EFFECTS OF STRIKE ACTIONS ON EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT PLANNING OF UNIVERSITIES IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA-AFRICA

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Abstract  
The purpose of the work was to analyze the effects of strike actions on educational development management of Universities in Rivers State. It is a survey design. The study randomly selected seventy five (75) non-academic staff and sixty (60) academic staff from each population of the university which total one hundred and thirty five (135) respondents randomly and independently sampled. The data collected was gathered using structured questionnaire and oral interview and it was synthesized with the sample percentage (%) method. The data collected were analyzed and presented in tabular form. The results obtain showed irregularity of academic programmes, examination malpractices and cultism amongst students, certificate racketeering, erosion of dignity and respect of higher education are the effects of strike actions. The measures to eradicate strike actions in Universities in Rivers State include stifling all aspects of collective bargaining, both employees and managers to allow third party in negotiations and both labour and management to base subsequent negotiations on the rules and regulations binding labour matters. It was therefore recommended that previous agreement on salaries, fringe benefit and other working conditions between labour and management government should be respected as at when due.

Introduction:  
Strike actions also called labor strike is stoppage of work caused by the mass refusal of employees to work, strike usually takes place in response to employee grievances, strikes are sometime used to pressure governments to change policies of universities infrastructural development and welfare of both Academic and non-Academic staff union of universities. Strikes are often part of a broader social movement taking the form of a campaign of civil resistance undertaken by unions during collective bargaining. Strike consists of workers refusing to attend word and picketing outside the workplace to prevent or dissuade people from working in their place or conducting business with their employer. Students strike sometimes supported by faculty not attending schools, such strike is intended to draw media attention to the institution so that the grievances that are causing the student s to strike can be aired before the public. Though this usually damages the institutions or government public image. In
government-supported institutions, the student strike can cause a budgetary imbalance and have actual economic repercussions for the institution.

A thorough work on the causes and effects of strike actions that cause the decline in the quality of tertiary education should include, focusing on causes of the country’s failure to fund public education at a level that is comparable to most countries on the continent, improvement of teacher education, cultivating achievement orientation in students in the three levels of education and providing appropriate and adequate facilities an instructional material for schools.

The objective of the work is to examine the many strike actions associated to our tertiary education systems. Specifically, the work was planned to:

1. Determine the effects of strike actions on our university education
2. Identify the measures to eradicate strike actions in Universities in Rivers State.

**Research Questions:** The following research questions were answered in the work.

1. What are the effects of strike actions on our university education?
2. What are the measures to eradicate strike actions in Universities in Rivers State?

This is a survey study. The design is based on gathered data and presentation for easy and realistic interpretation.

**Research Question 1:** What are the effects of strike action of our University Education?

**Table 1.1: Effects of strike actions on our Universities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No</th>
<th>Question Item</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Loss of faith and confidence in education by students</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Closure of school frequency</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Distortion and disruptions of school calendar and academic activities</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>83.91</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Irregularity of academic programmes</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Examination malpractices and cultism among students</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Poor quality of graduates compared to other countries</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Certificate racketeering</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Reduced productivity and loss of focus on objectives</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Non commitment and disillusionment</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Erosion of the dignity and respect of higher education</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From table 1.1 above, the following items with the percentage of 50 and above have been accepted as the effects of industrial actions on tertiary institution they include:

1. Closure of school frequency 85.9%
2. Irregularity of academic programme 76.2%
3. Examination malpractice and cultism among student 51.8%
4. Certificate racketeering 59.2%
5. Erosion of the dignity and respect of higher education 80%
Research Question 2: What are the measures to eradicate strike action in University?

Table 2.2: Measures to eradicate strike actions in Universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No</th>
<th>Question Item</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Proscription of trade unionism in tertiary institution</td>
<td>Yes 75</td>
<td>55.56</td>
<td>No 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Government involvement and promotion of healthy industrial relation</td>
<td>Yes 40</td>
<td>29.62</td>
<td>No 95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Ensuring management involvement efficiency</td>
<td>Yes 90</td>
<td>66.67</td>
<td>No 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Stiffing all aspect of collective bargaining</td>
<td>Yes 89</td>
<td>65.92</td>
<td>No 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Appointment of industrial arbitration panels to review labour at intervals</td>
<td>Yes 69</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>No 66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Constant negotiation and dialogue</td>
<td>Yes 99</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>No 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Labour matters should be handled only in courts</td>
<td>Yes 30</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>No 105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Both employees and employers to allow third party in negotiations</td>
<td>Yes 100</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>No 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Both labour and management to base subsequent negotiation on rule and regulations binding labour matters</td>
<td>Yes 104</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>No 31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the table 2.2 above, the following percentage of 50 and above have been accepted as measures to eradicate industrial actions in University? They include:
1. Proscription of trade unionism in tertiary institution 55%
2. Ensuring managerial efficiency 66.67%
3. Stiffing all aspect of collective bargaining 65.72%
4. Constant negotiation and dialogue 73.3%
5. Both employees and employers to allow third party in negotiations 74.0%

Discussions: From the analyses of data for the work as presented above, the following were found:
On the effects of strike actions on Universities in Rivers State, it was revealed that the effects include:
  a. Closure of school frequency
  b. Irregularity of academic programmes
  c. Examination malpractice and cultism among student
  d. Certificate racketeering
  e. Erosion of the dignity and respect of higher education
On measures to eradicate strike actions in universities in Rivers State,
  a) Proscription of trade unionism in tertiary institutions
  b) Ensuring managerial efficiency
  c) Stiffing all aspect of collective bargaining
  d) Constant negotiation and dialogue
  e) Both employees and employers to allow third party in negotiation
  f) Both labour and management to base subsequent negotiations on rule and regulations binding labour matters.
Summary: The results of the work indicated the causes, the effects and the measures to eradicate strike actions in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The causes of strike actions in tertiary institution were presented in table 1.1. In some cases, delays arise deliberately due to unnecessary protocols imposed by those in accounts Department or salaries lodged in personal accounts for interests. And so lecturers do not view this development with interest but to resort to protests and hostilities. It was also found that under-staffing and services cause strike actions in tertiary institutions. Conditions of employment and services agitated for by employees include promotions, provision of facilities and equipment, increased pay package and other benefits, etc. In the light of this, Willson (2005) stated that workers or lecturers have always risen in protest against their condition of employment while Denga, (2008) added promotions and other shades of discrimination.

Review of incessant student violence and cultism in campus cause strike actions in tertiary institutions just as many crises in recent times are exacerbated workers unrest in tertiary institutions. The crises emanate from students’ administration, and colleagues and employees of the tertiary institutions often times become target of student violence on campuses. This has made life unbearable resulting to sit-down strikes by staff and vocation of campuses by some staff. The chairman of the visitation panel to University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) Okara (2011) viewed the state of insecurity on campuses with grave concern and thus lamented that: much of the knowledge still remains unexpected and the Nigerian man’s dignity is yet to be resorted. Denga (2008) cautioned that: collective bargaining must be characterized by an open and flexible mind by both parties (employee and employer). In the past, government has responded to strike actions by proscribing the striking labour unions as a different measure for ensuring industrial harmony. All these findings are inter-linked and boil down to the conditions of services and employment. Thus, for any system to survive and progress, change is inevitable and so poor supply of welfare services for staff and students for disruption of activities in tertiary institutions.

It is also revealed that wage reductions remain a vital reason for strike actions in institutions of higher learning and in other organizations. Wage cuts and reductions result from several sources such as taxes, government policies, management initiated institutional welfare and so on. Often times such reductions from employees’ wage do not gain approval of the employees and one can imagine what the reaction could be among the workers. The result also indicated the extended of delay in monthly salaries and other fringe benefits as at when due has become a perpetual cause. This is imperative considering the fact that workers in tertiary institutions in Nigeria and Rivers State in particular, compare their salaries and fringe benefits, condition of services and social status with that of their colleagues in the countries of the world. Dekiewiet (2009) stated that fundamental to grievance leading to strikes include the common purpose of labour to protest its interest, all bars which block practically all opportunities of promotion. Also the insensitivity of management to students’ grievances cause strike actions in institutions of higher learning. Of a truth, management past often forgets their vows. An Assistant Lecturer today may rise to become the Vice Chancellor tomorrow: a junior clerk or messenger may become a Bursar or Registrar of the institution tomorrow. Also, unnecessary interference by governments on campus politics and life as well as adverse government policy decisions on tertiary institutions have been revealed by the work as causes of strike actions. No wonder the agitations for university autonomy and freedom. The rate at which governments interfere with issues and activities in tertiary institutions is unimaginable. A place meant for academic excellence and production of higher level manpower which demands no distractions has become a center of political rancor. Good bred and reasoning
members are not at peace with such developments. This is worse especially when policies are consciously made to undermine the serenity and activity of the institutions. It was revealed in the work that incessant students’ violence and cultism on campuses cause strike actions. Actually no one will like to work in an environment where insecurity of life and property breeds; neither will one prefer a victim of a fragile system, since the employees of tertiary institutions often times are targets of students’ violence. This has occasioned strike actions in the past.

The effects of strike actions on tertiary institution were presented in table 1.1. The result revealed that one of the effects is the loss of faith and confidence in education by students. This finding happen to be a major effect that touch students in the sense that in the event of strike actions, tertiary institutions are divulged of the tenacity of purpose and loss of grip of its goals. Thus student’s interest is deemphasized since the duration is lengthened. And so in a society like ours where materialism is the order of the day, students in such periods finds themselves into other endeavour. This finding is given credence to by Emenyonu (2004) who noted that when the institutions of higher learning are shut down for any reason these days, it does not appear as if the students portray any feeling of real sense of loss. On the academic programmes, the results showed a distortion and disruption of school calendar and academic activities. It is observed that in the event of Industrial action such as strikes and protest of all sorts, academic activities and other official jobs are paralyzed; since all activities are a standstill as lecturers wait for settlements. When this happens, one can imagine what happens to school calendar. Semester works drag on while sessions last longer than necessary. This finding is similar to the observation made by Emenyonu (2004) as universities and tertiary institutions for almost six out of the nine months of the academic years were shot and yet everybody pretended that the remaining three months are enough to complete the years work. Further result showed that there is irregularity of academic programmes. It was also shown by the result that there are examination malpractices on increase, and cultism among students. This is because students are not properly taught and so they employ various fowl means even in collaboration with their teachers to ensure they pass the examinations.

In the same vein, since students were not pre-occupied with academic work, they indulge in various vices such as cultism to occupy themselves. An idle mind is the devil’s workshop. The result also indicated another effect to be the poor quality of graduates compared to other countries. The authenticity of this finding is glaring as our tertiary institutions have been accused of turning out half baked graduates who cannot justify and/or defend the certificates they parade. This finding is in consonance with an observation made by Emenyonu (2004) that the products of our universities today are generally speaking, no longer compatible with their counterparts in the world.

One wonders how they can be comparable of their counterparts in other countries in terms of character and learning when another result indicated that crash programmes and teaching and learning are examination centred. Invariably, practical and laboratory work are no more part of the learning experiences for the students. All you hear about is term papers and submission of assignments as continuous assessment, engendering copying from books by students instead of insightful and discovery learning. On the staff, the result revealed that there is non-commitment and disillusionment among staff. This arises because the staff have come to realize that their needs and aspiration are not meet within their institution, some are beginning to engage themselves in other endeavours outside the
institutions to make ends meet. In support of this, Deng (2008) stated that the discordant relationship between labour and management has greatly reduced productivity. Also, it was found that there is loss of high quality-intellectually capable staff from tertiary institutions. This arises because the tertiary institutions are not conducive for meaningful academics. It was also revealed that there is a fall in the quality of higher educational services. This is evident in the caliber of teaching and non teaching staff employed as more qualified ones that have left to other countries. Aside, what does one expect from an educational system with irregular programmes, disillusioned staff and no conducive teaching and learning environment?

Measures to eradicate strike actions were presented in table 2.2. The result indicated that ensuring managerial efficiency is one of the ways to eradicate industrial action in tertiary institutions. By implication, those in administrative and managerial post in these institutions ought to know their onus in handling issues relating staff, establish good relationship, develop effective communication, and handle staff grievance appropriately. It was also found that governments' involvement and promotion of healthy strike relation is a measure to eradicate strike actions. This is because government is the highest employer of labour and can use its arms to approach the workers on various issues before it gets out of hand. This finding is in line with the view of Allen (2005) that the involvement of government in strike relation is seen as a means to contain trade unions. In this vein, it has been observed, that government is good at dialogue and effective pricing of industrial peace through negotiation with appropriate labour unions. Of course, labour unions are at home when negotiating with government. This calls for regular review of labour situations in terms of salary scale, fringe benefits, work conditions and so on. In line with this, Deng (2008) recognized the place of strike arbitration panels as an organizational arm charger with the responsibility of effecting industrial actions.

It was also found that to eradicate strike actions in tertiary institutions, labour and management are to base subsequent negotiation on rules and regulations binding labor matters. This is because violating these rules, on either side will worsen the soured relationship between labour and management. Each of them ought to exhibit 'a give and take' relationship during negotiation. This finding is supported by Deng (2008) that collective bargaining must be characterized by an open and flexible mind by both parties (labour and management; recognition of prevailing economic social and political conditions): and unconditional trust between labour and management. The result also suggested constant negotiation and dialogue. This is because labour and management relationship is an ongoing phenomenon and so what sustains relationship is communication and dialogue both at times of disagreement and at times of peace. It was also found that constant negotiation of dialogue is a measure to eradicate strike actions. This finding is in line with the view of Allen (2005) that the involvement of government in strike relation is seen as a means to contain trade union. There is the call for regular review of labour situation in terms of salary of scale, fringe benefits, work conditions etc.

**Conclusion:** Based on the findings of the work, it however concluded that strike action is an ongoing trend in tertiary institutions and eradative measures could be painstaking but possible and when adopted, could bring about a relief in industrial peace and stability in tertiary institution in Rivers State.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the exercise, the following recommendations are made:

1. Autonomy of tertiary institutions should be an issue that demand urgent approval to avoid unnecessary interference of government in the internal affairs of the tertiary institutions. In
the same view, the guidelines and statutory provisions for the appointment of Visitors to
the institutions should be reviewed to ensure that not every comer in government is tagged
a Visitor to the institutions to avoid mishandling of issues related to staff.
2. A re-orientation should be given to the staff and students of these institutions to restore
their lost of faith and respect to these institutions as citadels of learning.
3. Previous agreements on salaries, fringe benefit and other working conditions between the
labour unions and management should be implemented as and when due by
government/management to promote individual institutional peace.

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