

The Impact of Incessant Strikes on the Education Sector in Nigeria

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Abstract:

The tertiary institutions in Nigeria such as the Universities, Polytechnics, Monotechnics, College of Education and their graduates would have been compared by all standards with other graduates from other institutions of higher learning abroad, but due to incessant strikes by the staff unions in various institutions, the issue of standard is no longer feasible. There is no gain stating the fact that too many industrial strikes have tremendously contributed to distortions of the academic calendar and as a result so many of our graduates are half baked and of low standard. The incessant industrial action in the Education sector has greatly caused Nigeria to lose billions of naira that should have been used to improve her socio-economic development of the nation. To curb the incessant industrial action, the governments should be proactive and not reactive in initiating increase in salaries and allowance as well as welfare packages of their workers as this will put in check frequent agitations on salary increase and welfare packages by staff unions. This has to great extent resulted to capital flights which other countries are utilizing to develop their own economies. It is hope that too many industrial actions may be a thing of the past if the employers of labour respect and implement all agreements signed with the staff unions and also fulfill 26% budgetary allocation as prescribed by UNESCO

Keywords: *Incessant, Strike, Education, Sector, Tertiary, Institutions*

Introduction:

Despite the fact that tongue and mouth are inseparable, clash between the two is inevitable. As long as the academic staff union and employer (government) represented by politicians are at variance in belief and philosophy there is bound to be industrial dispute between the two. The action and counteraction of the academic staff union and non-teaching union (ASUU, ASUP, COEASU, NASU, SSANIP and SSANU) in recent years to recalcitrant attitude of the federal government towards the past agreement; conditions of service, salaries and allowances, adequate funding as prescribed by UNESCO, University autonomy, integration of polytechnic academic staff payroll had led to frequent industrial action by Unions. These unions have resulted to employment of strike as the last resort to balance the power between their staff and the government when the bargaining and consultation failed to yield desirable result. Implying that the only language understood by the government is strike action.

The counteraction of the academic staff unions to actions and inaction of the government is not self-centered but incited by the quest to resuscitate the acclaimed fall in Nigeria education

standard. The specific evidence to this fact are the agitation by ASUU and ASUP between 2013 and 2014 which includes improvement and provision of educational infrastructure in our dilapidated tertiary institutions; fulfilling 26% budgetary allocation to education as prescribed by UNESCO so that Nigeria education system would be able to turn out the graduates that are capable of taking up the task of national development and be globally competitive like in the 70's when Nigeria graduates were accorded high esteem at the global stage.

Furthermore, it is incontrovertible that agitations of academic staff unions are to foster the adequate conditions of service which would go a long way in stimulating advantageous atmosphere for students to accomplish the prerequisite curriculum objectives. And, this would reduce to the barest minimum if not to zero level the half-baked graduates or functional illiterates that Nigeria tertiary institutions are turning out lately. Unfortunately, the strike action that is always embarked upon by the staff unions whenever there is industrial dispute between them and their employer (government) always put students at the detrimental conditions. The reasons for this are not farfetched; they end up having lesser period to prepare for academic exercises before summative evaluation hence possibility of poor academic performance. After the whole struggle, the staff salaries and allowances that were withheld during the industrial action would end up being paid.

Aside the bad reputation the strikes conferred on Nigeria education system; delayed and extension of duration of students in school in the face of age sensitive or discriminating Nigeria labour market which plummet the economic value of the graduates in Nigeria labour market.

And, unjust compression of the syllabus and academic calendar which deprived students of adequate academic preparation and eventually have undesirable effects on the students achievement of educational objectives as laid down in the prescribed curriculum which paved way for the production of half-baked graduates by Nigerian tertiary institutions is of great concern to the study at hand. In view of this, the specific objective of this investigative study is to determine the repercussion effect of 2013/14 staff union strike action on the academic performance of the students in Nigeria and to proffer the policy prescriptions that would mitigate this undesirable incident in Nigeria education system.

Furthermore, the students' circumstances associated with the strike action of academic staff union by being at the receiving end because their educational success had always been in jeopardy whenever there was strike action justified the investigative attention paid to this study in one hand.

Problem Statement/Justification

Strike is an ill wind that blows nobody any good, whether you are an employee, employer, students, parents and other people including the economy of the nation.

It is estimated that Nigeria loses billions of naira each time unions embark on strike. Staff unions had on several occasions embarked on strikes in the tertiary institutions because of the failure of the federal and state government to honor and implement agreements reached and signed by them with the unions

The incessant strikes in our institutions of higher learning have in no small measure contributed to low quality graduates, distortion of academic calendar that students and their parents can no longer determine or know when their wards will be graduating from school and financially, parents and guidance are burdened more since their wards stay at home due to strikes

There is no doubt that due to incessant strikes in Nigeria and Bauchi in particular which has resulted to poor academic standard and performance in tertiary institutions, many parents year-in-year out send their children outside the country to other countries to study abroad where they

believe the academic standard of the institutions over there where their children will be attending school is sound and high compare to ours. Not only that ,they will easily know when their wards will enroll in and when they will graduate from the institution since the word “strike” is not known or mentioned there.

This trend encourages capital flight to other countries while the socio-economic development of our nation is hampered

An idle mind they say is the devils workshop. So as the students stay at their various homes without doing any reasonable thing some of them engage themselves in prostitution and armed robbery.

Embarking on so many strikes whenever the governments fail to honor agreements ,may not be the solution to the problem(through the only language the government understand is strike),rather we should explore other possible options to avert strikes in the institutions of higher learning such as the universities, polytechnics and mono-technics, college of education

Literature Review

Ivancevich (2007) documented that strike is an effort by employee to withhold work so that the employer will make greater concessions at the bargaining table. It is opined that it is a major bargaining weapon used by the labour union. It is varied from economic strike where the employees stop work until the demand for better condition of employment is met to sit-down strike where employee strike but remain at work place. (2004) asserted that strikes are most politically charged of all the features of industrial relation. “Strikes are too often a weapon of first rather than last resort. However, labour unions have recognized that a strike is a legitimate last resort if all else fails” (Armstrong (2004). Shokan (1997) sees strike as a temporary stoppage of work aimed at forcing the employers to accept employees demand.

Strike is seen as Collective organized, cessation or slowdown of work by employees, to force acceptance of their demands by the employer. The legality of the strike action requires: approval by the majority of employees by ballot; independent verification to ascertain the majority support the vote; the notice of impending strike must be given to employer in advance; the employer must be provided with the result of the ballot; final notice to embark on the strike must be issued to the employer (Business Dictionary, 2015).

International Labour Organization (2011) posits that strike is the most visible and controversial form of collective action in the event of a labour dispute and is often seen as the last resort of workers’ organizations in pursuit of their demands. Section 2(q) of the Industrial Dispute Act defines strike as cessation of work by a body of persons employed in any industry acting in combination; Ivancevich (2007) defined labor union as an organization of employees that uses collective action to advance its members’ interest in regards to wages and working conditions. They form or join because of the belief that there is strength in unity. Trade Union Decree 1973 as cited by Shokan (1997) viewed labour union as any combination of temporary and permanent workers or employees, the purpose of which is to regulate the terms and conditions of employment of workers. Academic staff unions are in the context of labour relation, it is the continuous relationship between lecturers and the government. Their relation includes negotiation of contract about pay, hour and other terms and condition of employment.

Rosemary (1993) established that trade unions are seen as the legitimate representative of labours and conflicts arising from the clash of interest are resolved, if possible by bargaining and compromise and if not, by overt power. Armstrong (2004) is of the opinion that the fundamental purpose of trade union is to promote and protect the interest of their members.

They are to redress the balance of power between employers and employees.

The study adjudged it necessary to narrow down this conceptualization to the specific Labour union of interest, Association of Academic Staff of University (ASUU).

Academic Performance is the outcome of students' evaluation in the educational process indicating to what level the students have achieved the educational goals as specified in the Curriculum which is greatly influenced by internal and external classroom factors.

Wikipedia (2014) buttresses the above concepts by putting forward that academic performance is commonly measured by evaluation (examination) and continuous assessment but there is no general agreement on how it can best be captured. It emphasized among other factors that learning environments/ conditions have great influence on academic achievement of the student in the related study by Mellisa (2012) emphasized that academic performance indicates how well a student meets standard set out by the institution. A student success is measured by academic performance. Scott (2012) generally refers academic performance to how well a student is accomplishing his or her tasks and studies. The study emphasizes that Grades are the most well-known indicator of academic performance; grades are student's "scores" for their overall tenure. Grades are often the average of assignment, continuous assessment and semester terminal evaluation that are often affected by student psychological status, attendance, education environment etc. Arul Lawrence (2013) described academic achievement as the level of actual accomplishment or proficiency one has achieved in an academic area, as opposed to one's potential in the educational goal measured by examinations. Crow and Crow (1969) as cited in Arul Lawrence (2013) sees academic performance as the extent to which a learner is profiting from instruction in a given area of learning i.e. achievement is reflected by the extent to which skill and knowledge has been imparted to him. It is obvious that Crow and Crow (2015) do not specify how best the profit from learning can be measured

Methodology

The research design used for this study is both quantitative and qualitative. The study area is the Federal Polytechnic; Bauchi .Stratified sampling technique was used to select 400 sample sizes. This was based on the sample size guideline that when the population is about 5000 or more, 400 sample size is adequate for the study (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005), Olatunji, 2010 and Usman, 2015) .

Questionnaire and interview will be used to source data for the purpose of this research .The strata comprise students, management and academic staff of federal polytechnic Bauchi, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University and Abubakar Tatari Ali Polytechnic Bauchi .The data will be analyzed using analysis of variance (ANOVA)

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that The incessant strikes in our institutions of higher learning have in no small measure contributed to low quality graduates, distortion of academic calendar that students and their parents can no longer determine or know when their wards will be graduating from school and financially, parents and guidance are burdened more since their wards stay at home due to strikes

The findings of the study also reveals that Embarking on so many strikes whenever the governments fail to honor agreements, may not be the solution to the problem (through the only language the government understand is strike), rather we should explore other possible options to

avert strikes in the institutions of higher learning such as the universities, polytechnics and mono-technics, college of education

The findings of the study further reveals that the strike action that is always embarked upon by the staff unions whenever there is industrial dispute between them and their employer (government) always put students at the detrimental conditions. The reasons for this are not farfetched; they end up having lesser period to prepare for academic exercises before summative evaluation hence possibility of poor academic performance. After the whole struggle, the staff salaries and allowances that were withheld during the industrial action would end up being paid.

Conclusion

In conclusion Strike is seen as Collective organized, cessation or slowdown of work by employees, to force acceptance of their demands by the employer which contribute to low quality of graduates. There is no gain stating the fact that too many industrial strikes have tremendously contributed to distortions of the academic calendar and as a result so many of our graduates are half baked and of low standard. The incessant industrial action in the Education sector has greatly caused Nigeria to lose billions of naira that should have been used to improve her socio-economic development of the nation

Recommendations:

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendation were made

- 1). To curb the incessant industrial action, the governments should be proactive and not reactive in initiating increase in salaries and allowance as well as welfare packages of their workers as this will put in check frequent agitations on salary increase and welfare packages by staff unions.
- 2) The result of the joint consultation committee in Nigeria will be determined to guide policy makers in the future
- 3) The research will advance the efficiency of negotiating teams and their roles in resolving dispute
- 4) The shortcomings and inadequacies of previous and current government policies towards incessant strikes will be highlighted and the stakeholders advised accordingly
- 5) It will guide government and policy makers to have an insight into the education sector in Nigeria with a view to re-strategize in the future

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