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Towards A Harmonious Labour and Industrial Relations in Nigeria's School System: Challenges and Prospects

Andrew E. OJIEMHENKELE, Ph.D; Joseph A. EMOSOGA;
Emmanuel OGBEIDE; Osamede OGBEBOR, Ph.D;
Blessing O. IWUAGWU
Faculty of Education, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Nigeria
Correspondence to: **Dr. Andrew E. Ojiemhenkele**,

ABSTRACT: Management and employees relationship in the school system is very fundamental to the wellbeing of educational institutions. It provides a structured framework for effective and harmonious coexistence between workers and school management. Harmonious relationship between workers school management minimises conflicts that often times arise in work organisations. This study therefore explores the essence of harmonious relationship between workers and school managements, with the aim of finding possible solutions to minimise incessant industrial conflicts, which often times arise between workers' unions and school managements. The study was anchored on the Industrial Relations System Model, which provides a structured framework for understanding how labour relations operate within an organisation such as the school system. The study explored the causes and effects of labour and industrial disputes in schools and the various machineries for resolving disputes between workers' and school managements. The study argued that lack of knowledge of labour laws, poor or delayed implementation of collective agreements, politicisation of industrial relations, disunity among workers' unions**,** and conflict entrepreneurship are some of the challenges to labour and industrial relations in Nigeria's school system. In view of the foregoing, promotion of industrial harmony culture, participatory management, and capacity building in labour relations among others were however suggested as ways of ensuring a harmonious labour and industrial relations in Nigeria's school system.

KEYWORDS: *Labour relations, Industrial conflicts, Industrial harmony, School system, Challenges, Prospects.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The school system, as the foundational institution for human capital development and societal transformation, depends significantly on the quality of relationships that exist between its workforce and the governing authorities that manage it. Harmonious labour and industrial relations within the school environment refer to a state of productive, cooperative, and mutually respectful engagement between school worker and school managements (Ngololo, 2024). This harmonious relationship between workers and management in the school system is sin qua non to efficiency and effectiveness of the education sector (Ozabor & Ogie, 2023).

Labour and industrial relations refer to the relationship between employers of labour and workers, especially regarding working conditions, rights, responsibilities, and managing of conflicts. It is the relationship that exists among employers, employees and their respective organisations (Bamidele, 2023). Industrial relations involves the processes in making and enforcing rules that govern employment relationships (Orga & Monanu, 2020), while labour relations according to Fajana (2000) is a complex system of interactions among employers, employees, and government institutions that regulate employment conditions, work place rights, and conflict resolutions.

The field of labour and industrial relations deals with the interactions between employers and employees as well as the mechanisms for conflicts resolution, which are fundamental to organisational stability and productivity in Nigeria's education system. Labour and industrial relations are the backbone of industrial harmony (Abiodun, 2015) which is often promoted by a relationship that encourages mutual inclusiveness (Onwuka, 2004). Industrial harmony in school results when the parties in industrial relationship (workers and management) seek to resolve their differences with minimum level of crises and without resorting to total breakdown or closures of the school (Obiekwe & Obibhunun, 2019). Orga & Monanu (2020) opined that, industrial harmony is very essential for the educational system to be productive for to basic reasons; first, it enhances labour productivity and secondly, it creates a peaceful working environment.

Harmonious industrial relations do not imply absence of disagreements, rather it provides for mutual interaction between workers and their employers. The kind of mutuality created by the harmonious relationship between employers and employees often permits the school system to achieve its goals through a medium agreeable by the parties in the industrial relations to resolve industrial conflicts when they arise (Gberevbie et al., 2024). To Okolie & Ojomo (2020), harmonious labour and industrial relations connote a situation of healthy and cooperative working relationship among all actors in the industrial social context in spite of their ideological and aspirational differences. For the school system to function properly therefore, these different ideologies and aspirations need to be sufficiently compatible, in order to allow for a common set of ideas which would make for the boundary of actors' role possible, while also limiting their conflict areas of interest (Okolie & Agbefe, 2021).

Unfortunately, labour and industrial relations in Nigeria's school system lack these harmonious values over the years (World Bank, 2022). Ordinarily, cooperation among workers and management leads to a stable educational system, which fundamentally lays the foundation for effectiveness and efficiency in the school system (Girigiri & Badom, 2021). Industrial conflicts in Nigeria's school system have become a disturbing phenomenon, while the pattern of relationship between workers and school managements has been more of conflicts in nature. The relationship between labour and management in the Nigeria education sector has historically been characterised by tension, conflicts, and recurring disruptions of school academic calendars (Okolie & Ojomo, 2020). The continued reoccurrence of industrial conflicts in the Nigeria's school system have significantly undermined the quality and continuity of schooling the country (Academic Staff Union of Universities, 2022).

From the protracted strikes orchestrated by workers' unions in the education sector at all levels, to the systemic underfunding of education and the erosion of welfare conditions for teaching and non-teaching staff, the Nigeria's school system has remained a theatre of industrial conflicts and unrests that adversely had disrupted effective teaching and learning in the school system. These recurring do not only cause administrative inconveniences; rather, they reflect deep-seated structural, historical, and policy failures that demand urgent, rigorous, and sustained scholarly attention.

Despite this troubled historical analogy, there are emergent signals of change and cautious optimism. Recent policy reforms including the renegotiated ASUU-FGN agreement, increased budgetary allocations to education, the introduction of the University Transparency and Accountability Solution (UTAS) as an alternative payment platform and the growing discourse around reforming the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN), suggest a gradual recognition among policymakers of the imperative for a more stable and productive labour environment in Nigeria's school system. Also, civil society advocacy, international development frameworks, such as; the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), and the Nigerian Economic Sustainability Plan have collectively elevated the discourse around dignified teacher's welfare as a precondition for educational transformation and development.

This paper therefore, examines the importance of harmonious labour and industrial relations in Nigeria's school System with serious emphasis at minimising frequent and incessant industrial conflicts which often arise between workers' unions and school managements. It also interrogated the causes and effects of industrial disputes, industrial disputes resolution machineries and the challenges to labour and industrial relations in Nigeria's school system. Finally, future directions and prospects for a harmonious labour and industrial relations in Nigeria's schools were proposed, so as to be able to unravel the devastating consequences of industrial disharmony, as well as the effects of the challenges confronting harmonious labour and industrial relations on school's effectiveness and efficiency.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The foundation of this study was laid on the Industrial Relations System Model that was developed by John Dunlop in 1958. The theory provides a structured framework for understanding how labour relations operate within an organisation by its emphasis on achieving industrial harmony through clear and enforceable agreements that are built on strong institutions, balancing of power, and commitment to educational goals. Dunlop sees industrial relations as a system that is made up of several components that operate together to create stability and order in the workplace. This type of system has set of rules governing the behaviour of all the participants (employees, employers and their representatives, and government agencies).

This theory is relevant to this endeavour because, it is the foundational framework for understanding labour and industrial relation in schools, by highlighting that harmonious relations depend on effective interactions between key actors in the school system, a supportive work environment, shared values, and strict adherence to labour and industrial agreements.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employed the Expository and Exploratory Research Methods to gather relevant information from both direct research reports and secondary sources on labour and industrial relations in the Nigeria school system, importance of a harmonious labour and industrial relations, causes of labour and industrial conflicts, effects of labour and industrial disharmony, machineries for resolving industrial disputes, the challenges facing labour and relations, and the prospects for achieving a harmonious labour and industrial relations. .

Several international academic databases and academic social networks, such as Google Scholar, Research Gate, Education Resource Information Centre, and Academia.edu were visited by the researchers, to retrieve and process research reports for this study within a period of five weeks. The data gathered from these sources were systematically put together, organised, and appropriately synchronised to ensure that all the ideas expressed were properly and clearly presented in order to make the final report valid and reliable.

Conceptual Clarifications

The following concepts, which were used in the course of this review work, were thoroughly explained for the purpose of clarity, so that the purpose and intent for their use would be properly understood.

Labour Relations: This refers to the interactions, negotiations, and day-to-day relationships between employees and employers within an organisation, particularly as they relate to terms and conditions of employment. It encompasses processes such as collective bargaining, grievance handling, communication, and conflict resolution between workers (often represented by unions) and management. Armstrong & Taylor (2014) opined that, the focus of labour relations is to manage the employment relationship in a way that promotes cooperation, trust, and mutual understanding between both parties. Also, Fajana (2000) conceptualised labour relations as the practical aspect of managing workforce interactions, especially in unionised environments, with emphasis on maintaining industrial peace and improving workers' welfare.

Industrial Relations: This is a broader concept that encompasses the entire system of relationships among employers, employees and their representatives (workers unions), and the government within a regulatory and socio-economic framework. It goes beyond workplace interactions to include the legal, institutional, and policy dimensions that govern employment relationships. Industrial relations consist of a system involving actors (workers, employers, and government), contexts (economic, technological, and political), and a body of rules that regulate their interactions. This systems perspective highlights the complexity and interdependence of stakeholders in managing workplace relations. Fashoyin (2004) sees industrial relations as the structured interaction between labour and management within a framework of rules, institutions, and processes designed to regulate employment conditions and resolve disputes. In contemporary organisations like the school system, industrial relations aim to achieve industrial harmony, enhance productivity, and ensure fairness in the workplace. Industrial relations in Nigeria's education system are shaped by government policies, institutional governance structures, and union activities. The effectiveness of these relations determines the level of stability, efficiency, and quality of education delivery.

Nigeria's Education System: This refers to the structured framework of formal learning institutions, policies, and processes designed to provide education at various levels: basic, secondary, and tertiary. It operates under the guidelines of the National Policy on Education and is regulated by bodies such as the Federal Ministry of Education and other relevant agencies. The education system is intended to promote national development by equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for personal and societal advancement (FRN, 2013). Sele & Wanjiku (2024) described the Nigerian education system as a vital instrument for socio-economic transformation, as it equips individuals with relevant knowledge and skills necessary for productivity, innovation, and national development, while also promoting social cohesion and integration.

Industrial Conflicts: This refers to any form of disagreement or dispute between employees and employers arising from differences in interests, expectations, or perceptions regarding workplace issues. Industrial conflicts may manifest in various forms; like strikes, lockouts, protests, and work stoppages. Gberevbie et al. (2024) see industrial conflict is an inevitable feature of organisational life, particularly where there are competing interests between labour and management; like demands for better wages, improved working conditions, and organisational control. Also, Fajana (2000) describes industrial conflict as a breakdown in the employment relationship, which often results from dissatisfaction with working conditions, poor communication, or failure to honour agreements. Industrial conflicts have become a recurring phenomenon in Nigeria's education sector, which may be driven by issues; like inadequate funding, delayed salaries, poor infrastructure, and lack of policy implementation.

The Importance of Harmonious Labour and Industrial Relations in the School System

The following are identified as the importance of having a harmonious labour and industrial relations in the Nigeria school.

a). **Continuity and Stability of Academic Programmes:** Harmonious labour relations eliminate or significantly reduce disruptions of academic calendars that may result through strikes, ensuring that teaching and learning proceeds without interruption (Bamidele, 2023). A stable industrial relations environment therefore guarantees regularity in curriculum delivery, timely completion of academic sessions, and consistent assessment and certification processes.

b). **Enhancement of Staff Morale, Commitment and Productivity**: A peaceful and supportive work environment boosts staff members' morale, motivation, and commitment to their duties (Trikora-Putra &Arief, 2024). Researches in organisational behaviour consistently revealed that employees' satisfaction is directly linked with productivity (Robbins & Judge, 2017; Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). In the school context, a motivated teacher is more likely to invest in lesson preparation, adopt innovative pedagogical strategies, maintain regular attendance, and engage constructively with students. Poor industrial relations, by contrast, may breed cynicism, absenteeism, and disengagement, all of which are deeply corrosive to educational quality.

c). **Improved Quality of Education**: Harmonious labour and industrial relations create an enabling environment for effective teaching and learning, professional development, academic freedom, and pedagogical innovation. The quality of education delivered in any school system is inseparably tied to the conditions under which teachers work. When disputes between workers' unions and management are resolved amicably, through constructive negotiation rather than confrontation, energy that would otherwise be spent on industrial agitation is redirected toward curriculum development, research, mentorship, and institutional improvement (Obiekwe, & Obibhunun, 2019).

d). **Attraction and Retention of Qualified Personnel:** Harmonious labour and industrial relations, underpinned by competitive salaries, job security, transparent promotion criteria, and dignified working conditions, make the teaching profession more attractive to talented individuals. A school system that is characterised by persistent industrial conflicts, poor remuneration, and adversarial management culture, struggles to attract and retain competent educators. The phenomenon of brain drain whereby qualified Nigerian academics seek employment in more stable and rewarding environments abroad is partly driven by the hostile labour climate in Nigeria (Abolade, 2022).

e). **Promotion of Social Justice and Workers' Rights**: Harmonious labour relations affirm the rights of workers to fair wages, safe working conditions, freedom of association, and due process. When these rights are respected and institutionalised through collective bargaining agreements and grievance resolution mechanisms, it signals a broader commitment to social justice within the educational enterprise (Singalodra et al., 2025).

f). **Facilitation of Effective Communication and Collaboration**: A harmonious work environment encourages open communication and collaborative decision-making between school management and staff. This ensures that policies and decisions are inclusive and they equally reflect the interests of all stakeholders. In schools, effective communication and collaboration promote transparency, trust, and smooth implementation of educational policies.

g). **Reduction and Effective Management of Conflict**: While conflict is inevitable in organisations, harmonious labour and industrial relations help to minimise its occurrence and manage it effectively when it arises. Mechanisms such as collective bargaining and grievance procedures provide structured avenues for resolving disputes. Abdullah, et al (2025) note that effective industrial relations systems and conflicts management mechanisms are essential for regulating workplace interactions and preventing disputes from escalating, thereby promoting a stable and productive work environment.

h). **Enhancement of Institutional Reputation and Public Confidence:** Schools that maintain peaceful and cooperative labour relations are more likely to enjoy public trust and confidence. Stability in the school system reassures parents, students, and stakeholders of the institution's reliability. On the other hand, frequent industrial disputes can damage the image of schools and reduce public confidence. Gberevbie, et al (2024) observed that persistent industrial conflicts contribute to a loss of trust in educational institutions.

i). **Promotion of National Development:** Harmonious labour and industrial relations ensure that schools function effectively and consistently achieve their objectives in the production of skilled and competent manpower for national development.. When the education system operates without disruptions, it contributes positively to human capital development and socio-economic growth. Conversely, instability caused by industrial conflicts may undermine this role and could have broader negative implications for national progress.

Causes of Labour and Industrial Disputes in Schools

The following are the causes of labour and industrial disputes in the Nigeria's school system.

a). Non-implementation of Collective Agreements Previously Reached: One of the main causes of industrial disputes in Nigeria is the failure of employers, especially government agencies, to implement agreements reached with labour unions in the country. (Fashoyin 2005) notes that collective bargaining loses its value when

agreements are not honoured. In the education sector, agreements on salaries, allowances, and working conditions are often delayed or ignored, leading to strikes.

b). Poor Working Conditions: Unfavourable working conditions such as overcrowded classrooms, dilapidated structures, inadequate learning facilities, excessive workload and poor remunerations are major sources of conflict in Nigeria's school system. Armstrong (2006) highlights that poor work conditions reduces employees' morale and productivity. In Nigeria, many teachers work in stressful environments without adequate support, which often leads to agitation and industrial unrest.

c). Poor Remuneration: Low salaries and irregular payment of wages are common in Nigeria's education sector, which of course is one of the most common causes of industrial conflict. When workers feel underpaid or experience delay in salary payments, they are very likely to engage in strikes or protests. Fajana (2000) also emphasized that fair compensation is essential for maintaining industrial peace.

d). Lack of Effective Communication: Poor communication between management and staff often leads to misunderstandings and disputes. Cole (2002) note that communication is a vital tool in managing industrial relations. When employees are not informed or involved in decision-making, they may feel ignored or disrespected, which can escalate into conflict.

e). Weak Labour Administration and Knowledge Gap: A lack of proper knowledge of labour laws and industrial relations practices contribute to disputes. According to Fajana (2000), both employers and employees often lack adequate understanding of their rights and responsibilities. This ignorance can lead to unnecessary conflicts and poor handling of disputes.

f). Power Imbalance between Employers and Employees: There is often an imbalance of power between the government (employer) and workers. This of course, can create tension in industrial systems. In Nigeria, the government often dominates negotiations, leaving workers with limited bargaining power, which can result in frustration and industrial action.

g). **Rise in Expectations**: Increase in the expectation of workers can trigger industrial conflict even in situations where labour unions and management are maintaining very peaceful and harmonious relationship. Conflict becomes inevitable in a school where workers are apprehensive of a sudden rise in the cost of goods and services in the market resulting from a rise in inflation. When this happens, workers take home pay becomes insufficient for them to meet their daily survival needs. This of course may trigger an agitation for an increment in workers' pay and if the situation is not properly managed, it could lead to industrial conflict.

h). Relationship Error between Workers and Management: This is another very important area in the school system that needs serious and proper attention. Where the relationship between management and union leaders is strained, it may result to situations where union leaders may suffer undue victimisation, harassment and intimidation. Relationship between union and management may be that, the workers' union may suffer non-recognition from management. There could equally be undue interference or involvement of management in union's internal affairs, or in some situations, there may be lack of co-operation by management with union by refusing to release union leaders to attend union meetings. All these or any of these errors in relationship between management and union could make industrial conflict inevitable in a school.

i). Lack of Understanding and Accommodation: Where both parties stick to their guns and nobody is ready to shift ground, industrial conflict certainly becomes an option. This is often the case when management and workers holds on to their different position on a matter at stake.

j). Labour Error: Often times, workers may capitalise on mistakes or errors made by management to raise unnecessary alarm on issues that ordinarily would not have caused any tension in the school. On the other hand, management may equally capitalise on any minor mistake made by workers to take some drastic decisions. In either way however, such decisions can trigger very serious industrial conflict that could have been avoided.

Effects of Labour and Industrial Disharmony on the School System

Labour and industrial disharmony in the school system has far-reaching consequences that affect not only institutions but also students, staff, and national development. These effects can be examined through the following points.

a). Disruption of Academic Calendar: This is one of the most immediate effects of industrial disharmony in school. Strikes, protests, and work stoppages often lead to the closure of schools. This may result to prolonged academic programmes, delayed graduations, and uncertainty for students. Gberevbie, et al. (2024) observed that recurrent industrial unrests have significantly destabilised academic calendars in Nigerian institutions, making planning and effective learning difficult.

b). Decline in the Quality of Education: Industrial disharmony negatively affects the quality of teaching and learning. This could manifest in reduced commitment, absenteeism, and ineffective lesson delivery. In addition, compressed academic schedules after strikes often results in rushed teaching and incomplete curriculum coverage.

c). Reduced Staff Productivity and Morale: Persistent conflicts between management and staff create a hostile work environment that diminishes motivation and productivity. Employees who feel neglected or unfairly treated are less likely to be committed to their duties. According to Armstrong & Taylor (2014), poor employees' relations lead to dissatisfaction, low morale, and decreased performance. In schools, this manifests in reduced instructional quality, lack of innovation, and minimal engagement with students.

d). Brain Drain and Loss of Skilled Personnel: Industrial disharmony often drives experienced and highly qualified educators to seek better opportunities elsewhere; either in private institutions or abroad. This phenomenon, commonly referred to as brain drain, weakens the capacity of the education system to deliver quality education. Gberevbie, et al. (2024) highlight that, continuous industrial conflicts contribute to the migration of skilled academic staff, thereby reducing institutional effectiveness and global competitiveness.

e). Negative Impact on Students' Academic Performance and Behaviour: Students are among the most affected by industrial disharmony. Frequent disruptions in learning lead to loss of academic focus, poor performance, and in some cases, increased involvement in social vices. Extended periods of idleness during strikes may expose students to activities that hinder their academic and moral development.

f). Infrastructural Decay and Institutional Inefficiency: Industrial conflicts often divert attention from developmental goals to crisis management, leading to neglect of infrastructural development and maintenance. Resources that could be used to improve facilities are instead expended on managing disputes. Prolonged disharmony contributes to infrastructural decay and inefficiency in educational institutions, thereby weakening their operational capacity (Gberevbie et al., 2024).

g). Economic and National Development Implications: The effects of industrial disharmony extend beyond the education sector to the broader economy. Delays in graduation reduce the timely entry of skilled labour into the workforce, while poor quality education affects productivity at the national level. Education is a key driver of development, and any disruption in its functionality would have long-term socio-economic consequences. Thus, persistent industrial unrest undermines national growth and development efforts.

h). Weakening of Research and Innovation Capacity: In tertiary institutions, industrial disharmony significantly affects research activities. Frequent strikes disrupt ongoing research projects, delay publications, and reduce opportunities for academic collaboration. This weakens the capacity of institutions to contribute to knowledge production and innovation. As noted by Gberevbie, et al. (2024), research output in Nigerian universities has declined due to persistent conflicts, thereby affecting their global ranking and relevance.

Industrial Disputes Resolution Machinery in Nigeria Schools

a). Internal (Institutional) Mechanisms: Internal mechanisms include grievance procedures, staff meetings, and negotiation within the institution. Armstrong (2006) suggests that, schools should first attempt to resolve disputes internally before involving external bodies. These mechanisms are important for addressing issues early and preventing escalation.

b). Mediation and Conciliation: In Nigeria, the Ministry of Labour plays a major role in this process. Mediation and conciliation involve a neutral third party helping to resolve disputes. These methods are essential for preventing disputes between school workers and school management from escalating into strike actions.

c). Industrial Arbitration Panel (IAP): The Industrial Arbitration Panel settles disputes that cannot be resolved through mediation. Arbitration provides a formal and structured approach to dispute resolution.

d). National Industrial Court of Nigeria (NICN): The National Industrial Court of Nigeria is a specialised court that handles cases related to employment, labour, trade unions, and industrial relations in Nigeria. The court has jurisdiction over matters like; disputes between employers and employees, wrongful termination or dismissal from employment, unfair labour practices, salaries, wages, and other employment benefits, trade union disputes, etc. The NICN was specially established by the federal government of Nigeria as a specialised judicial forum for resolving employment and industrial relations disputes. However, in situations where any of the parties is not satisfied with the decision of the court, an appeal can be made to the Court of Appeal. A matter that is before the NICN can go as far as to the Supreme Court of Nigeria where the parties are not satisfied.

e). Government Intervention: The government often intervenes in disputes, especially in the education sector. Fashoyin (2005) argues that government intervention is necessary in public sector disputes due to its dual role as employer and regulator.

Challenges to Labour and Industrial Relations in Nigeria's School System

There are myriad challenges confronting effective labour and industrial relations in Nigeria's school system. Some of them are discussed below.

a). Inadequate Funding of the Education Sector: Poor or inadequate funding has been a major problem affecting the education sector in Nigeria, especially in the area of the payment of teachers' salaries and allowances, inadequate facilities and poor working conditions in schools. This has often times triggers industrial disputes between school workers and government because of low remuneration and even delay in the payment of salaries and other allowances.

b). Poor or Delayed Implementation of Collective Agreements: The implementation of most agreements hitherto reached by workers' union and government are sometimes delayed and even poorly implemented**.** This creates distrust on the part of workers and their unions, which of course may lead to repeated industrial disputes because, when previous agreements are not fully implemented or even unimplemented, the tendency is that workers may regroup to intensify their agitations and eventually take strike vote.

c). Conflict Entrepreneurship: This is a situation in which individuals or groups intentionally create, escalate, or prolong conflicts in order to gain personal, political, economic, or social benefits. Most industrial conflicts between government and labour unions in schools are deliberately manipulated by some labour leaders who are conflict entrepreneurs that create tension and thereafter, mobilise their workers to go into labour dispute with government for their strategic advantage. Osah, et al. (2017) in Azelama & Onimawo (2021) note that often times, after a group of workers is mobilised to go on strike, negotiations are made as part of collective bargaining, thereafter the strike is suspended even when the major problems have not been addressed or resolved. Some of the times, this could happen because of personal interest of labour leaders, ethnicity, or undue political influence (Azelama & Onimawo, 2021).

d). High Level of Unemployment in the Country: In a country like Nigeria, where unemployment is at a very alarming level, the few individuals that get employed are regarded as extremely very lucky and fortunate. So, when they agitate and ask for increment in their wages, the unemployed masses suffering from acute unemployment see them as people who are inconsiderate. Even government itself has weaponised this high unemployment rate as an instrument to intimidate workers and their unions by sometimes threatening to lay off workers and employ fresh and new ones that are roaming the streets.

e). Dichotomous Relationship between Academic and Non-academic Staff: Workers in schools are sharply divided into academic and non-academic staff, and so their operations are different and they belong to different labour unions. There is really no synergy between the two workers' bodies operating within the same educational institution and so they cannot articulate the same interest because of their divergent views and interests. While teachers' union may be in industry dispute with government, the non-academic staff union will go on with their legitimate official duties. On the other hand, when the non-academic staffs are on strike, teachers go to work. This of course weakens workers in the same educational institution their bargaining strength, because when one union is pulling up, the other is pulling down.

f). Lack of Knowledge of Labour Laws: Most school administrators and those in top management positions in the education sector may not be conversant with the rules, regulations, and laws governing employers and employees' relationship. This could lead to violations of employees' rights that could invariably trigger industrial disputes.

g). Poor or Weak Leadership within Labour Union: The effectiveness of labour union may be hampered by internal squabble, wrangling, and rivalry among the workers' union leaders resulting from corruption, envy, jealousy, and or lack of transparency. This could lead to division in the union in which members may end up joining different factions within the union.

Prospects for a Harmonious Labour and Industrial Relations in Schools

After careful study, the following were identified as ways of strengthening labour and industrial harmony in the Nigeria's school system.

a. Strengthening Collective Bargaining: Strengthening of collective bargaining processes and ensuring the faithful implementation of agreements will significantly build trust between employers and employees in the school system.

b. Improved Funding of Education: Adequate funding of the education sector remains critical to addressing many of the structural causes of labour disputes, such as poor infrastructure, inadequate teaching facilities, and low staff morale.

c. Effective Communication: Open and transparent communication channels promotes mutual understanding and reduces the likelihood of conflict in schools. The adoption of participatory communication systems such as the inverted triangular model will bring management closer to staff, enhance trust, and facilitate smooth decision-making processes.

d. Capacity Building in Labour Relations: Training of administrators, union leaders, and staff in general within labour and industrial relations is essential for reducing disputes and improving workplace relationships. Developing skills, abilities, knowledge, systems, and resources will enable individuals, organisations, and government institutions harmonise properly to promote an environment, conducive for learning.

e. Prompt Dispute Resolution (PDR): Timely and effective resolution of disputes will help to prevent its escalation into strikes or prolonged conflicts. Quick response mechanisms will ensure that grievances are addressed before they disrupt academic activities. PDR ensures quick, fair, and efficient way of dispute settlement as it arises without unnecessary delay or prolonged litigation. The essence of PDR is to avoid escalation of conflicts, maintain relationships between both parties and save cost.

f. Participatory Management: Involving employees in decision-making processes will go a long way in fostering a sense of belonging and commitment, thereby reducing the incidence of conflict or outburst. When workers feel valued and carried along, they are more likely to cooperate with management in implementing policies that bring about productivity.

g. Labour Laws Enforcement: Strict enforcement of labour laws and regulations will ensure fairness, equality, and justice in the workplace for effective harmonisation. Compliance with legal structures governing employment relations is essential for preventing exploitation and maintaining industrial peace within educational institutions.

h. Promoting of Industrial Harmony Culture: A culture of mutual respect, dialogue, and collaboration which is fundamental to achieving lasting industrial harmony in the school system need to be promoted. Also, a culture of inclusiveness and continuous dialogue will help to strengthen relationships among school stakeholders.

IV. CONCLUSION

Harmonious labour and industrial relations are very essential for the effectiveness and efficiency of the school system in Nigeria. While challenges such as inadequate funding of the education sector, ineffective communication, and non-implementation of agreements between labour unions and government may persist, effective disputes resolution mechanisms and proper management strategies can promote industrial peace.

Achieving harmonious labour and industrial relations in Nigeria's education system requires a comprehensive and sustained approach. This involves not only strengthening institutional frameworks for conflicts resolution, but also addressing underlying structural issues such as inadequate funding, poor working conditions, and governance inefficiencies. It also necessitates fostering a culture of transparency, accountability, and mutual respect among stakeholders.

Collaborative efforts among government, institutional management, and workers' unions are essential for creating a stable and productive work environment in schools, without which, the education system may continue to experience disruptions that undermine its role in national development.

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