Influence of Autocratic Leadership Style on the Management of Industrial Conflict in Oyo State Teaching Service of Nigeria

AJAYI ADEOLA
ajayifunso4christ@gmail.com

Abstract
This paper examined the influence of autocratic leadership style on the management of industrial conflict in Oyo State Teaching Service of Nigeria. It reviewed existing literature on causes of industrial conflict and the effects on public secondary schools in the state. It also assessed the role of leadership styles on the management of conflict in Oyo State Teaching Service of Nigeria. This study was necessitated by the need to ensure improved leadership on the management of industrial conflict in Oyo State Teaching Service of Nigeria.

Both primary and secondary sources of data were utilized for the study. The primary sources of data were collected through personal interview while secondary sources were from books, journals, newspapers, internet sources and public lectures on the field of industrial conflict and leadership. The study revealed evidences of autocratic leadership style of the former state governor which made most industrial conflicts irreconcilable during his administration.

The empirical findings from personal interview discovered that major causes of industrial conflict were breach of agreement by state government, lack of proper funding, poor condition of service, unlawful retirement and illegal retrenchment of teachers, threat and blackmail of teachers among others.

It also discovered the major effects of industrial conflicts in Oyo State public secondary schools such as disruption of academic calendar and programmes, low enrolment in public secondary schools, low morale of teachers and students, street hawking, juvenile delinquencies, suspicion and withdrawal from school activities and failure of senior secondary school certificate examinations in 2010 and 2011 by final year students in public secondary schools of Oyo State.

The study concluded that autocratic leadership style on the management of industrial conflict in Oyo State Teaching Service should be addressed in order to restore the past glory of public secondary schools in Oyo State in particular and the country in general.

KEYWORDS: Arbitration, Autocratic, Industrial Conflict, Leadership Styles, Management

Introduction
Conflict is inherent in all societies irrespective of location, composition and mode of organization. Conflict arises when people congregate, share spaces, facilities and resources. It is a phenomenon that cannot be underrated in every human organization. This is because it can make or mar the survival growth and progress of an
organization. So influence of autocratic leadership style on the management of conflict should be given serious attention, if the goals and objectives of an organization must be achieved (Adegoroye, 2004)

Conflict results from human interaction in the context of incompatible ends and where one’s ability to satisfy needs or ends depends on the choices decisions and behaviour of others. It is therefore possible to argue that conflict is endemic to human relationships and societies. It is the result of interaction among people, an unavoidable concomitant of choices and decisions and an expression of the basic fact of human interdependent (Adejuwon & Okewale, 2009).

Furthermore, functional leadership can be seen as an aid to incremental improvement in organizational design and an agent for evolution functioning in the decision making process.

It is said to have started as soon as the employer – employee relationship emerges in the course of economic development. This is because the exploitation that is implicit in the capitalism mode of production. A reaction against the industrial system and capitalism in general followed and led to the development of modern industrial relation and labour movement in Nigeria (Adegoroye, ibid).

As early as 1896 attempt were made to form a trade union in Lagos. By 1912, the Nigeria Civil Service Union in (NCSW) was formed. By 1931 trade union were in existence, among them are: the always Workers Association and the Nigerian Union Teachers (NUT). The poor condition of service led to the first general strike in Nigeria on July 22 1945. Between 1955 to 1983, a total of one thousand three hundred and eighteen (1318) trade disputes were hundred and eighteen (1318) trade service while between 1990 and 1998 a total of one thousand four hundred and fifty (1450) trade disputes were recorded and nine hundred and fifty eight (958) work stoppages were recorded (Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity, 2003).

The colonial government set up Trade Union Ordinance of 1938 to regulate work activities in the country and workmen’s compensation ordinance was passed in 1941 (Adegoroye, ibid).

He further stated Trade Dispute Act of 1976, among others made an elaborate provision for the management of trade disputes. For instance, the act created legal institution like the Industrial Arbitration Panel (IAP) and the National Industrial Court (NIC) to manage trade dispute. It also vested the responsibilities of managing industrial relations on the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Productivity.

However, the true leadership has eluded Oyo State due to the use of autocratic style on the management of industrial conflict by former governor of the state. This has resulted in disruption of academic calendar and programmes, low enrolment in public secondary schools, low morale of teachers and students, street hawking, juvenile delinquencies, suspicion and withdrawal from school activities and failure of senior secondary school certificate examinations in 2010 and 2011 by final year students in
public secondary schools of Oyo State among others. This paper is thus a timely one as it is poised to examine the influence of autocratic leadership on the management of Industrial Conflict in Oyo State Teaching Service of Nigeria.

**Statement of the Problem**

Industrial Conflicts which generate into violence in most cases have become regular features between teachers and state government. From 1990 to date the education sector has witnessed industrial conflict more than any other sectors of Nigeria economy. This situation in Oyo State was particularly bad until recent times when some palliative measures were taken by the new administration. From December 2009 to May 2010 teachers in the state embarked on strike to press-their demand for payment eighteen thousand naira minimum wage in salary approved for workers by the federal government.

In 2010, public schools were closed up to five months while 2011; the number of days that school were opened for work was less that the number of days that they were closed.

There is no doubt that these series of strike actions have had adverse effects on the educational sector in the state and colossal economic losses, in term of man – day losses.

It is against these background problems that this study set out to examine the influence of autocratic leadership style on the management of industrial conflict in Oyo State Teaching Service of Nigeria.

**Objective of the study**

The objectives of this study are to
i. identify the causes of industrial conflict between public secondary school teachers and State government.
ii. examine the effects of industrial conflict on the educational sector of the state.
iii. assess the role of leadership styles on the management of conflict in state teaching service; and
iv. proffer solutions to ameliorate incidence of autocratic leadership on the management of industrial conflicts in Oyo State Teaching Service of Nigeria.

**Significance of the study**

This study is expected to broaden our knowledge on the importance of harmonious industrial relation in the teaching service with particular reference to the public secondary schools in the state. This is because the secondary school is the foundation that other forms of higher education are built on.

Therefore a healthy relationship is very crucial between the state government and her teachers so that government educational programmes will be well implemented. The study is also expected to assist politicians and career officers in formulating solutions to the problem of autocratic leadership style on the management of industrial conflict in Oyo State and stimulate further research in the field of industrial conflicts management and leadership in Nigeria with particular reference to the teaching profession and the public service in general.

**Literature Review**
Industrial Relations and Industrial Conflict

Industrial relations grew out of the industrial circumstances of the British Industrial Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries when feudalism as a mode of production gave way to capitalism. The industrialists were known as the capitalists or “bourgeoisie”. The Industrial revolution transformed the western world from a largely agricultural world to an industrial society. As a result of this, many people left farms and agricultural works for industrial occupation offered in “burgeoning” factories.

Flander (1965) defined industrial relations as the study of the institutions of job rules and regulations arguing that it is essentially concerned with both procedural and substantive rules. These rules establish rights and obligations, which together defined status. Wolfgang (1999) subscribed to the view by defining industrial relations as the set of rules and institutions, which determine pay and other condition for employment. This tends of rules are identified as; the substantive rules that regulate pay and employment. While the key institutions in industrial relation are identified as companies, employers association, trade union and the state.

Ejifor (1993) regarded industrial relations as a multi-dimensioned discipline which concerns itself centrally with human relations in workplace that the study of industrial relation recognizes conflict interpreted in various forms as an intrinsic phenomenon in employment relations.

Therefore, industrial relations is concerned with forecasting, containing and resolving industrial crisis or conflicts within an establishment institutional framework.

Edward (1995) referred that industrial relation is the relationship between employer and employee in paid employment; the ways, in which employees are rewarded, motivated, trained and discipline together with the influence on these process of the major institutions involved, namely; management, trade union and the state.

Industrial relationship is therefore the joint responsibility of employer, employee and these trade unions representing them. But the primary responsibility for promoting the relationship rests on the management (Firito, 2007).

Industrial Conflict

Kareem (2010) referred to industrial conflict as situation when powers and goals of actors within an organization clash. It encompasses all actions and inaction that could lead to industrial harmony and peace in the workplace.

Bankole (2001) posited that industrial conflict is a disagreement between or among actors of industrial relation system (employer, employee on the state) mostly ever issues of divergent interest. He also identified five types of conflict. They are: intra-personal conflict, inter-personal conflict and intra group conflict. Others are intergroup conflict and inter organizational conflict.

However, Arnold et al (1986) identified two factors as having effect on sources of conflict. They: information factor and
perceptual factor. Perceptual factor could exert its influence when various part of view have been developed on the basis of different past or in a situation where there is a limited knowledge on the situation at hand. Information factor arises when there is different perception on any issue, because of this, each of the party would be very selective on the type of information it is going to collect on the interpretation given to it.

According to (Otubo, 1992), he identified the following as the sources of industrial conflict: style of management, nature of physical environment, orientation or social consciousness of workers, efficacy or otherwise of the promotion system, cumbersome of grievance and dispute procedure task interdependence, shared resources perception and values, personal style and life background and demand for increase in wages and better working condition.

However, workers dissatisfaction with their employment situation can exhibit itself in a wide variety of ways. These have commonly been divided into broad categories; organized or unorganized conflict. Parker (1974) regarded organized conflict as forms of conflict which represent attempts on the work part of workers to change the conditions of work deemed unsatisfactory and its encompassed such action as strikes overtime laws, picketing etc.

He also referred to unorganized conflict as encompasses industrial based behaviour which are less strategically oriented to the achievement of change such as absenteeism lateness sabotage and other forms of indiscipline behaviour.

The incidence of industrial conflict in form of strike of withdrawal from work shows clearly that labour relation in Nigeria needs to be improved upon. Consequently, persistent industrial conflict will lead to collapse of the educational sector and other potential negative outcomes.

**Causes of Industrial Conflicts**

Mial et al. (1960) highlighted the causes of conflicts into five major types which are:

(a) Differences in people’s background
(b) Differences in values, ideals, objectives and religion
(c) Differences in age
(d) Differences in interest; and
(e) Differences growing out of power structure.

Edward (ibid) contended that the causes of industrial conflict include failure of collective bargaining, refusal of union recognition, and unlawful dismissal.

Daamchi (1986) enumerated the causes of industrial dispute as:

(1) Dissatisfaction with working conditions
(2) Delay in payment of wages
(3) Unlawful dismissal of employers
(4) Unemployment; and
(5) Union over protection or over indulgence of workers.

He also added that some of the claims of workers, for instance bonus which leads to conflicts or disputes if not met are extravagant and outrageous.

According to Okotoni and Okotoni (2003), causes of conflict are inadequate welfare
package for workers, forceful and compulsory retirement of workers and leadership and administrative incompetency. Adegoroye (ibid) stated that the major causes of industrial include: poor condition of service, breach of agreement by state government, unlawful retirement and retrenchment of teaches and poor remuneration.

Fajana (1995) claimed that the causes of industrial conflict include: public policies of government and failure of collective bargaining. This he stated further that when the interest of the employers represented by management and the employees represented by industrial unions has been diametrically opposed. This has historically been the cause of industrial conflict in an organisation.

Other causes identified by Fajana include conflicting goals, unpredicted policies, conflicting resources, conflicting styles and conflicting roles.

The causes of industrial conflict can be broadly classified into two categories: economic categories and non-economic categories. The economic categories include issue relating to compensation like wages, bonus, allowance and condition for work, working hours, leave and holiday without pay, unjust layoff and retrenchments. The non-economic causes include victimization of workers, ill treatment, by staff members, sympathetic strikes, political factors, indiscipline among others (Benjamin and Hideaki, 2004).

Effects of Industrial Conflict

According to Wokoma (2011), he emphasised that the manifest effects of industrial crisis are:
(1) Aggression
(2) High costs of products; and
(3) Unemployment

A study conducted by Okotoni and Okotoni (ibid) on effect of industrial conflict in secondary Schools in Osun State showed that disruption in academic calendar and programmes, hostility, suspicion and withdrawal from schools are some of the effects of industrial conflict. They also added that the consequence of industrial conflict has also contributed to a decline in the quality of education, as some students resorted to examination malpractice to make up for the loss time.

Igbaji (2009) reported that the consequences of industrial conflicts for an organisation are loss in several important account, low productivity and decline in quality of education.

Egwu (1996) maintained that the damaging effects of industrial crisis include low productivity, loss of academic sessions, irredeemable distortions in university calendar and examination malpractice to make up for the loss time.

Edinyang and Ubi (2013) also suggested that the strikes action by secondary school teachers have resulted to low enrolment in public schools, suspension of teachers, decrease in academic by performance of students, street hawking, juvenile delinquencies, low morale of teachers and students and fall in standard of education.
Role of Leadership Styles in Industrial Conflict Management

Jago (1980) defined leadership as process of influencing other people such that they can strive willingly and enthusiastically towards the achievement of goals of an organization. Northouse (2007) also defined leadership as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.

Rowe (2007) referred to leadership as a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent.

Clark (2005) regarded leadership as a process which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and direct the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent.

Follet (2001) pointed out three main ways of dealing with conflict: domination, compromise and integration. To her, other ways of handling conflict in organizations included avoidance and suppression.

Thomas (2000) considered the intention of a party (cooperatives i.e. attempting to satisfy the other party’s concerns and assertiveness i.e., attempting to satisfy one own concerns) to be of importance when classifying the modes of handling conflict.

According to Prutt and Carnevale (2000), dual – concern mode (concern for self and concern for others) are four leadership styles of handling conflict. They are: yielding, problem solving, inaction and contending.

Mohr and Spekman (2004) advocated for six techniques: (1) joints problem solving (2) smoothing (3) persuasion, (4) domination (5) withdrawal and (6) arbitration.

Magugula (2007) articulated three styles of handling peaceful crisis resolution among warring parties: mediation, arbitration and reconciliation. He further stated that each of the approaches could be used by universities to resolve conflict among the between aggrieved parties.

Fajana (ibid) advocated social dialogue as a way of facilitating harmonious labour relations.

He argued that conflict is an inevitable, rational, functional and normal situation in organisations. However he stressed the need for industrial conflicts to be resolved through compromise and agreement and collective bargaining or social dialogue.

Ojo (2006) mentioned various ways of crisis resolution as problem–solving, prevention and avoidance’ expansion of opportunities and the behaviour of people involved in conflict through conscious appeal ,behaviour modification better communication; reduction of mistrust through dialogue and improved human relation; changing the structure of the organization and compromise and agreement style.

Denga (1986) identified three types of leadership styles: laisser-faire style, autocratic style and democratic style.

According to Bolman and Deal (1991), laisser-faire leader allows people under him to do whatever they wish, autocratic leader uses ‘‘iron hand’’ to hammer into shape anybody who flouts his dictatorial order and democratic leader instills feelings of confidence, help attitude, admiration and commitment in the followers (Clark, ibid)
A study conducted by Ajayi (2015) compared the leadership styles of incumbent governor of Oyo State (Senator Abiola Ajumobi) and former governor of Oyo State (Chief Bayo Alao-Akala). He argued that Ajumobi used democratic style of leadership in his first term in office while Akala employed autocratic style of leadership. This he concluded contributed to Governor Ajumobi’s election for a second term of office as governor of Oyo State.

**Research Methodology**

**Sources of Data**

Data were collected from primary and secondary sources. Interviews were conducted for Chairman and Secretary of Oyo State Teaching Service Commission (TESCOM), the government agency responsible for the management of secondary schools was interviewed. So also the chairman and secretary of Oyo State Wing of Nigerian Union of Teachers were interviewed. Secondary sources of data sources were utilized from relevant textbooks, internet sources, journals, conference proceedings of the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) etc.

**Research Design**

The research design was designed to:

i. examine the causes and effect of industrial conflict in Oyo State Teaching Service and

ii. assess the role of leadership style in the management of conflict in Oyo State Teaching

Service of Nigeria

**Discussion of Major Research Findings**

**Discussion of the findings from Oral Interview**

**Causes of Industrial Conflicts in Oyo Teaching Service of Nigeria**

From the responses of the respondents during interview, it was discovered that there are many causes of industrial conflict in the state. They are: poor salary, unlawful retirement and unlawful retrenchment of teachers in the state, breach of agreement by state government, poor condition of service, victimization of teachers, lack of proper funding of education in the state among others.

**Effects of Industrial Conflict on the Secondary School System of Oyo State**

The interview finding also revealed that industrial conflict has a devastating effect on the educational sector in Oyo State. For instance the chairman and secretary of National Union of Teachers in Oyo State affirmed that over 69% of final year students in secondary schools failed Senior School Certificate Examination in 2010 and 2011. Similarly, they also attested to the fact that low enrolment in public secondary schools, low morale of teachers and students, street hawking and juvenile delinquencies are the effects of industrial conflict in the state public secondary schools.

**Role of Leader in Managing Industrial Conflict in Oyo State Teaching Service of Nigeria**

Respondents argued that that the Oyo State Government’s autocratic leadership style escalated crisis in the state reaching service. The general consensus in this regard anchored on the leadership in the state. This is due to incompetence of these personae or wilful insensitivity to the yearnings and aspiration of Oyo State teachers.
It was discovered that the Oyo State government made use of court order in order to undermine the strike embarked upon by secondary school teachers in the state on 20 April 22, 2002. The teachers protested non-implementation of six thousand five hundred naira (N6500.00) minimum wage that had been agreed since 2001. Rather than implementing the new minimum wage the state government went to the high courts where they felt their relief could be granted speedily. The Oyo State teachers refused to abide by the court order which they considered undemocratic and anti-union. The secretary of the NUT also stressed that arbitration was employed in 2008 by Oyo State government. He recalled that Oyo State teachers went on strike over non-implementation of the then nine-thousand four hundred naira (9400) minimum wage, the Oyo State governor who had failed twice to obtain a restraining order from Oyo State High Court, Ibadan rushed to Industrial Arbitration Panel to obtain an injunction to abort the then ongoing workers’ strike. The Oyo State government was however disappointed when the IAP declined to give order to declare the strike illegal.

They also agreed that the court order and Industrial Arbitration panel were not effective due to non-implementation of the judgement by the state government. In addition, they also maintained that the use of threat, intimidation and victimization, unlawful retrenchment of teachers and compulsory retirement of union leaders are some of autocratic leadership styles of the state government. Cases were cited when union leaders were sacked during the era of Governor Alao Akala without inviting them to negotiation table. Some of the respondents even alleged that this former governor used the industrial conflict periods to attack adversaries in the guise of curbing crisis.

Finally, they argued that state governments always see industrial by teachers as an affront on its persona and authority. They argued further that this perception had informed the government autocratic leadership style of trying to win at all cost but has remained the albatross to quick and genuine trade dispute in Nigeria.

**Summary**

The study established the fact state government employed autocratic leadership style on the management of industrial conflict with particular reference to Oyo State Teaching Service.

It was also established that there are many causes of industrial conflict in Oyo State Teaching Service such as: poor salary, poor condition of service, breach of agreement by state government, lack of proper funding, threat and victimization, indiscriminate retirement of teachers among others.

The effects of industrial conflict on the public secondary schools in Oyo State were also identified. They are: low enrolment in public secondary schools, juvenile delinquencies, decline in the quality of education, disruption in academic calendar and programmes, street hawking, suspicion and withdrawal from school activities poor academic performance of final year student in senior secondary school examination between 2010 and 2011 respectively.
In addition to the foregoing is that the autocratic leadership of state government was not effective due to non-implementation of court order and arbitration panel judgment.

Conclusion
From the findings of this study, it was discovered that industrial conflict in the Oyo state teaching service is not properly managed due to the autocratic leadership style of former state governor. So also the leadership mechanisms employed such as: court order from high court and industrial arbitration panel judgements were not effective. This explains why strike is used as the last tool to bargain whenever there is any industrial conflict in the teaching service.

Therefore, the influence of autocratic leadership style of industrial conflict in the Oyo State Teaching Service can no longer be ignored without having a devastating effect on the educational sector of Oyo State in particular and Nigeria as a whole.

The study concluded that autocratic leadership style of state government should be addressed in order to restore the past glory of secondary in Oyo State in particular and Nigeria in general.

Recommendations
In the light of the findings from this study and the conclusion so far made, the following recommendations are considered pertinent:

1. Government should set up a standing negotiating team that would be meeting regularly with the Nigeria Union of Teachers. This will serve as a form of collecting bargaining.
2. Job security in the teaching service should be guaranteed likewise threat and blackmail of teachers should not be used by state government to resolve industrial conflict.
3. Ministry of Labour, Employment and Productivity should be made to live up to its billings by strengthening the ministry to be able to tackle and resolve any industrial conflicts in any part of the country.
4. All industrial conflict cases should be the exclusive jurisdiction Industrial Arbitration Panel (IAP) and National Industrial Court (NIC). They should also ensure that state high courts should not entertain any case that involved industrial conflict.
5. Government and teachers should endeavour to embrace collective, bargaining consult with the union representative and negotiate between themselves in order to resolve industrial conflicts.
6. Government should revamp the State Labour Advisory Council (NLAC) in order to facilitate enhanced government effort at resolving industrial conflict.
7. Government must make available a multi-party mechanisms for dialogue whenever issues arise that cannot be resolved bi-partite.
8. The provision of “No work No Pay” as provided for in the Trade Dispute Act should be not be followed, whenever rules regulatory strike action are followed before teachers
embarked on a strike action as a form of grievance expression.

9. Government should be more democratic in handling teachers’ affairs in particular and other labour unions in general.

10. Finally, all unions in the subsector and state government should exhibit the spirit of give and take during negotiations.

References
[8] In Western Europe”, London School of Economics
a. Inc.Int /Industrial-Relation html