

Effects of Strike Action on Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Among Public Secondary School Students in Anambra State

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Abstract

This paper investigates the effects of strike action on teaching and learning effectiveness among public secondary school students in Anambra State. To accomplish this, four research questions were formed. The method used in carrying out the research is by administration of questionnaires. The calculation of the study consisted of 23 public secondary schools in Aguata L.G.A. The sample size used was 300 and comprising of 270 students and 30 teachers from the public secondary schools in Aguata L.G.A. using a simple random sampling technique. The responses to the questionnaire were analyzed and the following findings were made. Strike action is caused by non-payment of salaries and other allowances, insensitive to the welfare of staff etc. Strike affects the academic standard of the students as well as lead to poor academic performance of the students. Strike affects the actualization of educational goal by affecting the educational development in secondary school. The incessant strike actions in secondary schools could be averted if the following measures were adopted; use of dialogue, making consistent policies and government being sensitive to the plight of staff. Based on the above finds, recommendations were made and conclusions drawn.

Keywords: Strike/Industrial Action, Victimization of workers, Anambra State, Secondary School Students, academic standard.

Introduction

Teaching something to someone else is one of the finest ways to learn it, as educators have long observed. According to Fafunwa (1991), western education was first introduced in Nigeria by the Portuguese who visited Nigeria in 1472. They did not come to Nigeria merely to introduce education but for other reasons which include commerce, evangelization and colonization among other reasons. Western type of education spread throughout the country because of missionary activities. The missionaries established primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in various parts of Nigeria. The

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Received 14 Jan. 2025; Accepted 20 Jan. 2025. Available online: 30 Jan. 2025.

Published by SAFE. (Society for Academic Facilitation and Extension)

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colonial management and funding of the schools were in the hands of the missions that established them. Fafunwa (1991) contended that the colonial government on realizing that the western type of education is essential for development and should not be left in the hands of the church or mission alone intervened in the administration of the schools in 1882. From that time on, the government formulated policies to guild education, and these were referred to as “Education Codes”. These codes came at different periods with various targets.

According to Eresimadu and Arinze (2007), they introduce stringent condition for the certification and reclassification of teachers. The measures introduce includes demotions of teachers and three years successive annual report for further awards of certificate. The teachers protested and expressed their disapproval of such measure additionally frequent cuts in the salaries of voluntary agency teachers by the employer, a state of disparity existed between the conditions of the service on salaries of voluntary agency teachers. This unsatisfactory condition of service and frequent cuts in teacher salaries led to the formation of Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) in 1931. This body started seeking for better condition of service for its members throughout the country. Whenever their employers refused to grant the request of the teachers’ thought, dialogue and negotiation, strike became the alternative means to achieve their goals.

The Academic Staff Union of Secondary and University, which was established in 1978 to protest the military regimes of General Muhammadu Buhari, General Ibrahim Babangida, and General Sani Abacha, has conducted a nationwide strike that has had a significant impact on students' ability to learn. Additionally, the union has used strikes to seek financing for Nigerian universities, autonomy for universities, and equitable pay, among other things.

Chijioko (2013) defines a strike as a planned work stoppage by a group of employees to compel an employer or group of employers to comply with demands.

The academic or non-academic staff unions at Nigeria's numerous higher education institutions frequently take industrial action against their students. The majority of these strikes are the result of disputes between the government and the union or unions of different institutions over the partial or complete execution of a previous agreement. The academic calendar is typically disrupted by deadlocks that arise from disagreements or misunderstandings between the government and the academic community. The grass suffers when two elephants battle, as the proverb goes. In this instance, the grass is the students who bear the brunt of the disagreement.

According to Ukeje (2006), incessant strikes dwindle the academic performance of students. Students' reading skills deteriorate when instruction is interrupted for an extended length of time. Some pupils even forget the information they learnt during the study session. Some students become more certificate-seekers as a result of this than knowledge-seekers.

The educational schedule is also distorted by most prolonged strikes. The result is an extended academic year that goes beyond the allotted time. Most of the school year's academic activities are skewed. This is a primary factor in the production of graduates that lack qualifications and expertise in their industries. Similarly, students who are expected to complete a four-year course wind up attending the school for six years for a basic curriculum. Undergraduates are also more likely to engage in social vices during these strike periods, including as prostitution, pool betting, needless gossip, cyberscams, and amusement activities like viewing films and reading comic books instead of reading their books.

They claim that "the devil's workshop is an idle man." Over time, individuals quickly lose interest in school and become unprepared for class activities, which impairs their capacity to learn. Therefore, a reassessment of the education system is required. It is important to address the factors that frequently result in strikes in our institutions. Experience has shown that incessant strike action by the academic staff union of Nigerian greatly affects learning effectiveness and the general climate in the educational system. Odubela (2012) concluded that an effective learning or an enhanced academic performance is achieved by successful covering of the course outline timely and before the examination. With strike action in place, this is rarely accomplished. According to the aforementioned review, the researcher believes that disruptions in the academic programme brought on by strike action cause psychological trauma, students' lack of readiness, and a lack of motivation, all of which contribute to an environment that is not conducive to effective learning in Nigerian schools—a situation that stunts human development.

Eresimadu and Arinze (2007) assert that a favourable learning environment is essential to high-quality education. In order to prevent brain drain and promote efficient research, education should also receive appropriate and sufficient funding. Sufficient funding and equipment for Nigerian schools will significantly reduce the likelihood of more strikes. In the meantime, the government need to make every effort to uphold any agreements made with the academic groups. If the required measures are made to foster a positive relationship between the parties, the majority of protracted strikes can be avoided. Any government with a subpar educational system is bound for a dark future, it is important to emphasize.

The several unions in our educational institution should simultaneously come up with alternatives to strikes to address grievances. The last option is to use force. This is due to the detrimental impact that regular strikes have on students and the academic community as a whole.

Since the First Republic until the current administration, no government is believed to have prevented strikes in our educational institutions. The worst casualty was the military government. There is no plausible reason why the democratically elected administration should follow the same course of academic devastation if we are willing to overlook the military government's insensitivity to students given its flat form of government. The future of the country is immediately jeopardized by any administration that does not support its youth's education. Living under such a government is not worth

it. According to Chauhan (2004), the main objective of school as an institution is to bring certain desirable changes in the behaviour of children through the process of learning.

Statement of the Problem

Around the world, secondary schools are seen as the best place to nurture tomorrow's leaders, the cradle of knowledge, and the source of intellectualism. However, more official attacks and extraordinary industrial unrest have occurred in Nigeria's education system than in any other social institution during the past three decades. The strike actions witnessed in Nigeria have been a great concern to students, staff, parent, employers of labour and the governments. To this end, a lot of efforts have been made by the government and administrators to curb it, yet to no avail. It is against this background that the problem of the study is stated thus, the effects of strike actions on teaching and learning effectiveness among secondary school students in Anambra State.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to find out the effects of strike action on teaching and learning effectiveness among secondary school students in Anambra state.

It also aims at finding the following:

1. the factors responsible for strike actions in secondary school in Anambra State.
2. the effects of strike action on learning effectiveness among secondary school students.
3. how strike action hinders the actualization of educational goals?
4. the remedies towards curbing incessant strike actions in secondary school.

Research Questions

The following have been formulated to guide the study.

1. What are the major causes of strike action in secondary school in Anambra State?
2. To what extent does strike action affect learning effectiveness among secondary school students?
3. How does strike action affect the actualization of educational goal?
4. What are the remedies for curbing incessant strike action in secondary school?

Literature Review

Concept and Origin of Strike Action

The evolution of industrial revolution in the 19th century brought in the new world economic order in which people specialize in one aspects of production. It gives rise to the coming together of people to

defeat the means of production such as capital, land, entrepreneur or investors and people who provide the human energy required in the industrial relation that come into play in industrial organizations. Chamberlain and Kuhu (2005) indicated that within an organization, different groups interpret objectives differently. They concluded this by saying that “in fact, management is made up of members differing and sometimes contending groups who may understand and emphasize corporate objective in different ways and urges conflict priorities in pursuit of company goals”.

According to Okeke (2000) every concession is a benefit of work while the same is a cost to employee. Thus, if labour seeks to maximize its benefit and the employee his profit, conflict will naturally set in.

According to Okeke (2000), workers often use one of many sanctions available to them when they want to force the employers to conceit their demand. One of those sanctions is strike. Strike is the most important one and for this reason, the most damaging. It is often referred to as “workers economic weapon”.

Strike, according to Hanson (2011), refers to the combined voluntary withdrawal of their labour by employee. It consists of the concerted refusal of the members of the union of work (Lipsey, 2009). Strike action goes by another name industrial unrest or action.

Meaning of Industrial Action

A temporary demonstration of discontent by workers, particularly through a strike, slowdown, or working to rule, is known as industrial action (British English) or job action (American English). Its purpose is to increase bargaining power with the employer and force them to improve working conditions or low pay by lowering workplace productivity. Trade unions and other organized labour groups typically undertake industrial action when workers are evicted from their jobs due to contract termination without negotiating a mutually agreeable solution with their employers. Although the meaning is far broader, it is frequently used and understood as a euphemism for strike or mass strike. Industrial action may be intended to bring about political or social change, or it may occur as part of a labour dispute. They often exclusively use this method of communication to express their worries regarding advantages and safety.

According to *Oxford Dictionary* of Current English “strike” is a remedied, it is also refusal to participate. *The Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English* defined “strike” as the action of the employees in order to get better pay, shorter hour etc. According to Rahim (2000), strike is an interactive process which is manifested in incompatibility, disagreement or differences within or between social entities (that is individuals, groups, organization etc). It is the divergence of interest, objective or priorities between individuals, groups or for non-conformity to the requirement of a task, activity or process (Gardiner and Simon 2001).

According to Hanson (2011), strike action includes work to rule, ban overtime and lateness adopted by trade unions to support its demand. This implies that strike can be referred to as all forms of measures adopted by workers either for actualization of their demand or to show their grievance over actions and policies formulated by their employers which are not in their interest.

Hornby (2012) strike action is “the refusal of work normally the interrupting of work in protest above something”. These approaches are adopted by workers to reduce their production to the detriment of their employers for not conforming to their demands. The formation of trade union in Nigeria generally is the effect of workers to seek improvement on the existing conditions, which may relate to wage, hours of work and other condition of employment.

Wogu (2000) stated that the response was the formulation of first trade union in Nigeria on August 21, 1921 known as Southern Nigeria Civil Service Union. This was change to Nigeria Civil Service after the amalgamation of southern and Northern Nigeria in 1914. As time went on, other trade union began to emerge such as Nigeria union of teachers and Rail way workers union, which came into existence in 1931. Other trade union was formed time to time until present day Nigeria.

Victimization of Some Workers

Victimization of some workers is one of the major political reasons why workers embarked on illegal transfer, retrenchment, denial of increment, reduction in ranks, and withdrawal of union rights. Some workers will stay in their place of work and continue to work hard without any reward. This is why Ekwegbalu (2000) said that many workers stay in the same grade level for more than 10 years. Those that progressed were the ones that have god –father and not those who worked hard. The above act is unfair and victimization to hard workers. When this arises, some workers tend to embark on strike to show their grievances. Retrenchment occurs when workers are relieved of their jobs without avenue for seeking redress for perceived injustice.

Methodology

The research design employed in this research work is a descriptive type of survey research aimed at determining the effect of strike action on teaching and learning effectiveness among public secondary school students in Anambra State.

According to Nworgu (2006), descriptive research design involves collecting of data and describing in a systematic manner, the characteristics, features or factors about a given population

The Population for the Study

The study was conducted in the 23 public secondary schools in Aguata Local Government Area of Anambra State. The sample size used was 300 comprising of 30 teachers and 270 students. The sampling technique adopted for the study was simple random sampling, each element of the population

has equal and independent chance of being including on the sample. Sample resulting from the application of this procedure are said to be unbiased and therefore representative of the population.

The research's instrument for data collection is the questionnaire on the effects of strike action on teaching and learning effectiveness among public secondary school students in Aguata Local Government Area, Anambra State. The questionnaire used in this study was given to two experts in the field of expert from Education Foundation and Measurement and Evaluation Department in Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe for validation.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, the responses were been tabulated based on data collected, the data were analysed statistically by using descriptive statistical tool such as mean (\bar{x}) structured into frequency distribution table.

Therefore, mean (\bar{x}) = $\frac{4+3+2+1}{4} = 2.50$

Decision Rule

My decision rule is 2.50

If $x > 2.50$, Accepted

If $x < 2.50$, Rejected

If $x = 2.50$, It becomes neutral

The results obtained were analyzed according to the respective research question.

Research Question 1

What are the major causes of strike action in secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean responses on the major causes of strike action in secondary schools in Anambra State.

| S/N | Items | ΣFX | \bar{X} | Decision |
|-----|---|-------------|-----------|----------|
| 1. | Demand for increase in wage. | 996 | 3.32 | Accepted |
| 2. | Non-payment of salaries. | 1038 | 3.46 | Accepted |
| 3. | Irregular payment of salaries and other fringe benefit. | 936 | 3.12 | Accepted |
| 4 | Denying staff their rights and privilege e.g. promotion, leave bonus. | 609 | 2.03 | Rejected |

The table 1 above indicates that the respondents accepted that there are some factors that cause strike action in public secondary schools in Anambra State. According to respondents, factors such as demand for increase in wage, non-payment of salaries, irregular payment of salaries and other fringe benefit, were accepted as the major causes of strike by the respondents. While denying staff their rights and privilege and demand by workers on their condition of work were not accepted by the respondents.

Research Question 2

How does strike action affects the actualization of educational goal?

Table 2: Mean responses on how does strike action affect the actualization of educational goal.

N = 300

| S/N | Items | ΣFX | \bar{X} | Decision |
|-----|---|-------------|-----------|----------|
| 1. | Does strike affects educational development in secondary school in Anambra State? | 1146 | 3.8 2 | Accepted |
| 2. | Does incessant strike action hinder the actualization of educational goals in students? | 1008 | 3.3 6 | Accepted |
| 3. | Does strikes lead to the production of half-baked students in secondary schools? | 966 | 3.2 2 | Accepted |

The table 2 above shows that the respondents agreed on all the items listed as how does strike action affects the actualization of educational goal.

Research Question 3

To what extend does strike action affect learning effectiveness among secondary school students?

Table 3: Mean response on what impact does strike action affect learning effectiveness.

N=300

| S/N | Items | ΣFX | \bar{X} | Decision |
|-----|--|-------------|-----------|----------|
| 1. | It affects academic calendar. | 1086 | 3.62 | Accepted |
| 2. | It could lead to poor academic performance of the student. | 1032 | 3.44 | Accepted |
| 3. | It lowers the standard of education. | 942 | 3.14 | Accepted |

| | | | | |
|----|--|-----|------|----------|
| 4. | It leads to brain drain. | 612 | 2.04 | Rejected |
| 5. | It extends the number of years students will stay in school. | 948 | 3.16 | Accepted |

Table 3 above shows that the respondents accepted that strike action affect learning effectiveness among secondary school students.

According to respondent, it affects academic calendar; it could lead to poor academic performance; it lowers the standard of education, and it extends the number of years students will stay in school were accepted as what affect learning which has the mean greater than 2.50, and item 4 was not accepted by the respondents which has the mean score less than 2.5. In item number five, strike prolongs the duration of students' academic programme.

Research Question 4

What are the remedies for curbing incessant strike action in secondary schools?

Table 4: Mean responses on the remedy for curbing incessant strike action in secondary school.

N = 300

| S/N | Items | ΣFX | \bar{X} | Decision |
|-----|--|-------------|-----------|----------|
| 1. | Making consistent and reasonable policies by the government. | 996 | 3.32 | Accepted |
| 2. | There should be constant dialogue between staff and the employers on the welfare of staff. | 1014 | 3.38 | Accepted |
| 3. | The government should be sensitive to the welfare of the staff considering the economic situation. | 1098 | 3.66 | Accepted |
| 4. | Granting autonomy to secondary school. | 600 | 2.00 | Rejected |
| 5. | The employers should avoid the use of intimidations or threats during labour unrest. | 978 | 3.26 | Accepted |

Table 4 above shows the various measures which when implemented may curb the incessant strike action. The respondents tend to agree that making consistent and reasonable policies by government, constant dialogue, sensitive to the welfare of the staff and avoid the use of intimidation will help to curb strike action. The respondents do not believe that granting autonomy to secondary schools is a solution

to prevent frequent strikes. The greatest measure suggested by the respondents was that the government should be sensitive to the welfare of the staff considering the economic situation which has the mean score of 3.66.

Discussion of the Findings

The discussion of the result has been done according to different research questions and data collected on them. From research question one, the major causes of strike action in secondary schools in Anambra State include: demand for increase in wage, non-payment of salaries and irregular payment of salaries and other fringe benefit. For instance, the last strike action that took place on universities was because of government inability to pay staff their entitlement. This kind of situation creates room for industrial disputes.

In research question two, it showed how does strike action affects the actualization of educational goal. The outcome of the study showed that strike affects educational goal, leads to the production of half-baked students and it extends the number of years students stays in school. Take for instance; the Federal Polytechnic, Oko students that supposed to graduate this year have not started their first semester examination now. This has made their year extend to next year.

From research question three, the researcher was able to find out the extent strike action affects learning. It affects academic calendar; it leads to poor academic performance; it lowers the standard of education. This supports the view of Odubela (2012), on his findings that an enhanced academic performance is achieved by successful covering of the course outline timely, and it extends the number of years students spend in school. That is to say, strike prolongs the duration of students' academic programme.

Finally, research question four provides the remedy of curbing incessant strike action in secondary school. The finding suggested that there will be consistent and reasonable policies by the government, constant dialogue between staff and the employers on the welfare of the staff considering the economic situation (so that the minimum wage of the staff suits the economic situation at hand); the employers should avoid the use of intimidate on during labour unrest and being sensitive to the welfare of the staff e.g. payment of suitable salaries.

The result of this study also supports what Onyekere (1987) and Nwakalor (1985) says, these authors advocated the need for the government to make consistent policies and try to abide by any promise made to workers to avoid industrial dispute and the greatest instrument to be utilized before, during and after industrial action is dialogue.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the school management should meet from time to time to discuss the welfare of the staff and low best to solve them amicably. Strike should be seen as the last option

towards resolving staff problems in view of its devastating effects on the student academics. Government should be sensitive in her decision to determine the minimum wage of the staff, in such a way that the economic situation of the country suits the minimum wage of the workers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made.

1. The government should be very sensitive to the plight of staff so as to boost their morale.
2. The school management and government should employ dialogue as a means of settling labour unrest.
3. The government should from time to time review the pay package of workers under her employment.
4. The government should make consistent policies while deciding the welfare of the staff.
5. The minimum wage of the government's decision should suit the economic situation at hand.

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