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Effects of Strike on the Academic Performance of Business Education Students in Nigerian Universities

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Abstract

This paper discusses the effects of strike on the academic performance of business education students in Nigerian Universities. It also discussed the labour disputes and their settlement recorded strikes, 1960-77, academic staff union of universities history and struggles, the effects of academic staff union of universities strikes on business education students as well as possible remedy. This paper uses historical survey in evaluating the views of various scholars in an attempt to inform researchers, business educators, scholars on current reasoning on the issue of effects of strike on the academic performance of business education students in Nigerian Universities. Conclusion and recommendations such as a matter of policy the executives and legislators of both Federal and States should have their children in public universities in Nigeria, both federal and state governments should always respect the agreed negotiated agreement between them and the Academic staff Union of Universities to avoid incessant strike actions etc. were made.

Keywords: Strike, Performance, Business, Education, Universities, Academic, Students.

Introduction

Strike is known as the period for which workers as a result of disagreement with their employers decide to with-hold or with draw their services. Ohiwerei and Omo-Ojugo (2008) opined that conflict has acquired varied meanings as a result of its uses in many different disciplines. It may be used to refer to disputes in a war to the personal choice of a television program. This research is concerned with organizational conflict and uses the term in reference to all types of opposition or antagonistic interaction. Conflict in the organization can usually be viewed as antagonistic interaction or antagonistic psychological relations.

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2010) strike is a period of time when an organized group of employees of a company stops working because of disagreement over pay or conditions. Ohiwerei and Omo-Ojugo (2008) stated the following as subject for which strike could be inevitable: negotiation, procedural matters, probationary period of service, disciplinary procedure, principles of redundancy, professional examinations, various unpaid claims, staff loan, pension and gratuity scheme; salaries and wages, leave, acting allowance, inconveniences allowance, out of station expenses, medical scheme, sickness benefit etc.

Ubeku (1975) stated that it is an established principle of law that workers reserve the right to withhold their labour over an issue which concerns their conditions of employment. A strike is an infringement on the legitimate rights not only those of the employer but in many cases those of the consuming public or of other workers also the use of strike is thus acceptable if only it is properly used for the furtherance of legitimate social objectives: where a strike fails to satisfy this test, it is considered to have lost its legitimate nature in the following circumstances:

- (a) When it is diverted from its proper objective of settling a trade dispute between employers and workers.
- (b) When the methods adopted for the conduct of the strike are contrary to public order and
- (c) When the means for the peaceful settlement of disputes have been established by legislation or agreement and the union fails to use them.

Ubeku (1983) stated that labour disputes may be grouped into two types. Namely; disputes concerning an individual and disputes concerning the groups, the union. In some cases a dispute that begins as an individual can develop into a collective dispute.

According to Peretomode (1995) conflict can be defined simply as a struggle for control of another person's behaviour, doing or action. In educational institutions, business, service, religious and political organizations, not all disagreements can be considered as conflict, but all conflicts involve disagreement. As Tucker (1981) points out, generally a disagreement becomes a conflict when it goes beyond the normal intellectual difference that characterizes academic life to the emotional realm to involve feelings of anxiety, or anger and is often evidenced by intemperate or abusive language and covertly or overtly hostile actions.

Academic Staff Union of Universities History and Struggles

According to abcd "History and struggles of ASUU" (2010), the academic staff union of universities was formed in 1978 with a history of militant action, a successor to the Nigerian Association of University Teachers formed in 1965 and conversing academic staff in the University of Ibadan, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, University of Ife and University of Lagos.

The union was active in struggles against the military regime during the 1980s. In 1988 the union organized a National Strike to obtain fair wages and university autonomy. As a result, the ASUU was proscribed on August 7, 1988 and all its property seized. It was allowed to resume in 1990, but after another strike was again banned on August 23, 1992. However, an agreement was reached on September 3, 1992 that met several of the union's demands including the right of workers to collective bargaining. The ASUU organized further strikes in 1994 and 1996, protesting against the dismissal of staff by the Sani Abacha military regime.

After the return to democracy in 1999 with the Nigerian Fourth Republic, the union continued to be militant in demanding the rights of university workers against opposition by the government of President Olusegun Obasanjo. In July 2002 Dr. Oladipo Fashina, national president of ASUU, petitioned Justice Mustapha Akanbi of the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission to investigate the authorities of the University of Ilorin for financial mismanagement and corruption.

In 2007, the ASUU went on strike for three months. In May 2008, the ASUU held one-week 'warning strikes' to press a range of demands, including an improved salary scheme and reinstatement of 49 lecturers who were dismissed many years ago. In June 2009 the ASUU ordered its members in federal and state universities nationwide to proceed on an indefinite strike over disagreements with the Federal Government's on an agreement it reached with the union about two and a half years ago. After three months of strikes, in October 2009 the ASUU and other staff unions signed a memorandum of understanding with the government and called off the industrial action

Some Nigerian authorities such as federal and state governments' representatives have in some many occasions turned strike to conflict by calling Academic Staff Union of Universities members all sorts of names. Some times ASUU members' salaries were seized and driven out of their accommodation on campus quarters. During peaceful protest march, they have been chased by Policemen and Police Dogs. When all Eastern States owned universities ASUU members embarked on strike action, between June, 2009 to December, 2009 over the non-implementation of the federal government/ASUU agreement, which Eastern states government paid deaf ears to the strike action, ASUU members from all eastern state owned universities gathered in Enugu for a peaceful march protest, unfortunately they were chased away from the street by heavily armed policemen and police dogs. Even some individuals have made provocative statements concerning ASUU in the past such as Obijiofor (2012) who stated that there was something demonstrably wrong with the leadership of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). On Thursday, 30 August 2012, ASUU leaders encouraged their members to go on a one-day strike over the reappointment of the incumbent Vice-Chancellor of the Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Professor Barineme Fakae, by the then Governor Chibuike Amaechi of Rivers State, in his capacity as the Visitor to the university.

Since this research is based on effects of strike on the academic performance of business education students in Nigerian Universities, our focus will be based on academic staff union of universities (ASUU) which is a registered trade union which aims are to fight and protect the good welfare of all its members. These which include interested in salaries, conditions of service, universities autonomy, and academic freedom. Apart from these, ASUU is also interested in the learning condition of the students, political situation of the country, the rule of law, under funding and the education crisis.

Many Nigerian are of the view that ASUU is always embarking on strike, to demand for their right but available records showed that strike has been in existence in Nigeria and has been carried out even as far back as 1960 as shown in table 1: Evidence has also shown that it is not only in Nigeria strike has taken place. For instance, as far back as 1972 Colorado teachers went on strike also Chicago Public schools teachers union has equally gone on strike as well as Sri Lanka.

Labour Disputes and their Settlement Recorded Strikes 1960-77

For going on strikes, the workers are, of course, aware that sanctions in the country's labour laws are generally not enforced.

Year	No of Strikes	Workers Involved	Man-days lost
1960 – 1	65	36667	157373
1961 – 2	58	18673	57303
1962 – 3	45	n.a	53039
1963 – 4	62	45409	96621
1964 – 5	195	73447	253460
1965 – 6	126	n.a	238679
1966 – 7	89	41344	100000
1967 – 8	63	11767	70955
1968 – 9	29	11551	35028
1969 – 70	46	18357	71895
1970 – 1	124	78474	224470
1971 – 2	85	31915	63254
1972 – 3	71	43676	105415
1973 – 4	105	41527	148130
1974 – 5	354	126818	357028
1975 – 6	264	122546	439296
1976 – 7	130	83126	225710

*These figures cannot be correct. Almost all wages earners in the country were involved in the General Strike of June, 1964. As wages earners were estimated at about 1 million (see the Melson 1970 reference in the Bibliography p. 771), total man-days lost must be anything up to 13 million, as the strike lasted for thirteen days.

Source: Federal Ministry of Labour, Annual Reports. See also T. Fashoyin, 'The Impact of the Trade Disputes Decrees of 1968 and 1969 on strike Activity'. Quarterly Journal of Administration (October, 1978) p.59.

Strikes

Strike is an inevitable management partner in management decision making. Though management has never valued strike as progressive but destructive. While workers on the other hand, viewed strike as a positive management tool. Strike has therefore produced both positive and negative effects. To the students, strike has always produced negative effect as they are at the receiving end. During this period, academic process suffered a drastic set back. Between June, 2009 to February, 2010 academic staff union of universities was on strike and all federal and states owned universities were all affected. Also, all Eastern states owned universities after the general strike commenced their own strike again between, June, 2010 to December, 2010 over governments insensitiveness to their welfare and the breach of the agreement reached, such as terms of poor funding and lack of equipment etc. all at the expense of business education students.

Strike is a necessary evil in the academic performance of business education students in Nigerian universities. This is because it is the only weapon and the only instrument used by academic staff union of universities to force government at all levels to accept negotiated agreement between them. While this struggles go on, it is the business education students who are at the receiving end by either been on campus without lecturers or are been sent home. Oladipo (2012) stated that long term effect of strike would be profitable to all when government meets the demand of the academic staff union of universities.

According to Igwe and Ekwulo (2012) "No man is above the law and no man is below it; nor do we ask any man's permission when we ask him to obey it. Obedience to the law is demanded as a right not asked as a favour". Kerssen-Griep, Hess and Tree (2003) stated that interaction in school shows that students' perception of instructional behaviour sustains their involvement in classroom. Jackson, Weiss, Lundquist and Hooper (2003) pointed out that the degree to which cognitive motivation predicts academic performance. They hold the point that increased school activity may assist motivation. While Martin (2004) opined that the more a student is involved in school activities means a better grade point average.

Effects of Academic Staff Union of Universities Strikes on Business Education Students

Psychologists have identified incessant brake in academic sessions on public universities as a major factor contributing to the decline of education quality in the country. One of the psychologists Aletan (2012) stated that the effect of the breaks in academic sessions was devastating, affecting the students both psychologically and socially. The effect of the strikes can be enormous and very devastating on the students. Imagine an athlete in a 400m race who is about half-way and is stopped abruptly. It would take him time to regain his speed when he resumes the race. When students had resumed school, paid their school fees and started lectures before strike, this will definitely negatively affect them psychologically, academically and socially, most especially during the festive periods when students may have not opened their books till they resume school again. In the light of the definite strike embarked upon by the academic staff union of universities, each time an academic session was abruptly interrupted, the school system paralysis, the students lost concentration, resulting in poor academic performance and students spend longer years in school e.g. a student spent six years for a programme meant for four years.

Business education students will not be proficient in a variety of computer software application. These which include word processing, spreadsheet, presentation, document management, time and billing, calendar and docketing, transcription, desktop publishing and video conferencing, Projector, excel, accounting, organizational skills, teamwork skills, multi tasking skills, research skills, interpersonal skills, supervisory skills. Chukumezie (2001), also confirmed that business educators (secretarial) revolves around job skills, employability and self dependability and self dependency. To Okolo (2002), business educator (secretarial) provides students with adequate skills information and competencies needed to function well in the office occupation. When strike occurs, there will not be enough time for the business education students to complete all their academic scheme. This is in line with Oladipo (2012) who stated that strike would result in the academic calendar being compressed and parts of the curriculum skipped, some topics would not be treated and the student would have to write the exams like that, resulting in poor performance and decline in quality of education. The long term effect of

the strike would be profitable to all, when government meets the demands of the academic staff union of universities. The immediate effect of the strike is obviously adverse. It would be very tough. Programmes would have to be adjusted, lectures, tests, exams, meetings and so on. It is unfortunate that government had not kept its part of the agreement it signed with ASUU in 2009 despite a warning strike in September, 2012. The poor ranking of the Nigerian universities was as a result of inadequate funding, lack of equipment and poor infrastructure at the universities.

According to Kazeem and Ige (2010), disruption in academic programme resulting from strike leads to closure of schools for a period of time. This period may be defined to be specified or indefinite and at such periods, no academic activity takes place at schools and upon resumption students in mist times are dined opportunity to make up for lost times. While Olukunle (2011) opined that disruption in academic programme as caused by strike gives students underserved study years extension. Isangedighi (2007) and Iheanacho (2002) stated that effective learning is achieved when students are emotionally and psychologically stable. But on the contrary, when disruption in academic programme occurs from strike action, students become emotionally and psychologically unstable especially on the perception that it will cause them to stay at school longer than expected.

This as a result of incessant strike by ASUU, hence there are no competent business education teachers in secondary schools and tertiary institutions to stimulate and motivate the students' interest in business education. This is a confirmation of Oyesode (2002) who stated that nature of the business education demand motivating students all at times to keep their interest on the course.

Possible Remedy to Strike

The universities should be granted autonomy. Once this is done the university system will bounce back to its former glory. But to Oladipo (2012) government should implement its part of the agreement it signed with ASUU in 2009. Alade (2012) opined that there is the need to encompassing reform of the education sector to make it dynamic and future oriented. Efforts should be developed to developing a system that would inspire patriotism in the students as they seek to become future leaders. Emphasis should also be placed on including vocational education to solve the problem of skills mismatch. This could be done by including a work based education system in our education policy, where students combine formal education with work based training as it is the practice in some countries. This will make transition from school to work place smooth and would solve the problem of unemployable graduates which is the hallmark of today's education system.

Conclusion

The study after a comprehensive analysis revealed that strike has played negative effect in the academic achievement of business education students in Nigerian universities. Though, it is inevitable in Nigerian university system. As a result of the incessant strikes by ASUU, students of business education in Nigerian universities will continue to perform poorly in their academic because during the strikes students are involved in some social verses, such as drinking, kidnapping, raps, students might not read their books, academic interest is dead; the zeal to get rich syndrome and when they are called suddenly to school for the examination, there will be

examination malpractices because students are not academically prepared and the resultant effect is poor performance and decline in the quality of education.

This phenomena will be a continuous one if not properly check in the sense that even when government representative have agreed on terms of agreement, signed and sealed, the government on its own part always not sincere, when it comes to matter of implementation. This can only be averted if only the government will honour any agreement reached between them and ASUU.

Recommendations

The authors after a critical study recommended as follows:

1. As a matter of policy, the executives and legislators of both federal and states should have their children in public universities in Nigeria.
2. That the federal and state governments should always respect the agreed negotiated agreement between them and the academic staff union of universities to avoid incessant strike actions.
3. That both federal and state governments should always provide enough funds to enable the universities function as universities and not glorified secondary schools.
4. The issue of understaffing should be looked into by both the federal and state governments. That is enough lecturers should be recruited.
5. Teaching at the universities should be made attractive to avoid brain drain.
6. All Nigerian universities should be connected to the internet.
7. Both federal and state government should as a matter of urgency establish an exchange programme both within and outside Nigeria. This will in no small way improve the academic and social standard of our universities.
8. The universities should be granted autonomy.

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