

A Conceptual Extension of the Conflict Theory on the Indices Influencing the Appointment of University Administrators in South-South Nigeria

JOHN, MARK PhD

Department of Management, Rivers State University of Science and Technology
Nkpolu - Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper intends to propose the extension of the conflict theory in the application of the indices that account for the appointment of the principle officers of the universities in south-south Nigeria. This will be done through a conceptual and content analysis of secondary materials. However, the researcher intends to hinge this on the conflict theory of Karl Max. Meaning then that as the researcher would like to argue that the indices upon which administrators are pointed are likely to generate conflict in the system in the university authority do not stick to the functional role of the university

Keywords: Labour-employment-indices, labour-behavior, principal officers, labour-meritocracy, gender-disparity,

INTRODUCTION

The university like, any other sector within a true functionalist state, is created to gratify institutional needs. This probably, as argued among scholars, is for a well meaning labour corporatism among member states. The thrust then is that conflict of state function by this process may well be checked as each member unit renders her services with earnest commitment. It is however, not to be forgotten that such functions may well be abandoned or on the other hand, performed with oversights. This is especially where administrative and labour behavior is defiled.

No doubt, the institutional functions of the university are to teach, conduct research and respond to other administrative duty in the state. But as observed by the researcher, excellence on university running depends largely on her principal officers. May it then be said that this is the thrust of this paper. To determine, rising from the vice chancellor to the least member of staff, the indices for appointments and the effects of this on labour behavior among staff.

As Ndeithu (2007) noted, labour behavior for any institution is shaped by the determination of the university management more than the values of students, lecturers and the availability of resources.

To justify their continued existence, the university management must assure the stakeholders and the general public that their expectations are being achieved. Pounder (1999), revealed that efficiency and cohesion are the key measures used in achieving the expectations (i.e. educational provisions) of universities management. while efficiency is the labour behavior that reflects the extent to which management is concerned with the effectiveness of university administration for the promotion of institutional goals, cohesion on the other hand is the labour behavior that reflects the extent to which management is concerned with staff morale, job satisfaction, interpersonal relations, teamwork, and sense of belonging. Therefore, to guarantee that standards and quality educational provisions are being maintained in the universities, emphasis then is that issues relating to the appointment of principal officers be addressed.

The government and other owners of private universities appoint most members of the universities council. Under this study of appointing council members, it often turns out that governments' and owners' views become predominantly registered in the council's deliberations and as such easily steer universities' affairs in governments' and owners' favour. This spirit then undermines university autonomy and academic freedom and further tends to diminish democratization of decision making in the university system. In Orido (2010), a faculty member with a private university in Kenya was sacked for holding a different view on the draft constitution from that of the church association with the university. Similarly, Kubana (2011) reported that a vice-chancellor in South Korea was appointed without regard to procedure or written law that regulates and licenses institutions of higher learning in the country.

In Nigeria, as well vice chancellors are usually appointed by the visitor of the university, such as the president, governor, and proprietor for federal, state and private universities respectively, whereas other principal officers are appointed by the governing council. The principles then underpinning appointments are fairness, credibility, equal opportunity and merit (Schoderbeck, 2012) it is therefore interesting to examine whether the appointments of these officers in Nigerian universities are in any way near the ethical conduct of meritocracy as argued by exponents; for it is never to be forgotten that the image of a university is so much in alignment with the profiles of her member staff. In what follows then, are the appointments based on merit through fair and open

processes set out in the recruitment, selection and appointment within the overall workforce plan of the university? This again is the concern of the paper

A SURVEY OF APPOINTMENTS OF LABOUR IN REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES

A study conducted by Sifuna (1998), found that the appointees in key administrative positions in most African universities, are in majority of cases not the most napt administratively and academically. More so, Kumba (2010) averred that the appointments of principal officers of Nigerian universities are often in violation of the university Acts and Statues. A case view to this was the appointment of the vice chancellor of the Rivers state university of Science and Technology, Port Harcourt in 2006 by the visitor of the university. This appointment was made without regard to the rules and procedures for the appointment of Vice chancellors and it led to industrial action by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), which crippled academic activities of the university for almost two academic sessions. What could have influenced such an appointment?

An attempt to determine the predominant indices for the appointment of principal officers in South-South Universities of Nigeria and the extent to which these indices influence labour behavior of university employees, is the motivation for this study.

The appointment of principal officers of Universities has been a subject of concern in education and government circles all over the world. The factors that account for such appointments vary from university to university, and from one country to another and are therefore not well developed and modeled. This is a steering challenge in the appointment of principal officers of universities, in that the indices for such appointments are capable of influencing labour behavior of employees and labour flow as well.

Several indices are employed in the appointment of these officers of universities at different times and places. Some of the common indices include language, political affiliation, personal relationship and loyalty, religion, gender, equity, competence, career history, length of service, personal integrity, and community services. Letsoalo (2004) conducted a study on the appointment of top management of the North-West University in South Africa, and observed that such appointments were based on merit, considering job competency and experience. Gender disparity has also been focal point of discussion in the appointment of principal officers of universities. Egunjobi (2009) reported that the percentage of women appointment into key administrative positions in commonwealth nations' universities ranges from 9.5% in Ghana, 9.8% in Zimbabwe, 10.9% in Zambia, 11% in Tanzania, 13.6% in Nigeria and 50% in Jamaica. This analysis shows that while Jamaica has equal appointment opportunities for male and female employees, Nigeria is still far to meet this requirement in spite of the provision for equal employment opportunities as enshrined in the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria.

Kabaji (2010) observed that under the administration of the Kenya African National Union (KANU) - a political party; staff recruitment, deployment, promotions and appointments in all public institutions were largely influenced by party politics. He further pointed out that to be appointed into any public office, a recommendation letter is usually requested from party stalwarts, which requires a very high level of loyalty. A politically compromised university management is a vessel that implements political decisions, which may not necessarily benefit the larger university fraternity nor promote the delivery of quality education.

Gitahi (2010), observed that a trend has emerged where a pro-chancellor, Vice chancellor or chairman of council of a university must be appointed from the community where the university is located. The appointment of other key administrators of the university, follows a similar pattern where the appointee must be of the same religion fraternity with the vice chancellor. At the University of Port Harcourt for instance, only among professors who are of the state origin, are appointed for the office of a vice chancellor. Appointment, promotion and even placement in Nigeria universities, have presented an image of struggles among the various ethnic groups. If this remains unchecked, it may come to a time where universities will be reduced to village entities and become ethnic enclaves; where staff meetings will be held in vernacular.

Many studies have shown that the indices for the appointment of principal officers in universities influence labour behavior of employees (See; Gudo, Oando and Olel, 2011, Gitahi 2010; Wilk, 2009; Egunjobi, 2009; Ndegwa, 2007) but most of the prior studies are of foreign origin and lack local contents. Therefore, environmental differences could cause differences in research findings.

More so, most of the existing studies only examined the impact of each of the factors on labour behavior of university employees without adopting a holistic approach to determine the multiple relationship that exists between the factors and employees' labour behavior.

Despite the attention given by scholars and researchers in determining the factors influencing appointment of principal officers in universities, and the impact of such appointment criteria on employees' labour behavior, not much literature and empirical evidence of the subject matter as it affects universities in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria have been documented. In view of the above, our point of departure is to fill in these existing gaps by empirically examining how these indices influence the appointment of principal officers and the impact of such indices on employees' labour behavior in South-South Universities of Nigeria.

This will help increase the volume of literature and provide more empirical evidence of the subject matter.

It is never to be forgotten that the main objectives of this study is to determine the predominant indices that influence appointment of principal officers in South-South Universities, with a view to examining the extent to which these indices as well can influence employees' labour behavior.

And then in what follows the significance of this research work is viewed in three dimensions namely: theoretical, policy making and productivity.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is intended to show some earnest theoretical significance as it adds to the existing body of knowledge on the indices influencing the appointment of principal officers on one hand, and the relationship that exists between those indices and employees' labour behavior.

The study stands as a suitable ground for testing the evolving concepts of Management by Objectives (MBO) approach in relation to gender differences, competence and experience, and ethnicity in the appointment of principal officers of universities and quality delivery of educational provisions. The work serves as a grand reference material for students and researchers in this area of study.

POLICY MAKING

The data from this research work are to be translated into policies to further address the critical problems associated with the appointment of principal officers of universities based on unmeritorious indices which manifest in gender differences, federal character, indigination, catchment areas, etc. The work in its evidence will show the negative impact of biased appointment of principal officers in universities.

PRODUCTIVITY

The findings of this study are to bring to the limelight the indices that influence the appointment of principal officers in the Universities in South-South zone of Nigeria. This is to help the university's visitors and chief executives of university design the appropriate policy for the appointment of principal officers that would enhance employees' labour behavior, job satisfaction and motivation for efficient service delivery of universities.

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Humans are good lovers of war. Although this becomes more compelling when there are competitions of results in the state. As Marx will argue individuals and groups within the state have divergences of value and material rewards which are capable of generating conflicts when not properly managed and then the researcher wishes to extend this further that the indices upon which the university administrators are pointed are constituents of conflict agents and are capable of exploding if not properly managed. The earliest study on record that examined indices and work-related outcomes was conducted in 1958. Katz et al. studied the interpersonal relations between blacks and whites in a laboratory study consisting of four-person teams. Each team included two white students and two black students. The study used was open and positive communication as the outcome of interest. Not surprisingly, white students were more likely than blacks to communicate, and when they did communicate, they tended to direct their contents of speech to each other, not to the black students in their team. These results likely reflect the status differences between blacks and whites during the 1950s, something that makes any other study relating ethnicity to work-related outcomes questionable. Further early studies (Hoffman et al, 1962; Hoffman & Maier, 1961; Levy, 1964) suffer from the same generalization issue. When considering a diversity dimension like ethnicity that is so politically and socially-charged, it is important to consider the social context when determining whether any given study remains relevant.

More recent research on diversity effects has found mixed results-some studies show a positive relationship between ethnic diversity and workers' attitude, while others show a negative relationship. Studies showing a positive relationship have come from both laboratory and field experiments. For example, Watson et al (1993) created 36 groups of students in a management course and asked them to engage in a series of case studies. Groups with high levels of ethnicity tended to consider a wider range of perspectives and alternatives than groups that were relatively homogeneous. McLeod and Lobel (1992) gave a brainstorming exercise to a large sample of college students, both graduate and undergraduate, organized into groups. While the diverse groups did not tend to produce a larger number of ideas or solutions, the ideas and solutions they produced were of higher quality than those generated by homogeneous groups. Two recent field studies provide evidence for a positive relationship between diversity and employees' behavior as well. Mullen & Cooper (1994) found that in-groups and out-groups changed over the course of the task, such that the initially-created groups, based on task-irrelevant issues, disappeared, and new groups arose that were more task-specific.

They found that in-groups and out-groups that were specifically related to the task were not detrimental to the organization in achieving positive outcomes. O'Reilly et al (1997) studied an organization with a reputation for valuing employee diversity, finding that, within the organization's work teams, ethnicity created

positive, performance-related results.

Other studies have shown a negative relationship between ethnicity and employees' behavior. Many of these studies use individual performance evaluations as the outcome of interest, and the bulk of the studies show that, in diverse units or organizations, employees are less likely to receive positive performance evaluations from supervisors. (Greenhaus et al., 1990 also found a relationship between ethnicity and lower career satisfaction, lower organizational commitment, and employee perceptions of unlikely promotion. Tsui et al (1992) found that, in diverse work teams, members of the minority, or the primary out-group, were less committed to the organization, more likely to be absent from work, and more likely to be in active search of other employment. Kizilos et al. (1996) found that diverse groups exhibited less prosocial behavior than homogenous groups, and Pelled et al (1997) provide evidence that high levels of ethnic diversity are related to more emotional conflict in work teams. Riordan & Shore (1997) found that, in diverse work groups, employees are less likely to be committed or perceived that they are likely to advance in the organization. Studies showing a negative relationship between ethnic diversity and employees' behavior seem to be just prevalent as those showing a positive relationship, causing the literature to sprout out in two different directions and making it difficult to articulate hypotheses.

Given the above research on ethnicity effects, it is difficult to formulate credible hypotheses relating ethnicity performance outcomes. Two streams of theory suggest ethnicity will harm organizations, while a third suggests it will create benefits. The empirical research shows both positive and negative relationships. The bottom line is that ethnicity makes it difficult for people to work effectively together. If a performance outcome requires employees to work extensively with one another, then that situation is perhaps more likely than others to see a negative diversity effect if a performance outcome requires employees to work relatively independently, then it is more likely than others to see positive effect, since the benefits of increased knowledge and information will not be outweighed by process difficulties (Pitts, 2002).

It seems most likely, given the above literature review, that one would hypothesize a negative relationship for tasks requiring collaboration and coordination. As mentioned previously, most of the research on information and decision-making theory is based on functional and education diversity, not ethnicity. That makes it a weak theory on which to rest a study of this nature, especially given that two other more prominent theories (similarity/attraction and social categorization and identification) suggest a different (negative) relationship. Furthermore, it appears that the majority of empirical studies linking ethnic diversity to employees' behavior show a negative, not positive relationship. However, if the task itself requires little to no coordination, there is no reason to expect a negative relationship, since the theoretical perspectives outlined above are based explicitly in process-oriented difficulties.

GENDER DISPARITY IN UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION

Gender issue has been a focal point of discussion in many regional, national and international forums. Issues bordering on inequality and inequity are often addressed as well as forms of discrimination against women, The 1999 Nigeria Constitution makes provision for equality of women, guarantee the rights and protects the interest of women considering the religious, traditional and cultural norms that govern the society.

The role of women as nation builder and in education cannot be underestimated. Education reinforces generally all human potential and it is a very critical factor in human life. Education is believed to be the most powerful and dynamic instrument for social, economic, political, scientific and technological development of nations. (Aghenta 2001). The World Bank experts observed that a country with more educated girls and women will not only heal her economy but will make it wealthier (UNESCO, 1985). Women have been seen to be astute managers of the home and local economies and so are capable of playing important management roles in Universities globally.

It is not possible to ignore women employment even though the employment pattern in Africa still favours men more than women. (Mensah, Biney and Ashang, 2009). Sutherland (2008) submitted that women face serious challenges in gaining access to their daily resources and bargaining power. These adversely affect the women, hence they are considered in the world as the more vulnerable to socio-economic depression. All these have culminated into huge gender gaps in literacy, education, health and access to power, despite all these women are still important and they constitute a visible force in terms of development and socio-economic changes of any society including the Universities systems.

Academic profession, like any other profession at the beginning of time, was a single sex profession. (Singh, 2002) cited by Egunjobi, (2009). But the World War II had actually opened the gateway to women emancipation in Europe and the USA before any University was introduced to Africa. Under the colonial imperialism, whatever operated in UK became law in Nigeria. Today in the Commonwealth Nations, the situation of women in academics has improved. The percentage of women employed as full time academic staff ranges from the highest of 50% in Jamaica to the least of 9.5% in Ghana, with a Commonwealth average of 24%. The smallest percentages were found in Ghana 9.5%, Nigeria 13.6%, Tanzania 11.0%, Zambia 10.9% and

Zimbabwe 9.8% all in Africa, for example, University of Ilorin, also showed female/male ration of 11.6% to 88.4% (Egunjobi, 2009).

Like in many professions, discrimination against women in academics in the past existed throughout the world. According to Egunjobi, (2009), women academic in Nigeria were denied maternity leave under the University Law and in some cases they were not allowed to get married or have children. Some women were even refused employment despite the fact that they were qualified because it was felt that the women would be a distractive influence in the laboratory working in an all male career. We take a look at the

Gender Pattern of Academic Management Staff in Ekiti State

University (Eksu0 Principal Officers	Male No. %		Female No. %	%	Total
Vice chancellor	01	100	Nil	0.0	01
Deputy chancellor	02	100	Nil	00	02
University Librarian	01	88.9	01	11.1	09
Dean faculties	08	88.9	01	11.1	09
Total	12	92.3	01	07.7	13

It is on this premise that the researcher is concerned with investigating the composition of academic women employed as lecturers in tertiary institutions including the south-south universities in Nigeria. The only industry in the Nation is education. If this is so, what then is the composition of male and female employed in the academic sector in the south-south universities? Is there discrimination against women employment in lectureship position in tertiary institutions in the region where education is highly valued?

Grandu (1998) gave National Female labour participation rate urban centres as 34.85% and 36.12% in rural areas. The World Bank (1995) quoted women average participation in manufacturing labour force as about 30% for both developing and industrial countries. Roscher and Cavanuagh (1992) discovered that only 33% of women with Ph.D degree in chemistry were employed by academic institution others were employed by industries. Bust (2006) stressed that women are greatly underrepresented in senior positions in education as in many other occupations. He stated that men dominated numerically in senior positions in all phases of education with the exception of nursery and infant schools while Duyilemi (2007) noted that the percentage of females in the academic senior is still very low and that in tertiary institutions most females are in junior cadre of administration. Ajayi, Goma & Johnson (1996) discovered that the percentage of women in tertiary institutions in Sub-Sahara Africa is only 25% of the total enrolment and this is much lower than the secondary level and the latter is much lower than the primary level.

Onokala and Onah (1998) studied the recruitment, promotion and appointment of women to academic and administration positions in Nigerian Universities and found out that although there has been an increase in the number of female academic staff recruited into Nigeria Universities, the female percentage of total academic staff is still very low.

The finding on the table as at the period of this research indicates that none of the university principal officer is a female. There is only one female among the nine Dean of faculties in the university. This shows that 7.7% of the academic management staff is female and 92.3% are males

MERITOCRACY AND UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION

The merit principle and equal opportunity underpin most university’s Appointment Policy. The merit principle means that appointment decisions are both based on a candidate’s knowledge, skills and abilities relevant to those genuinely required for the duties of the position, and free from discrimination or patronage, (Aghenta, 2001). Consistent with the merit principle, all appointment decisions will be based on an assessment of the candidates against established selection criteria and key responsibilities that define the position. The functionalist view of meritocracy have not really been followed based on the researcher’s finding. These criteria despised include:

Equal Opportunity

Equal opportunity means that the merit principle if applied fairly and consistently in the workplace. In particular, some aspects of a candidate’s background or circumstances are not relevant to their suitability for employment i.e. race, sex, marital status, age, disability, pregnancy, potential pregnancy, sexual preference or family circumstances and responsibilities. Assumptions made about a candidate’s suitability which are based on stereotyped views of these aspects may involve unfair discrimination and may be unlawful (Ghali, 2008).

Workplace Adjustments

Employers should choose the best person for a job and the decision should be based on a person’s ability to perform the inherent requirements of the job. Many people have disabilities that are not obvious and they are not obliged to disclose the disability at the interview, unless the disability will prevent them from crying out an

inherent requirement (e.g. a back injury and a requirement to lift heavy loads).

When a person with a disability is considered to be the best person for the job, and that person requires some adjustments to be made to enable her/him to carry out the inherent requirements of the job, the employer is required to be made such workplace adjustments as are “reasonable”. The principle of reasonable adjustment allows that wherever it is possible, necessary and reasonable to do so, the usual policy or practice will be varied to meet the needs of a person with a disability.

Reasonable adjustments which may be required include modification of work premises or equipment, changes to job design, work schedules or work practices, and provision of training or other assistance. The Disability Discrimination Act does not require workplace changes to be made if the changes will cause unjustifiable hardship to the organization i.e. major difficulties or unreasonable costs.

Selection Criteria

The selection criterion is to identify the skills, knowledge and qualifications training/experience required fulfilling the responsibilities of the position. Each person appointed to a vacant position must be assessed against the selection criteria for the position. (Medoff and Abraham, 1990).

Selection criteria will be either essential or desirable.

Essential criteria: typically, there will be between 5 and 7 essential criteria describing the skills, knowledge and competencies required in order for the job to be performed effectively. The Director Human Resources cannot approve a recommendation to appoint if the preferred applicant does not meet all the essential selection criteria; therefore, candidates who do not meet the essential criteria should not be short-listed.

Desirable criteria: These should include factors considered desirable but not necessarily essential for satisfactory performance in the job. The inclusion between 1 and 3 desirable criteria is typical but there may not be any desirable criteria specified. Desirable criteria can be useful for distinguishing between closely ranked candidates.

Contribution to Knowledge and Conclusion

From the findings of this research study, implication for proper appointment strategies in Nigerian universities is derived. There is an agreement that appointments have not always been based on merit in our university systems and the outcomes have never been favourable. Kumba (2010), therefore the major contribution of this research is in the following areas.

The major contribution is that there are several indices that influence appointment of principal offices in the university systems, and that these in the light of the conflict theory should be seen as constituents of conflict agents that are capable of competing for results and as such if not well managed can result in a break down in the university system.

REFERENCES

- Alderferm C., & Smith, K.K (1982). Studying intergroup relations embedded in organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 27, 35-65.
- Alderfer, C., & Thomas, D (1998). The significance of race and ethnicity for understanding organizational behavior. In C. Cooper & I. Robertson (EDs.), *international review of industrial and organizational psychology*. Chischester, England: Wiley.
- Allama, .I. (2006) Class, Ethnicity and Democracy in Nigeria: *The failure of the First Republic*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Amingo, .I. Jaja, SA (1998). Influence of Ethnicity on the Development of Education in African Nations. The Nigerian Experience. Hanging Gardena Publishers. Nig.
- Ancona, D. & Caldwell, D. (1992). Democracy and design: Predictors of new Product Team Performance. *Organization science*, 3, 321-341.
- Anyambela, S.C. (2004) Institution Management in Higher Education, A Study of leadership approaches to quality improvement in University Management. *An Unpublished Ph.D Thesis submitted to the Department of Education, University of Helsinki*.
- Ayayi, I.A and Ekandayo, H.T (2008). Funding impieties in University Education in Nigeria. Equity and Quality in Higher Education. *NAEAP Publications, Nigeria*.
- Azevedo, A, Prost, E.A., & Mullen, M.R (2002). Individualism and collectivism: Toward a strategy for testing measurement equivalence across culturally diverse groups. *Cross Cultural Management*, 9(1), 19-29.
- Babalola J.B; Jaiyeoba, A.O and Akediran, A (2007) University Autonomy and Financial Reforms in Nigeria, Historical background, Issues and Recommendations from Experience. *Research evidence from Sub-Sahara Africa, Hapos, Bola bay publishers*.

- Barnlund, D., Harland, C. (1963). Propinquity and prestige as determinants of communication networks. *Sociometry*, 26, 467-479.
- Bernardin, H.J (1984). An analysis of black-white differences in job performance, paper presented at the meeting of the academy of management, Boston.
- Blau, P.M (1977). *Inequality and heterogeneity*. New York: the free Press.
- Blench, R.M (2003). Pastoralists and National Borders in Nigeria. In: Nugent. P., and A. I. Asiwaju (eds). *African Boundaries: Barriers, conduits and opportunities* 111 -128. Edinburgh: Francis Printer for Centre of African Studies.
- Bond, M.A & Pyle, J. L. (1998). Diversity dilemmas at work. *Journal of management inquiry*, 7, 252-270.
- Brewer, M. (1979). Ingroup bias in the minimal intergroup situation: A cognitive – motivational analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 86, 307-324.