

Bridging the Dichotomous Gaps between Trade Unions and Management of Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined the relationship between activities of trade unions and management of tertiary institutions in a bid to provide empirical solution to the lingering industrial actions by the staff unions in various tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The population comprises all tertiary institutions in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Four hundred and fifty subjects consisted of 390 members of unions that were selected using proportionate sampling techniques and 60 top management staff of the selected institutions was selected purposively. Two self-designed instruments namely, “Trade Unions and management of Tertiary Institutions Questionnaire” (TUMTIQ) and “Management of Tertiary Institutions Questionnaire (MTIQ)” were used to collect relevant data from the subjects. The researchers and another expert in educational management and test and measurement did the face and content validity. In addition, the test-retest method of reliability was adopted with a reliability coefficient of 0.66 and 0.72 respectively. The data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics and the three hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that there was a significant relationship between activities of trade unions and leadership style of management of tertiary institutions. The study also showed that there was a significant relationship between trade unions’ dissatisfaction with conditions of service and management of tertiary institutions. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that management of tertiary institutions should adopt a leadership style that is all-inclusive through a participatory system of management. Government should also provide funding for management to enhance conditions of service in the form of a better pay package, in-service training, overseas trips and their welfare packages for staff.

Key words: Trade Unionism, Leadership style, Conditions of Service, Management, Tertiary Institutions.

Introduction

Tertiary education is regarded as the third stage of education all over the world after secondary education. It is considered as post-secondary education, which according to Bamiro (2012), includes Universities, Colleges of Education, Polytechnics and mono-technics in the case of Nigeria. More importantly, tertiary institutions are centres of excellence where knowledge is disseminated and acquired by those who seek it. This apparently could be the reason why

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Ogunlade, Ekundayo and Omodan (2015) described it as academic communities comprised of intellectuals such as teaching and non-teaching staff as well as administrators in charge of teaching and non-teaching activities of the system. To this end, the important roles being played by tertiary institutions as an apparatus of social engineering and societal efficacy cannot be undervalued because these institutions instigated advancement and diffuses societal consciousness for the maintenance and adaptive structures of the society (Rotem & Glasman, 1977; Uko & Nnaji, 2015; Oyewunmi & Oyewunmi, 2017).

Specifically, the goals of tertiary education are fundamental to the build-up of a successful society. This is due to its contributions to the production of higher-level skills and competencies, which are essential to national development, particularly in the context of globalisation and the agitation to shift towards knowledge-based economies (Akinyemi & Bassey, 2012). These goals, according to section 45 of the National Policy on Education 2004 include promotion of national and international understanding and interest, contributing to national development through high level of relevant work force training, developing and inculcating proper value for the survival of the individuals and society among others (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). In the same vein, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) further stressed that tertiary institutions shall pursue the following goals: teaching, research and development, virile staff development programme, generation and dissemination of knowledge to mention a few.

However, upon all these laudable goals and objectives that are expected to be performed as expatiated above, the reality appears to be contrary. There are various constraints observed such as demoralisation of staff and periodic staff strikes as a result of unpalatable condition of service, funding, lack of educational facilities and bad leadership styles from the side of schools management (Asiyai, 2006; Ekundayo, 2012). In order to bridge these long standing managerial deficiencies in Nigerian tertiary institutions, especially with regard to the welfare and treatment of workers, which constitute the work force, these workers organised themselves into various groups otherwise referred to as the trade unions. Their view is to protect the interest of their members through stated mechanisms of agitation such as dialogue, protest and strikes among others. Trade unionism from a simple point of view connotes the reaction of workers to the employer's actions (George, owoyemi & Onokala, 2012; Omodan, 2016). From a practical point of view, a trade union is defined as an organised group(s) of workers who have come together to achieve common goals such as better working conditions for their members, ensuring members' welfare coupled

with their full recognition to the decision making body of their institutions (Arikewuyo, 2008; Gichaba, 2013).

Notably, there are various representatives of employee groups, otherwise referred to as the trade unions in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria. These include Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Senior Staff Association of Nigeria University (SSANU), Non-Academic Staff Union of Universities (NASU), Association of University Technologists of Nigeria (ASUTON), Senior Staff Association of Universities Teaching Hospitals Research Institute and Allied Institutions (SSAUTHRIAI) and Association of Secretariat Staff of Nigeria Universities (ASSNU). For polytechnic, there are Academic Staff Union of Polytechnic (ASUP), Non-Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (NASUP) and Polytechnic Senior Staff Association (POSSA). For Colleges of Education, there are Colleges of Education Academic Staff Union (COEASU), Colleges of Education Non Academic Staff Union (COENASU) and Senior Staff Union in Colleges of Education (SSUCOEN) among others (Asiyai, 2006; Okebukola, 2010).

However, various sources of contention were perceived between the trade unions and the management of the tertiary institutions in Nigeria, most especially in Ekiti State. These include unpalatable conditions of service such as unquantifiable and irregular salaries for staff, epileptic payment service allowances, delay in payment retirement and pension entitlements as well as irregular and delay in appointment and promotion of staff. This is also supported by the observation of Fakunle (2017) that the majority of the conflicts between staff and school management are mostly due to late payment of remuneration and non-payment of outstanding allowances and other services allowance, which according to him, led to the 2013 Academic Staff Union of Universities National Strike in Nigeria. The conditions of service have caused severe disagreement and dichotomy between trade unions of tertiary institutions and their institutional management. This was justified by the list of requests made by ASUU to the federal government of Nigeria that the Earned Allowances and amendment of the pension and retirement age of academics staff needed to be reviewed (Abayomi, Adesulu, Asomba & Arenyeka, 2013). ASUU had believed that Government and Management of tertiary institutions seem to have demonstrated insincerity on these issues (Uwerunonye, 2018).

Meanwhile, one of the major tasks of personnel management in every tertiary institutions is to ensure that the staff are well catered for with good remuneration such as payment of their entitlements as and when due. This may be in form of salary, fringe benefits, personal emolument,

retirement benefits, pension allowances and welfare packages among others (Olaleye, 2002). If all these were recognised and implemented, it would not only stand as sources of motivation for staff but also reduce the tendencies of misunderstanding and disagreements between the staff unions and their institutional managements. This is corroborated by the findings of Adeoye (2000) that one of the major causes of conflict between the employer and labour unions is the question of salary and conditions of services. Therefore, an effective salary administration has many well-defined goals. Some of these are provision of a systematic determination of equitable compensation for the workers, control of salary cost by the organisation, production of staff turnover, motivation of staff to enable them to perform at an optimum level with the provision of financial and non-financial incentives and promotion of employee-employer relations (Adeoye, 2000).

Thus, conditions of service are aimed at attracting workers, retaining the good and productive workers and motivating them for higher productivity devoid of disagreements. The findings of Djastuti (2010) justified this that better job characteristics/conditions will lead to job satisfaction and high organisational commitment, in turn reducing the intention of conflicts. No wonder a breach of this consensual motivator usually trigger disharmony and dichotomies between the staff unions and the management of tertiary institutions.

Hence, the kind of leadership styles of school management also appear to have made it impossible for the objectives of the tertiary education to be realised, as stipulated in the National Policy on Education. This is because the style of leadership adopted by the management of these tertiary institutions appears to determine whether they will enjoy an amiable relationship with the staff union (Trade Unions). For example, the leadership of the Nigerian Tertiary Institutions perceived to have preferred an autocratic approach to resolving issues with the unions as suffices in the opinion of Ekundayo (2012) that the cause of conflict between the university managers and the trade unions is the high-handedness of school administrators. Meanwhile, it was observed that school managers, including head of departments, are ruling the departments single-handedly without involving other staff members. This is supported by Arogundade (2010) and Omodan (2016) that the leadership of tertiary institutions seems to be autocratic in their management styles, which could however attract catastrophic implications on the peace and productivity of the institutions.

Hence, it is not a gainsaying that there have been records of gross misconduct and abuse of power by some management of institutions in Nigeria, which has consequently resulted into major unrest or crisis. Omotosho (2013) cited the example of the Vice Chancellor of the University of Abuja, Prof Isa Muhammed, who unilaterally dismissed 35 lecturers, dissolved the Senate of the University, created programmes and altered the academic calendar of the university. This Vice Chancellor ran the university like a chiefdom and with unbelievable brutality (Egbokhare, 2000). This high handedness on the part of some major managers of the institutions has triggered disharmony and conflicts between them and their institutional trade unions. According to Ajayi and Ayodele (2002), an authoritarian leader makes all the decisions without involving their subordinates. This is obviously affecting the relative peace in the school system because an autocratic leader is primarily concerned with production and the use of power and authority without concern for humanity (Nwafor, 2012; Ajayi & Ekundayo, 2016).

Thus, the above identified missing gaps constitutes the urgent need to find lasting solutions to the conflicting variables (condition of service and leadership styles) as possible reasons for perpetual dichotomy between staff unions and leadership of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This may be uneasy to be achieved in an environment where staff motivation and leadership treatment is lagging behind. Thus, every organisation, especially tertiary organisations, will fight for leaders who will be concerned with the job and the people doing the job (Nwanko, 2014). Therefore, for the educational system to sustain its existence, it must place a strong emphasis on the sustainability of human resources as against the usual “unintended consequences” such as competition and financial return (Ekundayo & Omodan, 2018). However, the stakeholders at the helm of affairs in the education system, academic and political leaders, should recognise that skilled and motivated staff could make a significant difference in the pursuance of predetermined goals and objectives of the system.

Situating the problem

It has been observed that the frequent industrial actions embarked upon by various trade unions in different tertiary institutions seems to have hindered the speedy actualisation of the set pre-determined goals and objectives of tertiary institutions in Nigeria and in Ekiti State in particular. Trade unions, most especially academic staff unions of these institutions, had at most times been at loggerheads with the authorities of their various institutions as a result of the perceived inability of their institutional management to meet their demands. This is evidenced in

Fakunle and Omodan (2017) that there are industrial/strike actions in some institutions due to the disagreement on the conditions of service between the academic staff and the management of the institutions, which had resulted in disjointed academic calendars.

Hence, it appears that the leadership styles of school management, coupled with unpalatable conditions of service, at most times propel unavoidable disagreements between the unions and the school management. Ekundayo (2012) supports this, by indicating that one of the causes of disagreement between the staff unions and management is leadership style of university administrators, which is perceived to be unfriendly to the staff. The end result of this is abrupt disruption of the approved academic calendar, infrastructural collapse, social distortion, wider moral crisis among the staff and other stakeholders (David, 2013). Even students are at the receiving end because when there is strike action by the trade unions on campuses, all academic activities is shut down and students are usually directed to vacate the school premises for the period. This and much more usually lead to elongation of students' expected years of study.

The aim and objectives of the study

The aims of the study are to provide empirical solutions to the lingering industrial actions by the staff unions in various tertiary institutions in Nigeria and to ensure peaceful co-existence between staff and the management of their institutions in order to achieve overall goal achievement of the system with the following objectives:

- The study also examined the influence of leadership styles of management of tertiary institutions on the trade union's activities.
- The study equally investigated relevant influence of conditions of service on unions-management dichotomy in tertiary institutions.
- Possible solutions were recommended based on the findings.

Research question

The following research question was generated to reveal the extent to which the activities of trade unions have gone in respect of their frequent industrial actions and many other reactional activities;

1. What is the level of trade unions' activities in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were raised to pilot the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between activities of trade unions and management of tertiary institutions
2. There is no significant relationship between activities of trade unions and leadership style of the management of tertiary institutions
3. There is no significant relationship between dissatisfaction with conditions of service and the management of tertiary institutions

Method

Research Design

The study is a descriptive research of the survey design. The design is descriptive because it involves the collection of data in order to describe the existing situation with respect to trade unions' activities and its effect on the management of tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. It is also a survey design because it has a wide range of scope and coverage (Bamikole, 2017) from where inferences will be drawn about the features of the chosen population in order to make generalisations if possible (Omopariola, 2017).

Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques

The population of this study consisted of all the 4,174 academic and non-academic staff of three selected tertiary institutions including members of top management. The sample for the study consisted of 390 members of the unions who were selected using proportionate sampling techniques because of the variation in the numbers of staff in the selected tertiary institutions. This technique is also appropriate because it takes care of the number of differentials in the subgroup of the population (AlleyDog, 2018), such as ASUU, NASU, ASUP, NASUP etc. Sixty top management staff of the selected institutions was selected purposively. Purposive, according to Taherdoost (2016), is a strategy targeted at a particular person or event to obtain important information that cannot be obtained from other sources. This technique was employed because the information needed to correlate with staff unions could only be obtained from top management staff.

Data Collection

Two set of self-designed instruments were adopted for the study. The first was questionnaire titled "Trade Unionism and Management of Tertiary Institutions Questionnaire (TUMTIQ)". The second questionnaire was titled "Management of Tertiary Institutions

Questionnaire (MTIQ)". The researcher and another expert in the field of Educational Management and Test and Measurement in Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti, ascertained the face and content validity. The test-retest method of reliability was employed with a reliability coefficient of 0.66 and 0.72 respectively, which were considered highly reliable..

Data Analysis

The data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The research question was answered using percentage scores, frequency count and standard deviation while all hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance and the results are presented below.

Results and Findings

The following were the results based on the research question and the hypotheses generated.

Research Question 1: What is the level of trade unions' activities in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State?

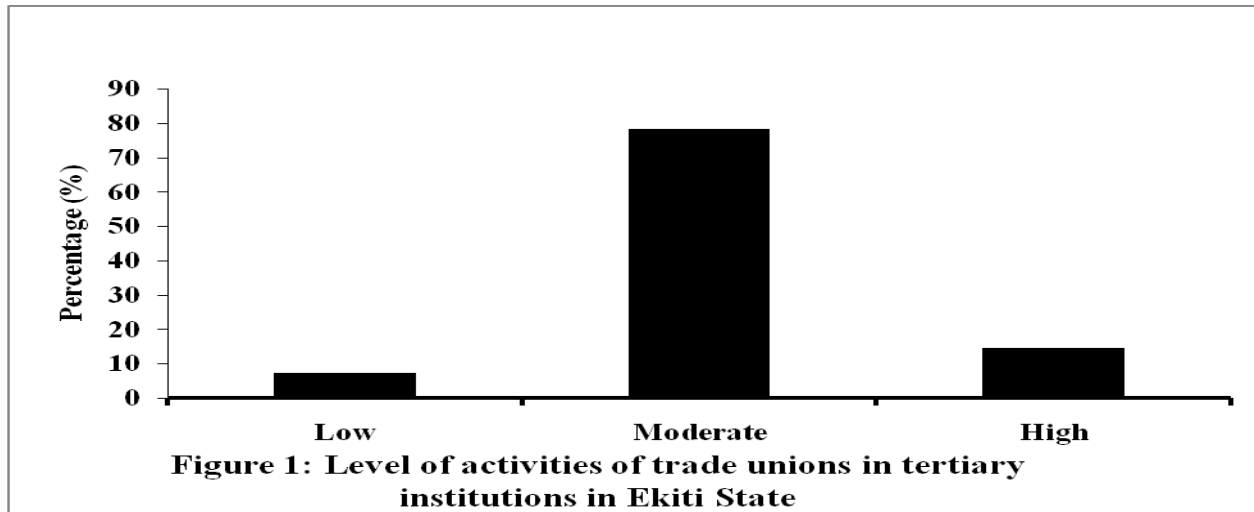
In order to answer the question, scores on activities of trade unions in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State were computed using TUMTIQ. The score (mean= 43.48 and the standard deviation SD=1.28) were used to categorise the respondents into "low", "moderate" and "high" levels of activities of trade unions. The low level of activities of trade unions was obtained using the difference between the mean score and the standard deviation. The moderate was obtained by using the mean score while the addition of the mean score and standard deviation were used to generate the high-level group in terms of trade union activities. The results are presented in Table 1 and Figure 1.

Table 1.

Level of activities of trade unions in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State

Level of trade unions' activities	Frequency	Percentage
Low (0.00–42.20)	27	7.20
Moderate (42.21–44.75)	295	78.20
High (44.76–100)	55	14.6
Total	377	100.0

Table 1 shows that 7.2% of the respondents had low level of union activities, 78.2% had moderate level while 14.6% had high level of activities of trade unions. The result on each of the sampled tertiary institution shows that the level of trade union activities is moderate, which implies that there are active trade unions in tertiary institutions. This was made known based on their frequent industrial actions and other protest activities while pressing home their demands. This is graphically expatiated below in Figure 1;



Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between activities of trade unions and management of tertiary institutions.

In order to test the hypothesis, scores on activities of trade unions and management of tertiary institutions were subjected to statistical analysis involving Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 3.

Table 2.

Pearson Correlation of activities of trade Unions and Management of tertiary institutions

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r _{cal}	r _{table}	Remark
Activities of trade unions	60	43.48	1.28	0.531*	0.250	Significant
Leadership style of management	60	57.77	4.82			

*p<0.05

Table 2 shows that r_{cal} (0.531) is greater than r_{table} (0.250) at 0.05 level of significance, which implies that there is a significant relationship between activities of trade unions and

management of tertiary institutions. The null hypothesis was rejected because the relationship between the activities of trade unions and management of tertiary institutions in Ekiti State is moderately high and statistically significant in a positive direction.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between activities of trade unions and the leadership style of the management of tertiary institutions

Scores relating to activities of trade unions (TUMTIQ) and the leadership style of management of tertiary institutions (Item 1-20 of MTIQ) were subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 level of significance. The result was presented in Table 3.

Table 3.

Pearson Correlation of activities of trade unions and leadership style of management of tertiary institutions

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r_{cal}	r_{table}	Remark
Activities of trade unions	60	43.48	1.28	0.421*	0.250	Significant
Leadership style of management	60	12.87	1.22			

* $p < 0.05$

Table 3 shows that r_{cal} (0.421) is greater than r_{table} (0.250) at 0.05 level of significance, which implies that there is a significant relationship between activities of trade unions and the leadership style of management of tertiary institutions. The null hypothesis was rejected because the relationship between activities of trade unions and the leadership style of the management of tertiary institutions in Ekiti State is moderately high and statistically significant in a positive direction.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between trade unions' dissatisfaction with conditions of service and the management of tertiary institutions.

In testing the hypothesis, scores relating to trade unions' dissatisfaction with conditions of service (Items 6-11 of TUMTIQ) and the management of tertiary institutions (Items 1-20 of MTIQ) were computed and subsequently subjected to statistical analysis involving Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 4.

Table 4.

Pearson Correlation of dissatisfaction with conditions of service and the management of tertiary institutions

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r_{cal}	r_{table}	Remark
Trade unions' dissatisfaction with conditions of service	60	17.23	0.49	0.481*	0.250	Significant
Management of tertiary institutions	60	57.77	4.82			

* $p < 0.05$

Table 4 shows that r_{cal} (0.481) is greater than r_{table} (0.250) at 0.05 level of significance, which implies that there is a significant relationship between trade unions' dissatisfaction with conditions of service and the management of tertiary institutions. The null hypothesis was rejected because the relationship between trade unions' dissatisfaction with conditions of service and management of tertiary institutions in Ekiti State is moderately high and statistically significant in a positive direction.

Discussion

The study showed that the level of activities of trade unions in tertiary institutions in Ekiti was moderate which further confirms that the frequent union activities in terms of their reactions in the form of protests, strikes and industrial actions is rampant. Findings of the study showed that there was a significant relationship between activities of trade unions and the management of tertiary institutions. This further confirms the observation of Ekundayo (2012) that there is constant conflict between the various staff unions and the university administrators, which according to the findings of Arikewoyo (2010), leads to demoralisation of staff and students and periodic staff strikes. The study also revealed that there is a significant relationship between activities of trade unions and management of tertiary institutions, which indicates that various reactions from trade unions towards agitating their interest do have a significant effect on the management of tertiary institutions. This is supported by the conclusion of Omisore (1999) that the mutual relationship between the management of tertiary institutions within the broad framework of the objectives will ensure goals' actualisation without obstructions.

The study revealed that there was a significant relationship between activities of trade unions and the leadership style of management of tertiary institutions. The finding also supported Omisore (2011) who stressed that the success of any institutional management depends solely upon the character and roles of leadership. This is further validated by the findings of Pitan & Akindele (2016), that the above picture underscored the source of conflict situation which demands

a kind of situational administrative mechanism by institutional authorities in resolving conflicts. This may be connected with the position of Agbonna, Yusuf and Onifade (2009) that most violent conflicts in Nigerian higher institutions of learning have been traced to contested bases of citizenship rights, greed, predatory rule, autocracy and unresolved grievances as a result of leadership styles adopted by school management. This finding also corroborates the recommendation of Okebukola (2010) that dialogue, mutual respect of feelings, neither party feeling superior or more powerful and voluntary participation in decision making with a win-win method of conflict resolution will go a long way to ensure a good relationship between staff and management of tertiary institutions.

The study showed that there was a significant relationship between trade unions' dissatisfaction with conditions of service and the management of tertiary institutions. The finding is in consonance with the finding of Adeoye (2000) that one of the major causes of conflict between the employers and labour is the question of salary and conditions of service. The finding of Garvey and Ringim (2016) also confirm that the federal government of Nigeria is sitting on financial resources and unwilling to distribute them to various tertiary institutions to motivate staff. The finding is favourably in support of Fakunle (2017) that there is a significant relationship between remuneration and job performance among academic staff. Aswathappa (2005) states that conditions of service followed by remuneration as monetary reward will make employees devout to his or her duty without side distractions. Finally, only better job characteristics and job conditions will lead to job satisfaction and high organisational commitment. This will in turn reduce the intention of conflict (Djastuti, 2010).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The role and responsibilities of trade unions in tertiary institutions cannot be underrated because they are the important stakeholders in charge of teaching disposition and academic excellence. However, if the trade unions and management of tertiary institutions are working towards actualising the intention and goals the system, their dichotomies could be harmonised for the purpose of effectiveness and efficiency in the overall management of their institutions. This could be achieved through a management leadership style that is centred on how to maintain balance between the job and the people with provision of corresponding conditions of service that are within the dimensions of trade unions.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- Tertiary institutions should be reoriented to be able to adopt acceptable situational styles of management of international standard in such that institutions will be properly run by ensuring that qualified and credible personnel are saddle with management responsibilities. This will further improve staff morale and reduce their disagreement tendencies; this could be through a participatory system of management and functional committee system and the government/management must be ready to implement whatever burning decision made by the committee.
- Since it has been confirmed that conditions of service is one of the reasons for staff-management dichotomy, the state and federal government must ensure adequate funding of the tertiary institutions to enable management enhances conditions of service in the form of better pay packages, in-service training, overseas trips and their welfare packages for staff. This will boost workers' morale, increase productivity and stem the tide of incessant industrial conflict in the tertiary institutions.

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