



## Personnel Labour union Characteristics and Effectiveness of School Management in South-West Secondary Schools, Nigeria

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**Abstract.** Personnel in organisations such as the school, belong to labour union where they strive to assert their rights. The study investigated the various characteristics exhibited by school teachers in their labour union (Nigeria Union of Teachers) and their influence on the effectiveness of the school management in South West secondary schools, Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted 10, 211 teachers from which the sample size of 384 teachers was selected based on the Taro Yamane formula. A researcher constructed questionnaire “Personnel Union Characteristics and School Managers Effectiveness Questionnaire” (PUCSMEQ) was used for the study. The research questions were answered in mean and standard deviation, using 2.5 as the acceptable benchmark mean while the hypotheses were tested with chi –square at 0.5 Level of Significant. The findings indicated that the teachers engaged in various union activities such as rallies, display of grievances resulting in strike actions. Also, it was found that the teachers’ union activities, mostly strikes, significantly influenced school management effectiveness of prompt realisation of learning goals. Recommendations such as having the policy of teachers prioritising their primary duties over union activities and management democratic behaviour on union matters were proffered.

**Keywords:** Personnel, Labour union, characteristics, effectiveness, school management, teachers, principals

### 1. Introduction

In all organisations, to which the school belong, there exist the personnel and the management in tackling administrative duties and services. In order to fully enjoy a smooth working relations, personnel tend to

belong and adhere to labour union principles and tenets (Agbaru, 2012). The participation of personnel especially teachers in labour union such as the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) in secondary schools, necessitate the need for effective management of schools (Manju, 2014). The management skill of school managers bears more on teachers’ labour union characteristics. Personnel labour union characteristics such as those of the teachers are the various behavioural traits the teachers exhibit in the course of belonging to the labour union. Personnel Labour characteristics according to Tongo & Osabuohien (2007) are the total range of behaviour and attitudes that employees in organisation express that are often of disapproval with the management but of immense benefit to the personnel. As the teachers engage in their NUT activities, most of the union characteristics exhibited by them in schools revolve round attendance of union meetings, charting courses for their progress, union road shows, and enacting policies for their welfare. The teachers being fully aware of the benefits of active participation in union activities, strive at all cost to be regular and vibrant.

In the South West secondary schools, the school management and the teachers appeared to be in regular altercation as a result of their labour union involvement. These union characteristics seemed to have influence on the effective management of schools (Agwobike, 2004). School principals’ management techniques are the various approaches, styles employed by the principal in discharging their duties in relation to the personnel assigned to them. It entails the modus of relating with the staff for full realisation of the goals and objectives of school performance (Amadi, 2013). Therefore, for effective management the principal as the school manager should strive to combine good interpersonal relationship skills with various elements of management to create conducive

environment towards high academic attainment. Thus, effective school management as it relates to school principals, involve adequate academic planning, coordination of staff responsibilities, regular supervision, strict accountability, better communication skills and cordial community relations in order to achieve the set education goals. School managers such as the principals and other relevant school management personnel make it as their priority to create the enabling environment for staff to feel the impact of their administrative techniques. This they do through strategic delegation of duties and prompt supervision to ensure accountability.

Teachers in the South West schools, view their enrolling in the NUT as being compulsory and not negotiable. Every teacher upon appointment automatically joins the union. In Lagos State the teachers are highly involved in the labour union activities. They have their biannual meetings, lecture series, road map shows, seminars and various fora to enhance their teaching career. The union also ensure that staff are up dated through monthly bulletin. This has necessitated the teachers' frequent unions' engagement as they belong to various sub committees to obtain the full benefits of being NUT member. In a similar trend, the teachers in Ogun State are known for their active labour union engagement such that the principals as the school managers tend not to be too comfortable with the teachers. The principals see the teachers numerous NUT engagements as impediment to their teaching duties (Peretomode, 2007). That teachers are immensely absorbed in their union obligations cannot be over emphasised as it relates to the schools in Ogun State. Teachers' passion for union activities stemmed from the facts of not being left behind when account of active participation in union activities are taken annually. The NUT various activities such as annual conference, staff development seminars, welfare cooperative meetings often compete with the class activities of the teachers. The never-ending union activities of teachers have made most school principals in the state to re-strategise their managerial skills in order for teaching/ learning not to be affected. According to Kamoh, Ughili & Abada, (2013) the union activities of personnel might not augur well for effective management, hence there is need for teachers' use of prerogative of duties to meet their teaching obligation. The authors in their report viewed active participation of teachers in union activities as a distraction to their daily classroom teaching. Most teachers who are union executive seemed to prioritise the union engagement over their primary duties of teaching.

As part of personnel labour union characteristics, the teachers in the south west secondary schools are often at variance with the school management principles in order to obtain the maximum benefit from their employers. It is a non-disputable fact that management will always maximise interest to the detriment of employees in labour relations (Wigwe, 2014). Labour union the world over such as the NUT aimed at addressing their workers needs for better welfare. In addressing their employees' needs as the union stipulates, most union leaders would more often than not try to be technical with their own side of the bargain. Labour union leaders such as the NUT in the South-West schools feign ignorant of their own service to the teachers due to selfish gains (Ukachukwu, Iheriohama & Nwokorie, 2017). They seemed to neglect their managerial functions to the teachers despite frequent reminder in order to maximise their interest. The teachers who are the principal beneficiaries of the school managers' neglect express their concern through various segments. The school teachers often express their grievances as a major characteristic of school personnel in the South West schools, through the NUT. As a fall out, the NUT executives more often than not register the teachers' agitations with the school management in areas relating to their work interest.

Majority of teachers grievances to the school management which in turn are channeled to the government are based on adequate welfare packages for teachers (Alabi, 2002). Personnel in the South West Schools have been forced to express their grievances in various forms. In 2017, Lagos State teachers voiced out their reservations on the sharing formula of the eko project. This they did through series of complaint letters, boycotts, meetings and project sharing formula initiatives. This form of grievances no doubt hinge on the school management effectiveness as most NUT executives were agitated at work. In Oyo State the teachers express their objections over the non-payment of 2018 leave grant, delay in promotion of staff and in payment of salary. The teachers and the executives in their characteristic manner engaged the school management and the government through series of meetings, deadline letters, rallies and protests match to drive home their demands. Also, most NUT executives in Ife metropolis, Osun State expressed their grievances on the government refusal to implement the new minimum wage in 2019. This they did through Walk outs, meetings and deadline that almost paralyse the school activities in the state. It is of utmost importance that employees register grievances according to Foong & Loke (2011), these grievances are often inimical to management panache.

More often than not employee grievances characterised with complaint letters, deadlines, protests snowballed into full blown strike when not nibbed in the bud. This scenario of labour union characteristic according to Ukachukwu, Iheriohama & Nwokorie (2017) is played out between NUT and the government through the school management in the South west Schools. The strikes in the school lead to shut down of teaching and learning activities as the schools are totally closed. In 2009, the schools in the South west joined the national NUT strike as they protest the non –implementation of the harmonised Teachers Salary Scale. This strike had wanton influence on the school management effectiveness. The principals had to shut down schools with incomplete syllabus. Their interpersonal relations with the teachers drastically changed to a sterner measure while goals were left unachieved. There might be handicapped on accounting purposes as budget had to be revisited to accommodate the time loss. The managerial effectiveness of school principals seemed to have been influenced in the wake of different strikes characterising the fight for minimum wage increase in the South West schools. Oyo and Osun state at intervals were involved in more than 10 weeks strike respectively. As learning activities were paralysed in the state, the school managers were overwhelmed with pressure from most stake holders. They were forced to play down on essential management duties in order to win the angry teachers trust at negotiation meetings. The principals had to adopt the transactional style of carrot and steak to win the teachers back to the classroom. Also at resumption, the sterner techniques were used to enable the teachers gain the time loss for the students. Thus, the labour union characteristics of the teachers through NUT call for a critical look on the principal managerial effectiveness in the South West secondary schools.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

The certainty of personnel labour union and management relation, called for the display of the employee characteristics as experienced with the NUT in the South West secondary schools. The teachers display characteristics such as NUT engagements in meetings attendance, conferences; registering grievances in deadline issuance, protests, lock out and the full-blown strike if not curtailed. These labour union characteristics do not occur in a vacuum, the school management such as the principals bear the brunt as they strive for effectiveness (Amadi, 2013).

The school principals in attempt to be effective in management must be proactive in planning, coordinating, supervising and cultivate better

interpersonal relation techniques to realise the academic goals. These management effectiveness skills aimed at achieving school learning goals by the principals are somewhat influenced by the teachers' labour union characteristics.

The cordial interpersonal relation between the school principals with the teachers appeared to be strained as the teachers engage in union activities through travelling for conferences, seminar to the detriment of their assigned teaching duties. The principals would have no objection than to use stern measures of warning, query letters that might hinder high productivity (Okorie, 2002). On the other hand, the grievances registered by teachers as they press their demands often result in delay in discharging duties; thus, making principal planned schedules to be scuttled by not meeting up the planned duties time line. The rallies and lock down seemed to influence the management effectiveness as the students, parents and community see the principals as being inept in conflicts management.

There appeared to be major management effectiveness melee when the teachers' grievances result in strike action (Francis & Oluwatoyin, 2019). When the schools are shut down the management knack of the school principals are influenced, there cannot be smooth managerial efficiency under tense chaos atmosphere with the teachers. The school principals have to carve out time to join government in negotiation through meetings with the teachers. As the strike is called off after much pressure on the principals' tact, the school time table had to be changed while the goals of teaching are seldom achieved. The course content might not be completely taught as the principal resort to being autocratic due to stress factors in coercing the teachers to perform their duties. This strain in the teachers' /principals' relation often led to adverse behaviour bothering on trust and submission in school organisation. Thus, the teachers' labour union characteristic through the NUT might necessitate that the school principals' managerial effectiveness be appraised. It is against this background that the study sought to investigate the school teachers' labour union characteristics and the school principals' management effectiveness in South West secondary schools Nigeria.

### 1.2 Objectives

The study sought to:

- ascertain the frequency of teachers' engagement in union activities
- investigate the method used by teachers in expressing their grievances

### 1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- To what extent do teachers involve in union engagements in the schools?
- How do teachers express their grievances to the school management?

### 1.4 Hypotheses

- Teachers' engagement in union activities will not significantly influence management effectiveness in the schools.
- Strike action of teachers will not significantly influence management effectiveness in the schools

## 2. Methodology

The study utilised the descriptive survey design. The population consist all the secondary schools in the South West region of Nigeria. There are six states in the region, the stratified sampling technique was used to select three states for the study. There are 322, 123 and 119 number of secondary schools in the selected states respectively with 10,112 teachers. The Taro Yamane formula was used to get the sample size of 384 teachers for the study. A researcher constructed questionnaire "Personnel Union Characteristics and School Managers Effectiveness Questionnaire" (PUCSMEQ) was used for the study. The research questions were answered in mean and standard deviation, using 2.5 as the acceptable benchmark mean. The hypotheses were tested using chi –square at 0.5 Level of Significant.

## 3. Analysis of Data

**Research Question 1:** To what extent do teachers involve in union engagements in the schools?

**Table 1:** Teachers Involvement in Union Engagement

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD
1	Teachers attend union meetings regularly	3.67	1.31
2	Teachers only attend annual union meetings	2.37	1.02
3	Teachers religiously participate in seminars organised by the union	3.56	1.14
4	Teachers in different union subcommittee are more active	4.12	1.21
5	Executive union members often travel for union activities	4.23	0.91
6	Activities of union are more tasking to the executive	2.98	0.96
7	Teachers seldom attend union activities	1.97	1.01
8	Union engagements do not overwhelm teachers	2.24	0.91
	Grand Mean	3.14	1.06

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of the participants' responses on teachers' involvement in union engagement. The responses indicate that the teachers attend meetings regularly, participate in seminars, are active in subcommittees and travel for union activities. The grand mean (3.14) is greater than the benchmark mean (mean=2.5) therefore it can be inferred that the teachers are to a greater extent deeply involved in union engagements.

**Research Question 2:** How do teachers express their grievances to the school management?

**Table 2:** Expression of Teachers' Grievances

S/N	Statement	Mean	S D
1	Letter of complaint	3.64	1.12
2	Ultimatum letter	3.03	1.03
3	Awareness meetings	2.73	0.97
4	Executives emotional outburst	2.13	1.11
5	Protest rallies	2.79	1.02
6	Warning strike	3.76	1.09
7	work to rule	2.31	1.05
8	Lockdown	3.84	1.13
Grand Mean		3.02	1.06

Table 2 shows the participants' responses on modes of grievances expressed by teachers as union members. Their responses indicate that the teachers express their grievance mostly through Lockdown (3.84), warning strike (3.76), letter of complaint (3.64) and ultimatum letter (3.03). Other measures such as protest rallies (2.79), awareness meetings with teachers (2.73), work to rule (2.31) and emotional outburst of executives (2.13) are less frequently expressed. The grand mean (3.02) is greater than the benchmark mean (mean=2.5) therefore it can be inferred that the teachers really express their grievances to the school management through various labour behavioural antics.

**Hypothesis 1:** Teachers' engagement in union activities will not significantly influence management effectiveness in the schools

**Table 3:** Teachers' Engagement in Union Activities and Management Effectiveness

Variables	Mean	SD	N	df	a	X2	P-value	Remark
Teachers' Union Activities	54.6	14.5	384	382	0.05	60.39	0.01	Sig
Management Effectiveness	64.6	16.4						

N= no of observation, df = degree of freedom,  $\alpha$  =level of significance,  $\chi^2$ =chi square.

Table 3 shows the result of the test of hypothesis on the influence of teachers' engagement in union activities on the management effectiveness in the schools. The hypothesis is significant as the p- value (0.01) is less than the 0.05 level of significance ( $\chi^2= 60.39$ ,  $df=382$ ,  $P\text{-value}=0.01 < 0.05$ ). Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative taken. This implies that teachers' engagement in union activities significantly influenced management effectiveness in the schools.

**Hypothesis 2:** Strike action of teachers will not significantly influence management effectiveness in the schools

**Table 4:** Teachers' Strike Action and Management Effectiveness

Variables	Mean	SD	N	df	a	X2	P-value	Remark
Teachers' Strike Action	57.3	13.5	384	382	0.05	60.39	0.01	Sig
Management Effectiveness	64.6	16.4						

N= no of observation, df = degree of freedom,  $\alpha$  =level of significance,  $\chi^2$ =chi square.

Table 4 shows the result of the test of hypothesis on the influence of teachers' strike action on management effectiveness in the schools. The hypothesis is significant as the p- value (0.01) is less than the 0.05 level of significance ( $\chi^2= 60.39$ ,  $df=382$ ,  $P\text{-value}=0.01 < 0.05$ ). Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative taken. This implies that teachers' strike action significantly influenced management effectiveness in the schools.

#### 4. Discussion of Findings

The participants' responses showed that the teachers are very much engaged in their labour union activities. These activities include regular meetings attendance, annual reunion, seminar at all levels, subcommittee meetings, distance travels by executives and negotiation meetings. That the teachers as school personnel are deeply engaged in union activities with a high mean of 3.14 is understandable considering the fact that the teachers must adhere to their union (NUT) regulation and policies through active engagement (Dauda, 2006). If teachers as school personnel are actively engaged in their union activities, then the tendency is for them to align their priorities and energy towards the improvement of their welfare. The teachers in the South- West schools in a bid to register their grievances towards school management and the government as showed in the data analysed get involve in awareness meetings, protest rallies, road show, ultimatum letter, warning strikes and lockdown. Among the modes of grievances displayed by the teachers, lockdown, warning strike and ultimatum letter ranked highest in intensity of usage. That lockdown and warning strikes are more often displayed as grievances by teachers through their union according to Manju (2014) amount to the delay in the management interference. The author opined that the fact that the teachers' agitations snowballed into strike sufficed that the management through the government do not harken to the teachers' initial grievances. This is understood as the school management regard the initial agitations through protests, ultimatum as mere threat till the major lockdown through strike which is perceived as the final straw, is established. The NUT therefore uses the strike as the major blow or last resort that can spur the school management to hearken to the union agitations.

The findings further showed that the hyperactive engagement of teachers in their union activities in the South- West schools such as meetings, rallies and seminars attendance significantly influence the school management effectiveness. That teachers spent some part of their primary duties assignment time on union engagement, more often than not result in principals' non-attainment of some learning goals. Personnel active engagement in union activities compete with teachers' classroom activities. Most teachers prefer to obtain permission from their principal for union meetings rather than be in the classroom. This sometimes results in administrative lapse on the part of the school principals. The lapses experienced by the principals might lead to managerial ineffectiveness according to Amadi (2013) due to teachers' unfinished syllabus and unfulfilled teaching goals. Okoro (2004)

in analysing teachers productivity opined that the effective management skills aimed at achieving school learning goals, prompt syllabus completion and impactful teaching are often affected due to teachers' regular union activities. The teachers' engagement in union activities do compete with the quality of their primary duties, which in turn bear on the principals' managerial technique as they juggle to meet the initial time line. In attempt to balance the equation and avoid negligence of duties, the teachers' classroom teaching suffers.

In another vein, the findings showed that the teachers' grievances often result in lockdown and strike actions. This strike action according to the findings do influence the school management effectiveness. This result of the findings is in line with Ukachukwu Iheriohama & Nwokorie (2017) that when strike occur the principal managerial skills are greatly influenced as they try to juggle schedules in making up for the time loss. The principals are always left alone in the schools when the teachers are in lockdown through strikes. They are challenged with non realisation of planned objectives, abrupt end to students learning, delay in students' examination, results, and completion of the school calendar. No school manager would want goals to be unaccomplished as experienced during teachers' union strike as academic activities would be shut down. Strike therefore as a weapon to make school management bend to the teachers' demands through their union often results in the school management ineffectiveness. The school management according to Oboegbulem (2004) must be proactive in quelling teachers' agitations at the initial stage. An effective school principal according to the author should liaise with the aggrieved personnel to forestall hitches when grievances are registered. The influence of strike on the principal managerial skills do result in changes expressed in supervisory and interpersonal relationship techniques with the teachers. This is so when the agitations of the teachers are met and classes resume. The principal must try the best strategies at utilising stringent measures to ensure gain of the time loss.

#### 5. Conclusion

The school as an organisation provide enabling environment for the personnel; who as teachers strive for their rights through the NUT, its labour union. In order to fully enjoy a smooth working relations, personnel tend to belong and adhere to labour union principles and tenets. The school teachers' personnel union characteristics such as meetings, rallies, protests and lockdown are often exhibited by the teachers as a

means to maintain their NUT policies and principles. In the schools as all organisations strategise, the school management as the principal ensure teachers promptly discharge their respective duties. In the South- West secondary schools, the school management and the teachers appeared to be in regular altercation as a result of their labour union involvement (Agwobike, 2004). School principals' effective management of prompt realisation of learning goals aimed at maintaining high students' academic standard is often influenced through the teachers' labour union characteristics. The teachers display of grievances mostly through strike more often than not scuttle the management laid down objectives as they struggle to apply alternative management/personnel relationship techniques to get the teachers make up for the time loss after the strike.

## 6. Recommendations

The following were recommended for policy and practice to guide school management and personnel:

- The school management, principals should positively work and align with the teachers as they engage in their NUT labour functions to avoid friction when the teachers are to indulge in their labour engagement.
- There should be a policy guiding the school teachers as personnel to prioritise their primary duties in the school over their labour union engagement to ease tension.
- The school management should act as arbiter in the event of negotiation over school teachers' labour union demands to forestall stalemate resulting in strike.
- There should be a retraining programme for school management and personnel for onward enlightenment in handling labour union management faceoff.
- The school management should have in place the policy of alternate timetable for school teachers as they indulge in their labour union engagement.

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