

Management of Industrial Relations and Tertiary Institutions Effectiveness in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between the management of industrial relations and the effectiveness of tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria. Correlational research design was adopted for the study. Two research questions and two research hypotheses were formulated to guide this study. The population of the study comprised 2,333 academic staff of two public universities in Cross River State. The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire tagged: Management of Industrial Relations and Tertiary Institutions Effectiveness (MIRTEQ). Validity of the instrument was done by experts in Management and Evaluation, as well as Educational Management. Reliability of the instrument was done using trial test using the Cronbach Alpha method, and the coefficient ranged from .71 to .86. The stratified sample of technique was used to sample 350 lecturers: Pearson product moment correlation coefficient were the statistical tools employed for data analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the analysis revealed that clear communication and collaborative decision-making significantly relate with tertiary institution effectiveness. The study recommend that tertiary institutions should adopt more inclusive and participatory decision-making process that include academic and non-academic staff as well as other key stakeholders, which will help to improve communication and operate a sense of ownership among employers.

Keywords: Management, Conflict, Resolution, Effectiveness, Communication.

Introduction

Management of industrial relations and tertiary institutions' effectiveness in Cross River State, Nigeria, is crucial for the state's economic growth and development. Effective management of industrial relations promotes harmonious relationships between employers and employees, which leads to increased productivity, improved product quality, and enhanced employee morale. One of the core benefits of effective industrial relations

management is the promotion of social dialogue and collaboration between employers and employees (Bassey et al., 2021; Ameh & Odey, 2022). This fosters a culture of mutual understanding and respect, which helps to prevent conflicts and disputes. When employees feel that their voices are heard and their concerns are addressed, they are more likely to be committed to their work and contribute to the organization's success.

Another significant benefit of effective industrial relations management is the improvement of working conditions. When employers and employees work together to address issues related to work environment, health and safety, employees are more likely to be motivated and satisfied with their jobs. According to Okon et al., (2020) and Akpan and Umoren (2021), this leads to increased productivity and reduced turnover rates. Effective management of industrial relations also leads to improved employee engagement and participation in decision-making processes. When employees are involved in decision-making, they feel more connected to the organization and are more likely to contribute to its success. This leads to increased innovation, creativity, and better decision-making (Adeyeye et al., 2017; Akintayo & Ajayi, 2021).

However, there are also challenges associated with managing industrial relations and tertiary institutions effectiveness in Cross River State. One of the significant challenges is the lack of social dialogue and collaboration between employers and employees. When there is a lack of trust and understanding between the two parties, conflicts and disputes are more likely to arise. Another challenge is the poor working conditions in many organizations (Akpan, 2015; Esu, 2017). Obeten, Nwosu, Ategwu & Abubakar (2024), opined that for employers to be articulate in their responsibilities, and in controlling conflict, management strategies such as avoidance and accommodation must be employed to enhance high level productivity of the institution. When employees are exposed to hazardous work environments, poor pay and inadequate benefits, they are more likely to be dissatisfied and demotivated. This leads to increased absenteeism, turnover rates, and reduced productivity.

The issue of poor funding of tertiary institutions is another challenge that affects the effectiveness of industrial relations in Cross River State. When tertiary institutions lack adequate funding, they are unable to provide quality education, which leads to a shortage of skilled workers in various sectors (Etim, 2018; Oyebode, 2015; Akpan, 2015). In addition, the lack of effective dispute resolution mechanisms is a significant challenge in managing industrial relations in Cross River State. When conflicts and disputes arise, and there are no effective mechanisms to resolve them, they can lead to prolonged strikes and disruptions in

the state's economy. Despite these challenges, there are prospects for improving industrial relations and tertiary institutions' effectiveness in Cross River State. One of the prospects is the establishment of a tripartite dialogue forum that brings together employers, employees, and the government to address issues related to industrial relations.

Another prospects is the development of a comprehensive industrial relations policy that addresses issues related to working conditions, employee engagement, and dispute resolution mechanisms. This policy can help to promote a culture of social dialogue and collaboration between employers and employees (Etim, 2018). The government can also play a critical role in promoting industrial relations and tertiary institutions' effectiveness in Cross River State. By providing adequate funding for tertiary institutions and promoting a culture of social dialogue and collaboration, the government can help to address the challenges associated with industrial relations and promote economic growth and development (Adeyeye et al., 2017; Akintayo & Ajayi, 2021). In another development Gire, Ategwu & Kenn-Aklah (2023), suggested that for universities to be effective, the management must ensure that entrepreneurial and innovative skills be established for a safe, schooling environment and creation of jobs. This will not grantee high level performance alone, but also act as a catalyst for innovation and economy development of the country.

Therefore, the management of industrial relations and tertiary institutions' effectiveness in Cross River State, Nigeria is critical for the state's economic growth and development. While there are challenges associated with managing industrial relations, there are also prospects for improving industrial relations and tertiary institutions' effectiveness (Okon et al., 2020; Akpan & Umoren, 2021). By promoting social dialogue and collaboration, addressing poor working conditions, and strengthening dispute resolution mechanisms. Cross River State can enhance the productivity and competitiveness of its industries, promote economic growth and improve the quality of life for its citizens.

The management of industrial relations and its impact on the effectiveness of tertiary institutions have been the subject of extensive scholarly inquiry, particularly in the context of developing countries like Nigeria. The system's theory of industrial relations, as proposed by Dunlop (1958), provides a useful theoretical lens for understanding the complex interactions between employers, employees, and the government in the tertiary education sector. Researchers have highlighted the importance of this tripartite relationship in shaping the industrial relations landscape and its implications for institutional performance (Anyim et al., 2011; Akanji et al., 2015). In the Nigerian context, studies have documented the challenges

facing the management of industrial relations in public universities, including political interference, inadequate funding and the lack of a competitive legal framework to govern labor-management relations (Adeyeye et al., 2017; Akintayo & Ajayi, 2021). These factors have been found to undermine the ability of institutions to attract and retain highly qualified faculty, maintain a harmonious work environment, and focus on core academic and research activities (Umoren & Akpan, 2019; Ekpo et al., 2022).

Empirical research conducted in Cross River State, Nigeria, has revealed a positive correlation between the effective management of industrial relations and the overall effectiveness of tertiary institutions, as measured by indicators such as student enrollment, research output, and community engagement (Okon, et al., 2020; Akpan & Umoren, 2021). These studies underscore the need for public universities in the state to develop comprehensive strategies and policies to address industrial relations challenges and foster a collaborative work enrolment.

However, the existing literature also suggests that the management of industrial relations in Cross River State's tertiary institutions is fraught with various challenges. This includes political interference, inadequate funding, and the lack of clear communication channels between institutional administrators and employee representatives (Adeyeye et al., 2017; Akintayo & Ajayi, 2021). Addressing these challenges and strengthening the capacity of tertiary institutions to effectively manage industrial relations is crucial for enhancing their overall effectiveness and contribution to the state's social and economic development. Ategwu, Amos and Uyimse (2022), examined teachers' information and communication technology usage, as part of their investigations. It was found out that clear communication as a means of improving institution effectiveness granted institutional productivity.

Winifred, Andeshie, Ategwu and Onabe (2024), conducted a study on accountability inclusivity in decision-making and teacher's job performance in Cross River State. In the study, it was recommended that when employers of institutions are inclusive when decisions are taken, it does not only propel their productivity but also enhance students' academic performance in the school system.

Statement of the problem

In Cross River State, Nigeria, the management of industrial relations and tertiary institutions has been a pressing concern for several years. The state has witnessed a surge in industrial disputes and conflicts between employers and employees, which have resulted in strikes, lockouts and other forms of labour unrest. These conflicts have had a negative impact

on the productivity and efficient of businesses, as well as the quality of education in tertiary institutions. The root causes of these conflicts can be traced back to various factors, including; poor communication, inadequate compensation, and unfavourable working conditions. Moreover, the lack of effective dispute resolution mechanisms, leading to prolonged strikes and disruptions in the state's economy.

The state's tertiary institutions have also faced challenges in terms of funding, infrastructure, and personnel management. These challenges have resulted in a decline in the quality of education, leading to a shortage of skilled manpower in various sectors. The decline in the quality of education have also led to brain drain, as many students choose to pursue their education outside the state or even the country. This has resulted in a loss of talent and a reduced pool of skilled workers, which has had a negative impact on the state's economy. Furthermore, the state's industrial relations have been characterized by a lack of social dialogue and collaboration between employers and employees. This had led to a lack of trust and understanding between the two parties, resulting in frequent disputes and conflicts.

Research questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study;

- (1) How does clear communication relate with tertiary institution effectiveness.
- (2) To what extent does collaborative decision-making relate with institutional effectiveness

Research hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated to guide this study

- (1) There is no significant relationship between clear communication and tertiary institution effectiveness.
- (2) Collaborative decision-making does not significantly relate with tertiary institution effectiveness.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was correlational research design. The design was considered appropriate because it shows the relationship between two variables in the study. The population of the study comprised 2,333 academic staffs of the public universities. The sample of the study was a total of 350 academic staffs from the universities. The instrumentation used for data collection was the questionnaire tagged: Management of industrial relationship and tertiary institution effectiveness (MIRTIEQ) validated by experts in Measurement and Evaluation and Educational Management respectively. In order to ensure

the reliability of the instrument (MIRTIEQ) a trial test using 5.0 academic staff with similar characteristics who were not part of the population. The Cronbach alpha method was used for the analysis ranging from coefficient of 0.71 to 0.86. the statistical tool employed for the analysis was Pearson product moment correlation coefficient.

Presentation of results

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between clear communication and tertiary institution effectiveness in universities in Cross River State.

Table 1: Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between clear communication and tertiary institution effectiveness (N= 343)

Variable	<u>X</u>	SD	r-value	Sig
Clear communication	19.9883	2.25427	0.222*	.000
Tertiary institution effectiveness	36.1312	3.11903		

*Significant at .05, critical $r=.062$, $df=341$.

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 1 revealed that to calculate r-value of 0.222 is significant at .05 level of significance with 341 degree of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between clear communication and tertiary institution effectiveness was rejected.

Hypothesis 2

Collaborative decision-making does not significantly relate with tertiary institution effectiveness.

Table 2: Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between collaborative decision-making and tertiary institution effectiveness (N= 343)

Variable	<u>X</u>	SD	r-value	Sig
Collaborative decision making	22.0000	1.59678	0.222*	.000
Tertiary institution effectiveness	36.1312	3.11903		

*Significant at .05, critical $r=.062$, $df=341$.

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 2 revealed that the calculated r-value of 0.220 is significant at a level of significant with 341 degree of freedom. With the result, the null hypothesis which stated that Collaborative decision-making does not significantly relate with tertiary institution effectiveness was rejected. This result implied that collaborative decision-making has a significant relationship with tertiary institution effectiveness.

Discussion of findings

The result of the first hypothesis revealed that there is a significant relationship between clear communication and tertiary institution effectiveness. The finding of this hypothesis is in line with the view of Ategwu, Amos & Uyimse (2022), who carried out a study on teachers information and communication usage and their job performance. The results of their finding state that teacher's information and communication usage in terms of clear communication and accessibility significantly relate with their job performance. Okon & Winifred (2024), supported that clear communication significantly predict academic staffs research skills in tertiary institutions.

The result of the second hypothesis revealed that Collaborative decision-making does not significantly relate with tertiary institution effectiveness. The finding of this hypothesis is in tandem with Winifred, Andeshie, Ategwu & Onabe (2024), who conducted a study on accountability, inclusivity in decision-making and teachers job performance in Cross River State. Their study revealed that of teachers participate in decision-making, the level of their productivity will enhance student academic performance.

Conclusion

Based on the results and finding of the study, the following conclusions were made;

- (1) Clear communication significantly relate with tertiary institution effectiveness
- (2) Collaborative decision making significantly relate with tertiary institution effectiveness.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Tertiary institutions should prioritize the development of specialized skills and competencies among administrators, human resource professionals and union leaders to effectively manage industrial relations. This includes training in areas such as communication, conflict resolution, negotiation, and grievance handling.
2. Tertiary institutions should adopt more inclusive and participatory decision-making processes that involve academic and non-academic staff, as well as other key

stakeholders. This will help to build trust, improve communication and promote a sense of ownership among employees, ultimately enhancing their commitment to the institution's success.

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