

CLASH OF CLASS IN INDUSTRIAL CONFLICT: THE CASE OF THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT

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Abstract

One of the instruments encouraged for industrial-democracy is that of strike. Strike, right from the period of the colonial master and through the emergence of trade unionism, has been used to respond to the petitions of employees. Though, sometimes, it does not depend on wage-determinant as some may argue. Sometimes it is used to prove professional superiority; especially where there are professional bodies coming together with class interest. This then is the case with the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital, where there has been continual strife over portfolio, thus between the medicals and the paramedicals. The paper then carried out a survey on the hospital, with data collection of twenty staff; 10 from the paramedicals and 10, from the medicals. Findings observed with Linker's scale system showed that staff go on strike sometimes to prove the place of class allegiance. The conclusion of the paper then is that workers should learn to isolate their personality from the issue at hand.

Keywords: industrial conflict; clash of class.

Introduction

The general practice of industrial relations requires such dimensions and measures as equity, effectiveness, participation, social justice, etc. The absence of these were the imbalances in early colonial days. Even down to industrial period, seasons were when workers' petitions were not granted, especially in an era where capitalism took turn. Thus, the absence of the state in industrial legislatures further gave rise to the sufferings of workers. Importance was placed more on productivity and gain rather than the rewards of the workers. Such times then were what enforced Web's and Marx's industrial approach to labour. Both advocated the place for industrial democracy as there can be no productivity without due harmony and fellowship in the system. Management and staff would need to continually reach consensus as to the matter of the subject with the issue of personality apart. In other words, the subject of concern would be called rather than the clash of class which is the case in most third world states. The consequence of this then is that in such industry where there are two or more trade unions, the state often uses one against the other. Scholars refer to this as divide-and-rule techniques whereupon now the state in her own interests poach one of the unions to militate against membership interest.

In other words, the issue of continual industrial strike at the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital is a thing of clash of class and that is not without the state or federal government being surreptitiously involved.

With a comparative survey on the strike rating of the hospital, there has been this incessant close-down and return approach to work. The paramedicals go on strike and upon their returning, the medical follow suit. Whereupon there is an attention of request to the other's petitions, let's say the medicals, the paramedicals too will want same, and whereby there is no attention, they embark on an indefinite strike.

The meaning of this then, does not stem from the subject matter. It is rather a thing of portfolio and professional superiority. The case of the chair of the CMD is one of such, whereupon the paramedicals agitate for the chair, claiming that such an office is a thing of appointment and has nothing to do with one's career. The medicals in return, will fire back, claiming that by reason of years of study and practice in the medical desk that the office of the CMD domicides with the medicals. The conclusion of this then is that of infantism, where upon complexity and personality struggle now meddle with labour.

In other words, the paper holds that industrial conflict requires the matter at hand be examined, rather than individuals imputing personality interest. This attitude to labour affects productivity and general economy; thus as we see in the case of most of the practitioners who during this time of strike, now channel patients to their private hospitals. There is no doubt, that most of them might have been pushing for the strike. The consequence of this is that labour is generally affected and the economy depletes. Okoli(20120)

It then follows that state intervention is required here, especially in the area where both unions are seeking to promote personality and class interest. That wouldn't help the medical image of the hospital in the nearest future.

Statement of Problem

Continual strike has a way of weakening a system. It also has a way of tarnishing the image of the organization. Such is the case with the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital whereupon the experience of staff has been that of continual strike.

The paper then posits that the continual strike in the hospital does not stem from petitions made, or matters at hand; not minding how pressing, the issue of strike between the two bodies is that of clash of class. This then should be the turn of papers if the menace will be curbed.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of the research was to find out

1. If the continual strike between the paramedicals and medicals is a thing of petition or clash of class.
2. If this has in anyway affected labour in the hospital.
3. To also find out the attitude of owners of private owned hospitals who work in the hospital towards and during the industrial strike.

Research Questions

The following research questions would then guide the paper

1. Does the continual strike between the medical and paramedical stem from economic petitions or clash of class?
2. Has the industrial conflict in any way affected labour in the health care?
3. What is the attitude of owners of private owned hospitals who work in the hospital towards and during the industrial strike?

Significance of Research

With the adoption of the paper, especially its emphasis on the clash of class, between the two bodies, it will help the hospital retain its image. The paper also will begin to help scholars explore the effect of two unions existing in an industry. As well, organizations will begin to check the divide and rule approach from the state.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES OF INDUSTRIAL CONFLICT

A number of reasons account for industrial conflicts in work place. One of such reasons is the opposition of interest between employers and staff. For besides the fact that man is naturally inclined to conflict, he has socio-economic necessities as well, which from time to time trigger him to contend. What then this implies is that employers are never to forget that such innate crises are in our power to check.

In Hyman (2004) industrial conflict ever before now has always stemmed from divergence of interest with various groups or individuals in a community. In other words, conflict can come in the form of socio-economic or the other wise. Early colonial day saw to the interest of workers and which further gave rise to the emergence of trade union membership. The concern of the movement was about workers' welfare. There was no such a thing as clash of class, there were only few trade unions and professionals. Besides, the imperial structure of national governance was the concern of everyone.

It then follows however that while the nation stabilized, concern for trade unionism began to shift. There was now to be such things as dimensions and measures, essentially as a way to check conflict in workplace. In Nigeria then cases of industrial conflict have continually abound. In 2007, there was the unrest with Nigerian Port Authority. Workers were in match protest against working conditions. As well, in 2011 the issue of fuel subsidy brought about the gorilla opposition against the federal government. Here was now the issue of the state and the people. Such instances of conflicts then have continually abound in recent times, Adefolaju (2007).

Dunlop (2009) then posits that industrial conflicts arise when there are social upheavals. At such a time there is always basically conflict of interest, but most of them economical. In other words, the above x-rays

conflicts arising from economic interest; and it appears this is most common with humans, especially in third world states. In advanced states, most conflicts are based on strong social issues. The black negro struggle is one of such. Also was the Lutheran movement against the church in early 14th century. Reformers were continually in opposition with the teachings of the church. In other words, earliest struggle was about the social system and not the economy. But both also, we do not forget, work in synergy.

Social upheavals have a way affecting economic realities. Of course, it requires strong social institutions build strong economy. Whereby the institutions are weak morally, as with the case in Nigeria, the consequence is the fall of the economy.

It then follows that while the advanced nations submit to strong social issues, the third world states submit to conflict on the basis of economic realities. The latter is in alignment with Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs; the first being the need to satisfy natural necessities, such as victual, shelter and clothing; workers in third world states basically fight to achieve these needs and whereby they are not forthcoming, conflict erupts.

However, that is not to say that all Nigerians crave for their needs. There are some now who are at the level of power struggle as the basis of their own conflicts. One of such is the issue of the health care system of the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital. The issue of the control of the chair of the Chief Medical Director (CMD) has always been one of the reasons for conflict in the industry. According to the information gathered from respondents, the chair of Chief Medical Director is a thing of experience and not only that of appointment as argued by those in the paramedicals. The truth here, the paper may conclude, is that the conflict in the industry; especially that of the CMD is a thing of clash of class (social status) and not a thing of the economic. In Ejim (2014), Agudosy (2012) and Muanya (2009) the paramedicals and the medicals are to work in synergy without professional superiority; for such we know, has a way of endangering the system.

In other words, clash of power is one of the causes of conflict among humans, Kaufman (2004). For one, there is no human sector where there are no conflicts; it is all about the analyst being able to rightly uncover the nature of such a conflict, Egeonu (2015). The paper then concludes that the nature of conflict with the health care system of the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital, especially between the paramedicals and the medicals is that of clash of class.

Theoretical Framework

Society is structurally governed; whereupon institutions, on their own, must, as a matter of power struggle, initiate enabling ideology to help alienate themselves. The paper then is based on Marx's super structure whereby it is believed that the noble class only engages in the production of ideologies, cultural expressions, philosophies and codes that expressly reflect what we think about ourselves. Whereupon there are two schools of this same self imposed unions; and one not willing to submit to the other, both then are likely to fall out with each other from time to time.

In other words, based on the paper, the issue of control of the CMD at the health care system is an issue of clash of image. The paramedicals not willing to playdown on their self image, and the medicals not willing to let go either. Both, by this same self imposed illusion feel indispensable in the industry. Also is the conflict theory of Deutsch's (1973) which posits that within the crude law of social relations that competition rather than cooperation, breeds strife between two opposing forces especially when the self-fulfilling prophecy is assumed. Whereupon then, the other party is on the vanguard to protect herself against the viles of the other.

Methodology of Research

The study employed Rensis Likert's Scaling system whereupon the views of the respondents were determined on the scale of $5 + 4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = 15/5 = 3.0$. Thus:

5 = Strongly Agreed

4 = Agreed

3 = Undecided

2 = Disagreed

1 = Strongly Disagreed

This means that any item in the questionnaire having the mean value of less than 3.0 is not accepted. It then follows that tables; simple percentages and mean scores were used to analyze data generated; as that would help justify the objectives of the paper.

Data Presentation and Interpretation of Findings

Research Question 1

Does the continual strife between the medicals and paramedicals stem from economic petitions or clash of class.

Table 1: The issue of CMD as a thing of clash of class

Item		SA	A	U	D	SD	Total	Remarks
		5	4	3	2	1	15	3
1	The issue of CMD-strife between the medicals and paramedics is a thing of clash of class	13 (65)	3 (12)	1 (3)	2 (4)	- (0)	84	4.4

The finding in the above indicates that the issue of the strife between the paramedics and the medicals is that of clash of class; as the response from both unions is strongly agreed; hence the mean value =4.4

Research Question 2

Has the industrial conflict in anyway affected labour in the health care system of the university?

Table 2: The state of the health care system as a result of the industrial conflict

Item		SA	A	U	D	SD	Total	Remarks
		5	4	3	2	1	15	3
2	The industrial conflict has in a way affected the image of the hospital before her external public and the economy	15 (75)	3 (12)	- (0)	2 (4)	- (0)	(9)	4.6

From the data analysis with the mean value of 4.6 shows that in a way, the labour strife between the paramedics and the medicals has affected the image of the hospital.

Research Question 3

What is the attitude of private owners of hospitals who work in the teaching hospital?

Table 3: Attitude of private owners of hospital during any industrial conflict

Item		SA	A	U	D	SD	Total	Remarks
		5	4	3	2	1	15	3
3	Doctors gladly send patients to their own clinic and remain non-challant over the issue	18 (90)	2 (8)	- (0)	- (0)	- (0)	(9.8)	4.5

Again the data with the mean value of 4.5 shows that the attitude of private owners of hospital who work in the teaching hospital also contributes to the industrial conflict. The paper concludes then that there should be an isolation of personality clash in resolution of administrative matters of the system. Rather salient matters should be looked into instead of portfolio and professional superiority

Recommendation then is that administrative of the system should be based on beaurocratic processes rather than career.

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