction between work environment and work station design will contribute to the work stress outcomes. According to DeCroon (2005), the work station design may directly or indirectly result in physiological and psychological, reactions such as crowding stress (psychological state of inadequacy of space), occupationally induced fatigue, job satisfaction decrement and increased levels of blood pressure. In addition, the long-term reactions include decreased performance, and negative health outcomes, such as psychosomatic health complaints including chronic fatigue, burnout and musculoskeletal disorders (Kirsh & McKee 2003). The ignorance of the stress outcomes in school organizations will have negative effects on workers' quality and productivity. This has attracted researchers to find alternatives to reduce work stress outcomes in these organization. Many research have shown positive effects in reducing work stress by applying ergonomic principles in workplaces, machine design, job design, environment, and facilities design (Ryan 2010).

In the past few decades, there has been a strong trend for corporate organizations and businesses to reconfigure the spaces of their offices in new ways and models. In addition, the shift towards more exciting and flexible workplace environment and the need to meet the diverse and growing expectations and requirements of different managers has led to the rise of debates about how and where productive work is accomplished. In a 2003 survey by Management Today magazine, virtually all (97 per cent) of respondents said that they regarded their place of work as a symbol of whether or not they were valued by their employer.

Office ergonomics has been recommended by many studies as one of the key guides to the educational managers at the workplace to help produce best performance. It is the quality of the Manager" workplace environment that mostly impacts on the level of manager's motivation and subsequent performance. How well they engage with the organization, especially with their immediate environment influences to a great extent their error rate, level of innovation and collaboration with their Managers, absenteeism and, ultimately, how long they stay in the job Al-Anzi (2009).

According to International Ergonomics Association (IEA), (2000) Ergonomics (or human factors) is the scientific discipline concerned with the understanding of interactions among humans and other elements of a system, and the profession that applies theory, principles, data and methods to design in order to optimize human well-being and overall system performance. Washington State Department for Labour and Industry (2002) identifies Office Ergonomics and defines it as the branch of ergonomics dealing specifically with the office environment. This field of ergonomics considers how key workplace elements such as workstations, computers, chairs, lighting, noise level, room temperature etc. could be tailored to fit and enhance the Manager Health, safety and performance. From the definition, the goal of office ergonomics is to set up office work space that fits and adequately supports the needs of the educational manager in his quest to execute office task very well.

It focuses on how school offices are designed and layout, how furniture and equipment are set up in the workplace. In addition, ergonomics considers the impact of other workplace elements such as air quality, noise levels, colour schemes, room temperature, lighting, general flexibility on educational Manager Performance. Generally, from the corporate perspective, the performance of a Manager is often assessed largely by the output that the Manager produces, given the requisite workplace environment, tools, technology, skill set among others etc.

Studies have revealed that among some of the factors that affect educational manager performance are; Manager's ability to learn and perform the task required, expectations to achieve and standards by which to achieve them, knowledge and skills necessary to perform the job, feedback from management regarding the status of the Manager's performance, acceptable working conditions and equipment to perform the job effectively, incentives in place that positively reinforce good performance.

Dr. Michael O'Neil, Senior Director of Workplace Research at Knoll Incorporated in his article "Office Ergonomic Standards; Layperson's Guide" published in 2011 asserts that Furniture designed using ergonomic principles can improve performance and reduce workplace injury. According to Gutnick (2007), a study by The National Safety Council established that on an average workday, one million educational managers will be absent from work due to job stress

Taiwo (2009), claims that about 86% of productivity problems reside in the work environment of organizations. The work environment has effect on the performance of Managers. The type of work environment in which Managers operate determines the way in which such enterprises prosper.

Although other organizational elements such as praise and recognition, compensation and financial reward impact on manager's performance, studies have also shown that a Manager's workplace environment is a key determinant of their level of performance. How well the workplace engages educational managers or a manager impacts their level of motivation to perform. Indeed poor workplace environment influences Managers: health and safety, error rate, level of innovation, collaboration with other Managers, absenteeism and, ultimately, how long they stay in the job.

In Beer et al. (1994) as cited in Taiwo (2009), we observe that work systems do not only affect commitment, competence and cost effectiveness but also have long term effects on physical health, mental health and longevity of life of Managers.

One major benefit derived from pursuing office ergonomics is that it reduces the risk of injury) adapting the work to fit the person instead of forcing the person to adapt to the work. In addition injury prevention, ergonomics is also concerned with enhancing work performance, by removing barriers that exist in many work places that prevent Managers from performing to the best of the

abilities. This ultimately helps people work more effectively, efficiently, and productively at their (Washington State Department of Labor and Industries, 2002). According to the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (2002) ergonomics improve the to the work environment and primarily used to create a safer and more healthful work environment, and that a company n experience other benefits including increased productivity, increased work quality, reduced tumor reduced absenteeism, and increased morale.

According to the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (2002), if workers are equal to adapt to a job that exceeds their body's physical limitations, they can become injured, especial with Work-related Musculoskeletal Disorders (WMSD's), which account for over 40% of Washington State Fund workers' compensation claims among office workers. Numerous studies had shown that Manager Performance and satisfaction are substantially impacted upon by key elements in the office environment such as furniture, noise levels, lighting, temperature, air quality and general comfort.

Scholars in Nigeria have over the year's demonstrated little interest in the subject of ergonomics and for that matter office ergonomics. As a result research material on the subject appears to be scanty). One of the few studies on ergonomics in Nigeria was in respect of occupational disorders in Nigerian subsistence farmers (McNeil and O'Neil, 1998). Afrodan Ltd, one of Nigeria's renowned suppliers o office furniture has over the years sought to sensitize Nigerians on the immense benefits of high quality ergonomic and durable office furniture through consistent advertisement and occasionally on- studio promotions. Although studies on ergonomics in Nigeria have not been substantial, empirical evidence suggests that the application of ergonomic principles and theories in educational institution in Nigeria is rife. Most higher institutions in Nigeria are increasingly mimicking layouts and finishes which to a large extent typify corporate offices in the advanced world. Evidently, these offices comprise of thoughtfully designed open plan and cellular offices with lush decor, automated work systems and ICT infrastructure that supports Manager Safety, communication, comfort, motivation and general performance.

WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT AND THE JOB PERFORMANCE OF THE BUSINESS MANAGER

Business Dictionary.com (2012) defines workplace environment as a location where a task is completed. When pertaining to a place of employment, the work environment involves the physical geographical location as well as the immediate surroundings of the workplace, such as a construction site or office building. Typically, it involves other factors relating to the place of employment, such as the quality of the air, noise level, and additional perks and benefits of employment such as free child care or unlimited coffee, or adequate parking. Besides manufacturing plants and other specialized production unit, nearly all educational manager productive activities take place in the office environment. In other words, most workplace environments are fundamentally office environments. Office Environment as defined by BNet Business Dictionary (2008) and cited in Hameed (2009) is, "the arrangement of workspace so that work can be performed in the most efficient wav". Office design incorporates both ergonomics and work flow, which examine the way in which work is performed in order to optimize layout. Office design is an important factor in job satisfaction. It affects the way in which Managers work, and many organizations have implemented open-plan offices to encourage teamwork. Office design is very vital in the Manager Satisfaction, and the broad concept of office design also includes the workflow.

KEY ELEMENTS

A productive office environment consists of a number of elements. Al-Anzi (2009) identifies; furniture, noise, flexibility, comfort, communication, lighting, temperature and air quality as the constituents of an office design and productivity. Office Design and Productivity Source: Al-Anzi (2009) In addition to these elements, Leblebici (2012), below as some of the elements at the workplace environment that may lead to the engagement or disengagement of educational managers.

WORKPLACE ERGONOMICS AND FACTORS AFFECTING THE EDUCATIONAL MANAGER PERFORMANCE

The ultimate aim of workplace ergonomics is to generally ensure the managers safety and enhance performance. Beyond these objectives, many other benefits are known to accrue to an organization when management commits to the development and maintenance of ergonomics in the workplace. These benefits according to McSmith (2014) includes increased productivity, increased work quality, reduced turnover, and reduced absenteeism, increased morale. From a safety perspective, Gyekye (2006) emphasizes that environmental conditions affect manager's safety perceptions which impacts upon managers also yielded indications suggesting that improving key ergonomics factors in working environment results in a reduction in a number of complaints and absenteeism and an increase in productivity.

Al-Anzi (2009: 19) suggests that the key ergonomics factors that affect managers productivity and performance are office furniture, workspace design, noise/vibration, light intensity, and ventilation/humidity Statt (1994) as cited by Leblebici (2012) argues that, the modern work physical environment is characterized by technology; computers and machines as well as general furniture and furnishings. To enhance Manager Performance therefore, it is imperative that the organization's physical environment is fashioned to support Manager in their quest to attain organizational objectives.

Al-Anzi (200) suggests that the key ergonomics factors that affect Manager Productivity and performance are office furniture, workspace design, noise/vibration, light intensity, and ventilation/humidity noise/vibrations. Exposure to occupational noise/vibrations, that is, unwanted sound, has been linked with variety of adverse effects upon well-being and obvious relationship with hearing loss (Das & Sengupta 2003). Noise exposure has been found to be associated with a range of work stress outcomes such as cardiac problems, sickness-related absenteeism, self-reported fatigue and psychological distress (McDonald 2009: 42). Most of the researchers agreed that the sources of noise/vibration in the organizations come from telephone ringing, piped-in background music, office machines, etc.

ERGONOMICS SIMPLIFIED

According to International Ergonomics Association (IEA), (2012) Ergonomics (or human factors) is the scientific discipline concerned with the understanding of interactions among humans and other elements of a system, and the profession that applies theory, principles, data and methods to design in order to optimize human well-being and overall system performance. A publication by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), UK in 2003: "Understanding Ergonomics at Work" also defines Ergonomics as the scientific study of human work. It considers the physical and mental capabilities and limits of the worker as he or she interacts with tools, equipment, work methods, tasks and the working environment. The publication further postulates that the application of Ergonomics to workplace improves health and safety by: reducing the potential for accidents, reducing the potential for injury and ill health and improves performance and productivity. Ergonomics permeates every aspect of human endeavour. As a result, various branches or concepts of Ergonomics have evolved and developed over the years. Some of the branches are:

Office Ergonomics

Washington State Department for Labour and Industry in its document: "Office Ergonomics - Practical Solution for a Safer Workplace (2002)" identifies Office Ergonomics and defines it as the branch of ergonomics dealing specifically with the office environment. This field of ergonomic considers how key workplace elements such as workstations, computers, chairs, lighting, noise level, room temperature etc. could be tailored to fit and enhance Manager Health, safety and performance. Other areas of Ergonomics identified and posted at the Blog: Safecomputingtips.Com includes the following;

Engineering Psychology

This field of study examines the relationship between machines and human beings, along with the effort to improve that relation. Possible recommendations of the study could inform change in the location of the work place, redesigning of work equipment and modifications in the way that work related equipment is used. The aim is to make things as user friendly as possible".

Macro ergonomics-

"This field is less of person specific and concentrates more on the organizational environment including the history, culture, goal and design of the environment. The aim of this field of ergonomics is to improve productivity and enhance Manager Satisfaction, health and safety". The International Ergonomics Association (IEA) identifies three main application domains of ergonomics. These include Physical Ergonomics, Cognitive Ergonomics and Organizational Ergonomics.

Physical Ergonomics

Physical ergonomics is concerned with human anatomical, anthropometric, physiological and biomechanical characteristics as they relate to physical activity. The focal areas include working postures, materials handling, repetitive movements, work-related musculoskeletal disorders, workplace layout, safety and health.

Ergonomics Cognitive

Ergonomics is concerned with mental processes, such as perception, memory, reasoning, and motor response, as they affect interactions among humans and other elements of a system. The main focal areas include mental workload, decision-making, skilled performance, human-computer interaction, human reliability, work stress and training as these may relate to human-system design.

Ergonomics Organizational

Ergonomics is concerned with the optimization of socio-technical systems, including their organizational structures, policies, and processes. The key focal areas include communication, crew resource management, work design, design of working times, teamwork, participatory design, community ergonomics, cooperative work, new work paradigms, organizational culture, virtual organizations, telework, and quality management.

KEY ERGONOMICS

BNet Business Dictionary (2008) defines office as "a place in which business, clerical, or professional activities are conducted". In simple term, it is often a building facility in which business activities take place. It ranges from temporal structures such as site offices to permanent multi-storey corporate edifices. Fundamentally, they all perform the function of supporting business activities. The office is a work system that entirely depends on humans: without them, no work gets done. Therefore, office ergonomics focuses on the human as the most important component of the office and adopts the office to the people involved. Such human-centered design requires knowledge of the characteristics of the people in the office, particularly of their dimensions, their capabilities, and their preferences (Kroemer and Kroemer, 2001).The Office Ergonomics Handbook (2008) identifies the under-listed as the ergonomic elements in the office;

- ✓ Your Chair and Workstation;
- ✓ Your Keyboard, Mouse and Monitor;
- ✓ Office Lights;
- ✓ Office Arrangement and Environmental Concerns;
- ✓ Indoor Air Quality and Thermal Comfort and;
- ✓ Noise Levels.

The sitting posture, angles, distances and the arrangement of the chair, workstation, monitor, keyboard and mouse best support human function in the office and promotes Manager Health, safety and performance.

Office Furniture

The physical problems associated with prolonged use of office furniture such as seats and tables do not end with the odd twinge discomfort. However, they can easily extend to repetitive strain injurv (RSI) causing chronic or permanent damage (Fernandez 2011). In terms of everyday office use. An ergonomic chair is one which not only allows the user to complete tasks, but also actively facilitate the tasks. The work chair shall be stable and allow the operator or user moves easily and sits in a comfortable position. Furthermore, the seat shall be adjustable in height and tilt. To maximize comfort when leaning backwards, the seat should remain stationary and the feet remain flat on the floor, so as not to inhibit circulation (Fernandez 2011). For a chair to be ergonomic, it has to have at least vertically adjustable. The ergonomic chair will affect the workers performance through minimization of fatigue and stress (Das & Shikdar 2008).

Workspace Design

Taking ergonomics concern for workspace design will decrease the problems of work stress (Das & Sengupta 2005). Das & Sengupta, (2005) pointed out that if the organization does not provide a good working environment to Managers such as buying the best-fitting apparatus, furniture and tools, the risk of becoming ill related to the workplaces will increase. Epidemiological studies proved that ergonomically designed workspace such as the improvement of work area will minimize the outcomes of work stress (McDonald 2009).

Lighting Intensity

There is a significant relationship between the lighting systems and work stress outcomes in organizations (Sutton & Rafaeli 1987). Workplace lighting contributes to decrease in workers' productivity and increases fatigue (Wojcikiewicz 2003). This premise has been supported by Dempsey (2004) and Das (2007). They stated that an improper level of lighting will cause eye strains and increase work stress. It is however, difficult to make specific statement about the best level of lighting since their appropriateness depends heavily on the nature of a task (Sutton & Rafaeli 1987). However there is agreement among scholars that high level of glare, lack of natural light, and level of lighting that are too low for a given task can have negative effects on work stress outcomes (Sutton & Rafaeli 1987). Negative relationship has been found by Oldham & Rotchford (2003) between low illumination and Managers' reactions including job satisfaction and wellbeing.

Ventilation/Humidity

Air quality is a very important factor determining organizational comfort level. Indoor air quality has a direct impact on health problems and leads to uncomfortable workplace environments (Czubaj 2002; Shiaw-Fen Femg 2002; and Wilson 2001). A good ventilation that allows for good indoor air quality will improve production quality and help to minimize the outcomes of work stress thereby increasing productivity (Martin 2009). Research in ergonomics field has demonstrated the negative effects of extreme temperature and humidity to work performance (Ellis 2002) while others have linked air quality on fatigue and moods (Dempsey 2004). Griffitt (2000) also stated that uncomfortable temperature or air quality has significant effect on the outcomes of work stress.

DIMENSIONS OF OFFICE ERGONOMICS

Moran (2010) suggests that because of the health risks posed by poor posture and repetitive stress, proper ergonomics are too important to ignore. In his article "Home Office Ergonomics". Moran analyses how; the lack of ergonomic principles in the office can negatively affect some of the human body parts i.e. the eyes, neck, wrist, arms, back, hips, legs, knees and feet.

Eyes and neck:

Incorrect monitor positioning can cause neck and eye strain, and can lead to poor seat positioning, which creates pressure on the back. Costello, the ergonomics consultant, says the top of your monitor should be positioned just above your eye level when you're seated. This is the best place

for your "vision cone," your most immediate field of vision, which starts at the top at your eye level and descends at a 30-degree angle. When monitors are too far away, people tend to lean forward to see well. This is increasingly true as people age, since vision almost inevitably declines over time. A rule of thumb: If you can extend your arm and just touch the screen with your fingertips, then you're in the right position (Moran, 2010).

Wrists and arms:
To keep wrists and arms at an optimum position, reducing the risk of repetitive-motion injuries. \our keyboard and mouse should be at the same level as your elbows when you're seated. Since most desks are too high for this position, a simple fix is an adjustable keyboard tray that attaches to the underside of your desk, says Cynthia M. Burt of the Environmental Health and Safety Department at UCLA (Moran 2010).

Back and hips:
Good news for aging disks: Sitting properly takes 20 percent to 30 percent of the pressure off your lower back. Your chair should be between 17 inches and 19 inches deep, and it should have good lower-back support. Your body should be positioned with your back against the chair and your hips open. If you find yourself leaning forward to see your monitor or reach the keyboard, move them toward you (Moran 2010).

Legs and knees:
Leg positioning contributes to your overall position in the chair, says Burt, so be sure your legs are bent at about 90-degree angles at the knees. This helps alleviate pressure on the back. Burt warns that movement is essential for circulation, however, so allow for subtle shifts in positioning and be sure to stand, stretch and walk a few steps at least once an hour. Move about more frequently if you have diagnosed circulation problems (Moran 2010).

Feet:
Feet should be firmly planted on the floor. If the chair positioning you require for proper wrist alignment results in your feet not reaching the floor, use a block, a few books or some other type of footrest to support your feet. However, make sure that the height of the support keeps your knees at a right angle, says Costello (Moran 2010).

CONCLUSIONS

Every educational organization requires highly performing individuals in order to ensure competitive advantage and attainment of corporate goals. High Manager Performance is therefore one of the critical determinants of the level of organizational productivity and accomplishments. Accomplishing tasks and performing at a high level can be a source of satisfaction, with feelings of mastery and pride. In defining the concept of Manager performance, Campbell et al., (1993) as cited in Sonnentag (2002) differentiates between an action (i.e. behavioural) aspect and an outcome aspect of performance. The behavioral aspect refers to what an individual does in the work situation. It encompasses behaviors such as assembling parts of a car engine, selling personal computers, teaching basic reading skills to elementary school children, or performing heart surgery.

The outcome aspect refers to the consequence or result of the individual's behavior. The above described behaviors may result in outcomes such as numbers of engines assembled, pupils' reading proficiency, sales figures, or number of successful heart operations. In simple terms. Manager Performance can be defined as the extent to which an organizational member contributes to achieving the goals of the organization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has assessed the impact of office ergonomics on the performance of educational manager operating in Nigerian educational institution. The result of this study shows that the office

ergonomics goes a very long way to change the output and help the educational manager in performance of his operations. Therefore, the impact of office ergonomics on the job performance of the educational manager cannot be overemphasized. Office ergonomics are very widely acceptable, means of providing or enabling environment that best facilities employees' performance and general productivity. The need for high office ergonomics and standards are vital considering that work place, impacts a great deal on the output of the worker or the manager.
Finally, it is hereby recommend that educational institutions particular and indeed modern in educational manager should have basic office furniture, furnishing, lighting and other assesstic and creativity to enable the educational manager perform maximally in organization the bane office and other aesthetics gratuity sociable the business manage perform maximally in these organizations.

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