

Co-operative Unionism and Informal Lobbying in Nigerian Universities

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Abstract: *The study explored the relationship between Co-operative Unionism and Informal lobbying in Nigerian Universities. The objective of the study is to determine the nature of relationship between integrative bargaining of Cooperative unions and promptness to resources' allocation by Nigerian Universities. Descriptive survey research design was employed and data were analyzed with mean and standard deviation. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the formulated hypothesis at 5% (percent) level of significance. Findings revealed that there is a negative significant relationship between integrative bargaining and resource allocation in Nigerian Universities. In addition, despite the negative relationship, the two constructs are significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed). It is recommended that the executives of the various Cooperative Unions should redesign their integrative bargaining strategies in liaison with the general house for vibrant Cooperative Unionism. We therefore advocate that for Cooperative Unions to achieve a better work life for their members, apparent concessions by the cooperative executives should not be abused to the detriment of Cooperative members.*

Keywords: *Unionism, Cooperative, Informal Lobbying, University.*

I. Introduction

Trade union is an association of wage or salary earners formed with the object of safeguarding and improving the wage and employment conditions of its members and to raise member's social status and standard of living in the community (Fajana, 2000). This definition emphasizes on the purchase of labour power as factor of production. Trade Union is here differentiated from other organizations or associations by the emphasis on the pursuit of better and improved condition of service for members. Trade union is best described as institutional representation of workers' interest both within the labour movement and in wider society and accentuate the collective rather than the individual power resources of employers (Bean,1985) cited in (Okoli, 2014).

Conceptually, trade union role in the society include among others; checking the excesses of employers; defending members' interest against management and most importantly providing workers with a measure of collective strength. Derived from the above, institutions focus attention on their working population with the aim of improving working conditions and standard of living. Employment policy oriented towards quantitative and sustainable growth, must go hand in hand with innovative answers to production model and respect for fundamental principles and rights in the workplace. Decent work must be protected from unfair competition in the internal market through higher minimum standards on working time, working conditions and wages (Bruno, Dovgan, Eum & Terraso, 2012).

In the Nigerian University system, it is common for management to have misunderstanding with staff which may be due to administrative misunderstanding, feud between boss and subordinate, leading to protracted disharmony in school staff, interpersonal relationship, disarmed school authorities, clogged channel of progressive communication and render institutions of learning ungovernable (Agbonna, & Yusuf, 2009; Olughbile, 2005), thus hampering smooth effective and efficient administration in the universities. Also job dissatisfaction, employees not promoted at work, in justice, no motivation at work place have given rise to conflicts.

In this sense, the Cooperative model more vibrant than ever, offers original contributions. As key actors in the "social economy", they have proved that it is possible to validate issues relative to inclusive, socially fairer and environmentally sustainable growth, whilst at the same time remain economically successful (ILO, 2012). It is now widely accepted that a cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise (ICA, 1995).

Though cooperatives are identified to be autonomous and independent organizations that seek to advance or protect interests of their members through a business enterprises they operate in a political environment under the confines of the institutions. The institutions may create an environment that is not

conducive for existence of cooperative or the operation of cooperative business. This reality may push the cooperative to secure its existence, for the sake of promoting the interests of the members, by engaging the institution in policy dialogue to create an enabling environment. Indeed, it is partly in recognition of the significance (Wanyama, 2012), of policy lobbying and advocacy that the Cooperative movement in some countries have created structures for this purpose.

Advocacy is a legitimate and recognized means of participation in the democratic process, (CLARITY, 2013). Informal lobbying by contrast, is taken to mean something more specific, to the particular act of advocating for passage of a piece of legislation in a relaxed and friendly, not following strict rules by a group of people to influence management on a particular issue. Through advocacy, (Wanyama, 2012), expressed that cooperative can achieve; the solution to specific problems relating to laws, regulations or institutional policies; strengthen the cooperative movement and deepen the cooperative principle of democracy; can give cooperative a more public presence and in the process perhaps attract more resources including new members and/or financial resources; and can help policy makers achieve their own goals to the benefits of their constituents.

In order to operationalize the variables, however, the study is based on two major constructs namely: Cooperative Unionism performance and informal lobbying climate. This implies that informal lobbying climate is a function of Cooperative Unionism activities. Thus informal lobbying climate is measured by indicators and variables such as, harmony, openness, promptness and friendliness. Further, Cooperative Unionism activities can be operationalized into indicators and variables given as; policy dialogue, integrative bargaining, leadership behavior and creating awareness.

In view of this, the primary objective of the study is to explore the relationship between Cooperative Unionism and informal lobbying in Nigerian Universities. Specifically, the study seeks to: Determine the nature of relationship between integrative bargaining of Co-operatives Unions and promptness to resources' allocation in Nigerian Universities. Consequently, the directional hypothesis is that, there is significant nature of relationship between integrative bargaining of Cooperative Unions and promptness to resource allocation in Nigerian Universities.

II. Conceptual and Theoretical Issues

2.1 Concept of Unionism.

Unions are organized association of workers formed to protect and further their rights and interests, (a labour union). Union performance refers to the degree to which unions bargain and fight for their members' right in order to improve their working conditions through the use of authority and leadership (Yusuf 2010). The working conditions here denotes, the conditions in which an individual or staff works, including but not limited to such things as amenities, physical environment stress and noise levels degree of safety or danger and the like. In a most general sense workers and unions have rights which are those legal provisions which are meant to protect workers in the course of employment, freedom of association, collective bargaining and prohibition of forced labour, child labour and discrimination in employment. Such rights are conferred on workers and their organizations taking into consideration their special role and need to protect them from extreme abuse and exploitation in the hands of profit – conscious employers often backed by a collective state (Scherrer & Greven, 2001). These rights are embedded in Conventions and Recommendation of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

2.2 Cooperative Advocacy

The trade union and Cooperative movements share a parallel history having emerged at the beginning of the industrial era and having provided, in their own ways, responses to the insecurities brought about by the development of capitalist social relations (The Cooperative Law and Regulation Initiative (CLARITY), 2013). A combination of the four principles of Cooperatives, namely democratic member control; autonomy of independence; cooperation among Cooperatives; and concern for the community makes these organizations suitable for engaging the Universities management through policy advocacy to protect the interest of their members, and are led by elected representatives who are accountable to the membership, give cooperative leaders the authority and locus to speak on behalf of the members (Wanyama, 2012). Cooperative organizations and their members should be accorded due process of law, including applicable rights to hearings, representation, and impartial appeals for decisions of the Universities that impact Cooperatives or their members. The autonomy and independence that enables cooperatives to work with other organizations including the Universities, on their own terms should be another assets in policy advocacy, because it effectively shields cooperatives from politics, thereby making them ideal for articulating the common interests of members and the wider community without fear or favour (CLARITY, 2013; Wanyama, 2012).

2.3 Informal Lobbying

This concept refers to a tendency of groups/firms to use individual representatives rather than intermediaries; a marked distinction between insiders and outsiders with a strong emphasis on credibility, transparency and institutional identity building (Vannom, 2011), expressing, further, informal lobbying is nothing more than an “inter pares exchange of resources or assets”. Lobbying means persuading individuals or groups with decision making power to support a position you believe is right. Moreso, it involves meeting people in your area; get other powerful people to influence them informally (www.etu.org.za). Informal lobbying according to Scott (2009) includes such practices, as direct lobbying and manipulation of both people/media and have become more prominent vehicles for group/industry involvement in the policy process.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on Social Exchange Theory developed by Blau (1964), which states that exchange stimulates feelings of personal obligation and gratitude. Employees in employment relationship seek a balance in their exchange relationships with organizations by having attitudes and behaviours commensurate with the degree of employer commitment to employees. When an employer acts in a manner that is beneficial to employees and when those actions go beyond the demands of the social role, the generalized norm of reciprocity creates feelings of obligation whereby the employees feel they are obligated to be committed to their employers. Social exchange theory is applied here on the account of the relationship between employers practice and employee’s/group contentment and commitment (Wayne, Shore & Liden, 1997). Social exchange theory also lends support to the prediction that positive, beneficial actions directed at employees and its union by the management of an organization create feelings of obligation for employees to reciprocate in positive, beneficial ways including feeling of loyalty, commitment and performance.

2.5 Empirical Review

A number of studies have been explored by scholars and Labour agencies on the subject matter. Wanyama (2013), investigated cooperatives and policy advocacy in Eastern Africa using analytical method. The findings from the study showed that organs for Cooperative representation and policy advocacy exist, but they have performed poorly in national policy debates due to their ineffectiveness. This ineffectiveness of representation and advocacy organizations has been attributed to their narrow focus on cooperative development policy and not the broader public policy that will then be visible; lack of capacity to engage in public policy advocacy; the deviation from the central role of representation and advocacy to compete with their members in carrying out economic activities; and the lack of powers as a result of their inability to marshal members support.

In a related development, CLARITY (2013) studied Cooperative advocacy: a practical guide for advocating cooperative legal and regulatory reform, identified that there are five broad categories of legislators with advocacy tactics different from each type, which are the champion, friend, fence sitters, opponent and enemy (adversary). The institution advised that cooperatives should engage members at the “grassroots” and “grass – tops” levels.

Another study by Vannoni (2011) on business lobbying in Europe found that informal mode of governance leads to a dynamic principal-agent approach that fosters direct dynamics, identity building, transparency and credibility.

III. Methods

Descriptive survey research design was used in this study in order to elicit information and data from sampled respondents. sequel to the non-definite nature of the population, a statistical formular for determining sample size from unknown universe was applied (Okeke, Olise & Eze, 2008). The population was non infinite since we could not ascertain the exact number of members of Co-operative Unions in all the Universities in Nigeria (Field Survey, 2015). The study assumed 5% tolerance error and 95 percent confidence level. Probability sampling techniques such as cluster and stratified were employed since they ensure equal probability of all elements in the population to be randomly selected (Azuka, 2011).

Following from the sampling techniques, the respondents were selected as follows:

Table 1: Categories of Respondents Sampled:

S/N	NAME OF UNIVERSITY	STATE	NUMBER OF SAMPLED RESPONDENTS
1	Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka	Anambra	49
2	Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	Kaduna	12
3	University of Benin	Edo	30
4	University of Ibadan	Ogun	17
5	University of Nigeria, Nsukka	Enugu	24
6	Ekiti State University	Ekiti	21
7	University of Lagos	Lagos	22

8	Cross River State University of Science & Technology	Cross River	29
9	Adamawa State University, Mubi	Adamawa	11
10	University of Ilorin	Kwara	5
11	Kogi State University, Anyigba	Kogi	13
12	Abubaka Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi	Bauchi	6
13	Federal University of Technology, Niger	Niger	7
	TOTAL		246

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Data were gathered from primary and secondary sources. The primary data were elicited from the respondents through questionnaire, while the secondary data were obtained through text books, journal articles and internet materials. Questionnaire instrument was utilized for obtaining the opinions of respondents on the research constructs economically, given a large sample size (Osuala, 2005). Questionnaire copies of 246 were distributed to respondents (Cooperative members) in selected Universities in Nigeria where Co-operative Unions exist. Federal and State Universities were selected from both the Northern and Southern Nigeria, for purposes of geographical spread. However, Private Universities were not selected owing perhaps to their lean financial peculiarities that may not give opportunity for cooperative formation in their institutions. Out of 246 copies of questionnaire distributed (100 percent), 218 copies of questionnaire (89 percent) were returned valid, while 28 copies (11 percent) were not returned.

Face and content validity was used in validating the structured questionnaire by ensuring that the objective, research question and hypothesis were aligned to the major constructs of the study (Integrative bargaining and promptness to resource allocation). However, Cronbach Alpha was used to test the reliability of the instrument and it revealed a negative result (-0.152) on 19 Number of Items. The negative relationship was explained from the empirical literature reviewed.

Data Analysis

The mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the data collected. 4-point likert scale was employed to measure the nature of relationship between integrative bargaining and promptness to resource allocation as perceived by the focused respondents. The 4-point likert scale was utilized because of the assumed awareness of respondents on cooperative activities through general meetings and executive reports in the Universities. Consequently, the weights allocated to the responders were: Strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points) and strongly Disagree (1 point).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

S/N	Defined Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
1	Sex	218	1.00	2.00	1.5367	.49980	.250
2	Age	218	2.00	4.00	2.7202	.64376	.414
3	Educational Qualification	218	3.00	5.00	4.5550	.56731	.322
4	Co-operative Experience	218	1.00	4.00	1.9862	.88239	.779
5	Formation Year	218	2.00	4.00	3.7523	.51082	.261
6	Co-operative Position	218	1.00	1.00	1.0000	.00000	.000
7	Co-operative Type	218	1.00	3.00	2.8716	.49142	.241
8	Use of Integ. Bargaining	218	1.00	4.00	3.2810	.70152	.492
9	Union-Mgt. Relationship	218	1.00	4.00	3.3119	.68825	.474
10	Welfare-collective action	218	1.00	4.00	3.3911	.60824	.370
11	No-benefit gained	218	1.00	4.00	2.8349	.79182	.627
12	Met-demand Policy dialogue	218	1.00	4.00	2.2706	.91840	.843
13	Meeting Concession	218	1.00	4.00	2.5917	.90738	.823
14	Mgt-Resource-apportionment	218	1.00	4.00	2.4817	.84903	.721
15	No-hesitation Vehicle request	218	1.00	4.00	2.3899	.86897	.755
16	Immed-Resp. Equipt hiring	218	1.00	4.00	2.1239	.74875	.561
17	Financial-grant project	218	1.00	4.00	2.4037	.75127	.564
18	Longtime-difference Res.	218	1.00	4.00	2.3991	.93148	.868
19	No-quick Approval-space	218	1.00	4.00	2.1422	.70086	.491
	Valid N (Listwise)						

Source: Computed from Field survey, 2015 using statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 20

Table 2 present the descriptive statistics of all variables in the research. Demographic variables (1-7) indicate low standard deviations (0.49980, 0.64376, 0.56731, 0.88239, 0.51082, 0.0000 and 0.49142) and high means respectively. This suggests a cluster in respondents’ opinion on the questionnaire items. However, of all the variables measured, co-operative position has the lowest standard deviation (0.00000) and mean (1.0000). This implies a much more cluster in the opinion of respondents than in other constructs. The same pattern is

seen in the variance associated with the mean and standard deviation results. Nonetheless, educational qualification is associated with the highest mean (4.5550) and standard deviation of 0.56731. This indicates a much more dispersal in the opinion of respondents with respect to educational qualification.

The ordinal scale of measurement in table 2 shows that item 18 (Longtime-difference Res) has the highest Standard deviation of 0.93148, mean of 2.3991 and 0.868 variance respectively. This suggests a little-higher differences in the opinion of respondents on the questionnaire item/compared with their responses in other questionnaire items.

Hypothesis Testing

Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient was used to test the formulated hypothesis. Pearson (r) is the most sensitive measure of associate between two variables (Wiersma,1969), cited in (Onyeizugbe, 2013).

H₁: There is significant nature of relationship between integrative bargaining of Co-operative Unions and promptness to resource allocation in Nigerian Universities.

H₀: There is no significant nature of relationship between integrative bargaining of Co-operative Unions and promptness of resource allocation in Nigerian Universities

Table 3: Pearson Correlations between Integrative Bargaining and Promptness to Resource Allocation

	Integrative Bargaining	Promptness to Resource Allocation
Pearson Correlation	1	-.182
Integrative Bargaining Sig (2-tailed)		.007
N	218	218
Pearson Correlation		
Promptness to Resource Allocation Sig (2-tailed)	.007	
N	218	218

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Computed from Field Survey, 2015 using SPSS Version 20

Table 3 shows the correlation between Integrative bargaining and promptness to resource allocation. This result is significant at the 0.01 (2-tailed) level of significance. However, it shows a negative relationship of -0.182, suggesting that although, a relationship exists, but is negative.

IV. Discussion Of Results And Implications

The finding revealed that there is a significant negative relationship between integrative bargaining and resource allocation in Nigerian Universities. The implication of this findings questions the potency of integrative bargaining of Co-operative Unions on campuses of the Nigerian Universities. The result is corroborated with the research findings of Wanyama (2013) which showed that the organs for Co-operative representation and policy advocacy exist, but they have performed poorly in national policy debates due to their ineffectiveness. Possibly, the significant negative relationship is attributed to informal lobbying since it does not follow strict rules by a group of people to influence management on particular issues (CLARITY, 2013)

Additional implication of the finding is that the clustered opinions of respondents on the ordinal scale measurement have brought to fore the real situation of many Co-operative Unions in the Nigerian Universities. Their apparent concessions with the University management on sensitive issues may sometimes be counterproductive to the collective aspirations and interests of Co-operative Members.

V. Conclusion

It is evident from the data analyses and hypothesis testing that there is a negative significant relationship between integrative bargaining and resource allocation in Nigerian Universities. In addition, despite the negative relationship the two construct are significant at 0.01 (2-tailed) level of significance.

VI. Recommendations

Emanating from the conclusion, we therefore recommend the following:

- The executives of the various Co-operative Unions should redesign their integrative bargaining strategies in liaison with the general house for vibrant Co-operative Unionism.
- Co-operative Union Executives should ensure that resource allocation by the University Management is executed transparently to the advantage of all members of the Cooperative Unions.
- Apparent concessions by the Co-operative executives should not be abused to the detriment of Cooperative members.

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