



STRIKE ACTION AND ADMINISTRATIVE EFFICACY IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

It is a disturbing situation when organizational disagreement takes place between the management and the workforce in an institution, which often leads to the suspension of work by the employee. When strike action takes place in an institution as a result of a dispute between the management and the employee, academic and other activities are brought to a standstill which renders the whole system stagnant and thereby making the administration of the institution ineffective. This paper discussed the concept of strike action, causes of strikes, types of strikes, pros and cons of strike action, strike effect on the academic programme, and the relationship between strike action and administrative efficacy. Conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made on the need to avoid organizational disputes between management and employees to prevent the act of suspending work which can paralyze activities in its totality and thus prevent a reliable accomplishment of the pre-determined objectives of the institution.

Keywords: strike, management, employee, administration, efficacy

Introduction

To achieve predetermined organizational objectives, institutions require efficient utilization of sensitive resources such as human resources, materials, and finances. Managing human resources, in particular, can be challenging as they are complex and capable of reacting to various situations. Organizational disputes between workers and management or government can lead to the cessation of academic and administrative activities, hindering the institution from accomplishing its goals. A reliable accomplishment of pre-determined objectives may not be easy to achieve when such disputes occur.

Concept of Strike Action

When there is a conflict between the management and the workers as to the acceptable terms and conditions of employment which cannot be resolved through industrial relations, then the act of suspending work by the workers comes into existence. Strike according to section 47 of sub-section 1 of the Trade Dispute Act “is the cessation of work by a body of persons employed acting in combination, or a concerted refusal or a refusal under a common understanding of any number of persons employed to continue to work for an employer in consequence of a dispute done as a means of compelling their employer or to avoid other workers in compelling their employer or any person or body of persons employed to accept or not accept the terms of employment and physical conditions of work”. Strike action is also a work stoppage that arises as a result of the deliberate refusal of workers to express their grievances when their employer cannot meet certain conditions to improve the welfare of workers.



Causes of strikes

Workers embark on strike for a lot of reasons which include:

1. **Structural organizational conflict:** This refers to an attempt by one party to change either the structure of bargaining or the contents of the negotiable or non-negotiable list.
2. **Inadequate decision-making power:** This refers to the limitations of negotiations in committing their respective constituencies to an agreement. This happened when an agreement signed by management negotiators was repudiated by top management because the foremen did not have the mandate to commit the employers; Unions Customarily resort to strike action.
3. **Management policies:** This refers to the management approach to bargaining relations with the Union. When management develops a negative policy towards unions, disputes and strikes are inevitable. Even when a positive policy is involved, management's approach to bargaining and the implementation of agreement may be a source of conflict and strike.
4. **Intra-organizational conflict:** This refers to internal Union conflict arising from several forces including the heterogeneous and diverse interests in the union.
5. **Interpersonal and Personal Sources of Conflict:** This comprises attitudes, benefits, and value systems of individual negotiators or officials on both sides which significantly influence the state of labour relations. Quite often, such conflicts are erroneously taken as legitimate issues of labour relations.

Types of Strike

The strike options have many varieties and these varieties can be distinguished by the scope and methods adopted. Lawal (1993) highlighted that the following are some of the commonest forms of strikes:

- **Economic Strike:** Under this type of strike, labours stop their work to enforce their economic demands such as wages and bonuses. In this kind of strike, workers ask for an increase in wages, allowances, bonuses and other facilities such as an increase in leave.
- **Sympathetic Strike:** When workers of an organization go on strike in sympathy with workers of another organization who are already on strike, it is called a sympathetic strike. This is a solidarity action embarked upon by workers who are not directly involved in the dispute. Sympathy strikes merely express moral and functional support aimed at bringing pressure on the employer involved in the trade dispute.
- **General Strike:** This is a strike by members of all or most of the unions in a region or an organization. It may be a strike of all the workers in a particular region of an organization to force demands common to all the workers. This type of strike usually creates political pressure on the government rather than the management of an organization or an institution.
- **Slowdown Strike:** Under this type of strike, employees remain on their jobs. They do not stop work but restrict the rate of output in an organized manner to put pressure on the employers.
- **Sit-Down Strike:** In this situation, workers do not absent themselves from their place of work when they are on strike. Such a strike is also known as a 'pen down' or 'tool down' strike. Workers show up at their places of employment, but they refuse to work and they also refuse to leave which makes it very difficult for employers to defy the union and take the workers' places.



- **Sick-out (or Sick-in) Strike:** In this strike, a significant number of union members call in sick on the same day. They don't break up rules because they are just on sick leave on the same day. The essence is to show their employer what it would be like if they went on strike.
- **Wild Cat Strike:** This type of strike is carried out by workers or employees without the authority and consent of the union to react urgently to a particular situation in an organization or institution. This is so-called because no reason or notice is given to the employer before embarking on it.
- **Work-to-rule Strike:** In a work-to-rule strike, workers insist on observing rights that have been collectively agreed upon but are dormant or not implemented. They insist on obeying rules and not deviating for any purpose and they challenge every change no matter how minor.
- **Constitutional Strike:** This refers to actions that conform to the due procedure of the collective agreement. The agreements usually specify the time at which strikes may be called by the workers and the procedure for conducting a strike. These are the strikes embarked upon after all laid down constitutional provisions have been followed.
- **Unconstitutional Strike:** This on the other hand does not conform to the provision of the collective agreement or the relevant public policies. It is often used by employers to describe employee strike action where the laid down procedures have not been properly explained before engaging in a strike.
- **Official Strike:** Official strikes are joint actions by the collectivity of members of a union usually authorized by the leadership of the union.
- **Unofficial Strike:** These are strikes without the authority of the union leadership. Usually, such strikes occur because the members have lost confidence in the leaders and are therefore willing to exert pressure on the employer without the leaders' permission.

Pros and Cons of Strike Action

While strikes can be disruptive for both workers and employers, they have the potential to force the employer to negotiate with the union and provide better wages, working conditions, safety regulations, and job security for the workers. However, strikes can also negatively impact the smooth functioning of the institution, lower workers' productivity, and affect the administration's efficacy. Typically, both parties realize that strikes cost them more than they are worth, and there are rarely any winners. Strikes should only be considered necessary if the management's terms are unacceptable to the workers, and the management is unwilling to negotiate a better deal.

Strike Effects on Academic Programme

Olakunle (2011) in his assessment asserted that disruption in academic programme as caused by strikes gives students an undeserved extension of study years. Isangedighi (2007) and Ihenacho (2002) explained that effective learning is achieved when students are emotionally and psychologically stable but on the contrary, when disruption in the academic programme occurs as a result of strike action, students become emotionally and psychologically unstable, especially on the perception that it will cause them to stay at school longer than expected. Asaolu (2010) opined that effective learning in school occurs when the stakeholders adequately perform their roles. This means that effective learning can be hindered when there is industrial action (strike), or conflict among the stakeholders (government, teachers, etc.) especially when one fails to discharge his or her expected responsibilities and disrespects others' rights. According to Kazeem and Ige (2010), disruption in the academic programme resulting from strikes leads



to the closure of schools for some time. The period of strike action may be defined to be specified or indefinite. During periods of strike, no academic activity takes place in schools and upon resumption, students are denied the opportunity to make up for lost time. This feeling negatively affects their learning in school. Odebola (2012) explained that effective learning or enhanced academic performance is achieved by successfully covering the subject syllabus timely and before the examination. This is rarely achieved with strike action in place.

Relationship between Strike Action and Administrative Efficacy

When people come together in an organization or institution to achieve a common goal, the processes and methods used to attain this goal are known as administration. Administration involves the skillful coordination of conflicting social energies within an organization to ensure they operate as a single unit. According to Adeyemi (2004), educational administration is the process of providing central leadership within an academic system. This involves coordinating activities and making decisions that lead to effective teaching and learning, which are the primary objectives of the school. When work is suspended in an organization or institution due to a strike, the smooth running of the institution is disrupted. The effectiveness of the administration becomes questionable because organizational activities come to a standstill. In such situations, the management is forced to engage in dialogue with the workers' representatives to resolve the issues that led to the strike. Through these discussions, mutually beneficial agreements can be reached to enhance the continuation of work. In essence, a strike affects the efficacy of the administration in an institution because academic and administrative activities come to a halt. This can lead to a reduction in productivity and the following situations are bound to prevail:

1. There would be an urgent negotiation between workers' unions and management.
2. There would be pressure on the management
3. Workers' demand gets better attention and consideration
4. The level of productivity of the institution gets reduced
5. The efficacy of the administration becomes questionable.
6. Workers have a better chance to be involved in organizational decisions.

Conclusion

Strike action in an organization or institution is a crucial issue which is capable of paralyzing the whole system thus making the accomplishment of the objectives of the institution a difficult task thereby making the efficacy of the administration to be questionable. This paper has attempted to establish that strike action is a situation that should not be allowed to exist in institutions because of its implications on the administration of the institution.

Recommendations

If administrative efficacy must take place in an institution, there is a need for the following:

1. Workers through their union should be involved by the Government or the management as the case may be when crucial decisions that affect the welfare of the workers are bound to be taken.
2. Agreements that are collectively reached between the Government and the workers or between the management of the institution and the workers should be implemented without any alternation to prevent strike actions
3. Agreements that are reached with workers through their unions should be timely implemented.



- Motivational strategies should be put in place by the Government and the management of the institution to make workers happy thereby preventing situations that can lead to strike action.

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