

# Dynamic Relationship between Social Dialogue and Conflict Resolution in Public Sector: Special Reference to Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos Nigeria

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**Abstract:** This work focused on Social Dialogue as a tool for conflict resolution using Lagos State University Area as a case study. The qualitative data were collected using in-depth interview technique. Data were collected from twenty five respondents. The interviews were conducted among the student which involved both under graduate student and post graduate student. Data were analyzed using Test Base Beta. Findings were presented using the ZY Index Tables. The study showed that, illegal deduction of salaries; poor condition of service; communication gap between management and staff; poor finding and poor condition of service were the major causes of industrial conflict in the university. It was inferred that, the University resolves industrial conflict through committee system, application of strict rules and regulations, and social dialogue. However the use of committee system of the governance in the University has promoted democratic style and prevented authoritarian leadership in the institution. The result showed that social dialogue is found to enhance peace, industrial harmony and democratic governance. The study concluded that industrial conflict can be effectively managed without resulting to strike action, when social dialogue is employed to embrace persuasion, lobbying, effective exchange of information, consultation and negotiation with the parties involved. This will definitely foster sustainable industrial peace, harmony and democratic governance within the Nigerian Educational system.

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## I. Introduction

Conflict as it were is largely an omnipotent trait of human societies since it is almost impossible to find two parties or more with entirely overlapping interests without experiencing one form of conflict or another. Etadon (2008) stated that conflict can also be described as a situation in which person or group disagree over means and ends as they try to establish their view in preference to others. Conflict could therefore, occur in society anytime and over any issue. Conflict can also be defined and interpreted as behaviors intended to obstruct the achievement s of some other person's goals. In this wise conflict is based on the incompatibility of goals which arises from opposing behaviors. Conflict can be viewed at the individual group or organizational levels. The term could also be used interchangeably to mean crisis.

However, little attention has been given to social dialogue as a tool for industrial conflict resolution. Social dialogue is the bed-rock of any good industrial relations. It is an invention dealing with the relational problems between the union and management and a strategy of furthering the basic union purpose without confrontation or conflict of interest. Dialogue helps inject vitality into democracy and increase meaningful participation in the political process. There are various definitions and "types" of dialogue (sustained dialogue, reflective dialogue, generative dialogue and democratic dialogue, among others). However, dialogue as an approach and as a process shared a common denominator: both seek to create a quality of conversation that facilitates the transformation of interpersonal relations and a shared understanding of complex problems. Dialogue as an approach can be used to tackle problems in a wide array of development areas (the environmental, HIV/AIDS, MDGs, Poverty reduction, democratic governance, etc.). Dialogue is an important tool for strengthening governance and democracy, preventing violent conflict and building peace. It facilitates a shared understanding of complex societal problems.

Visser (2001) defines social dialogue as cooperation among social partners, state institutions, and local governments aimed at balancing the interest of different segments of society in social and economic issues, and at ensuring internal social stability and also includes assessment of social interactions at the company level. Social dialogue can take a variety of forms, ranging from the simple act of tripartite process, with the relevant public authorities as an official party to the dialogue, or it may consist of bipartite relations only between labour and management (or trade unions and employers' organizations), with or without indirect government

involvement. Social dialogue can be informal or Institutionalized, and often it is a combination of the two. It can take place at the regional or at enterprise level. It can be inter-professional, sectoral or a combination of all of these.

In the educational sector the need for uninterrupted academic programmes calls for a more robust social dialogue approach to industrial conflict resolution. Stoner et al (2001) claimed that conflict is a pre-requisite to a meaningful industrial development when properly managed. The issue of industrial harmony within the university system is an important one since studies have also in the past linked conflict to breach of collective agreement between the social partners. It is deemed important carrying out an empirical investigation on knowing the extent to which social dialogue has resolved conflict between the staff, student and the union within the university system.

Conflict within the Nigerian University system has been addressed through collective bargaining as a mechanism for conflict resolution which has yielded little result, but little attention has been paid to the social dialogue as a tool for resolving industrial conflict. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the extent and partner of social dialogue as a tool for resolving industrial conflict in Nigerian University system with particular emphasis on Lagos State University, Ojo, Nigeria.

The major objective of the study was to investigate the use of the social dialogue as a tool for resolving conflict at Lagos State University, Ojo. While question on What is the relationship between the causes of conflict and the use of social dialogue as a tool for conflict resolution in the workplace? Was addressed and hypothesis **H<sub>0</sub>**: Social dialogue is not a determinant factor for conflict resolution was tested

This study is restricted to both management and union of the Lagos State University. These categories of workers are involved in the conflict resolution.

This research work is limited to the area of Lagos State University, Ojo, which viewed as a specimen of the study. Just like any other research carried out by other people, this research may not be a problem free one, in the sense that there are some sensitive questions which the respondent may not want to give answer to. This may require greater time and skill to establish the needed rapport, in order to elicit the information from respondents.

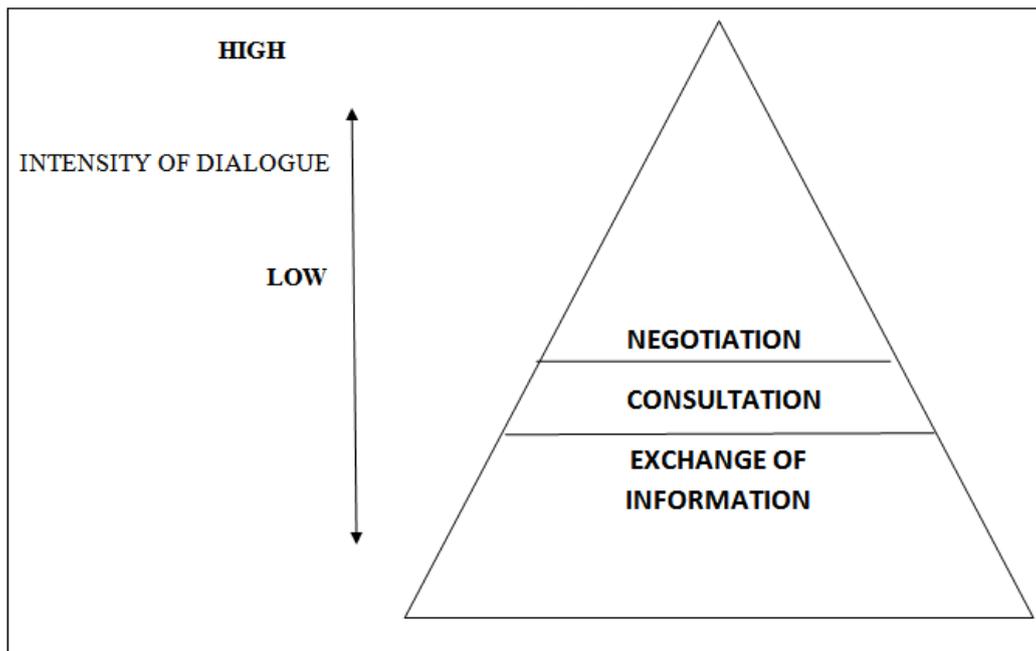
## **II. Literature Review**

Sivananthiran and Venkata Ratnam (2003), see social dialogue as a key element in achieving decent work for men and women, in condition of freedom, equality, security and human dignity. Decent works is achieved through the implementation of four strategy objectives; creating jobs; guaranteeing right at work; extending social protection at work and promoting dialogue and conflict resolution. The main goal of social dialogue is to promote consensus building and democratic involvement of the principal stakeholders in the world of work. Social dialogue gives workers, through collective bargaining and consultation, a voice in the decisions affecting them, thus promote consensus building and democratic involvement at work.

Social dialogue includes all type of information exchange, consultation, negotiation and collective bargaining between representatives of governments, employers and workers- and between the social partners themselves-on all issues of common interest. Social dialogue is therefore, a fundamental mechanism for promoting and enabling effective solutions to social and industrial relations challenges and complex issues faced by the industry that may affect the workers. For this reason, social dialogue is different from a wider dialogue that involves civil society (Peter Auer, 2005).

Figure 1, below illustrates the relationship among the different notions.

**Figure 1** Social dialogue triangle



**Source: ILO 2004.**

Exchange of information is the most basic process of social dialogue. It implies no real discussion or action on the issues concerned, but it is an essential starting point towards more substantive social dialogue. Consultation is a means by which the social partners not only share information, but also engage in more in-depth dialogue about issues raised. While consultation itself does not carry with it decision-making power, it can take place as part of such a process. Collective bargaining and policy dialogue can be interpreted as the two dominant types of negotiation. Collective bargaining is one of the most widespread forms of social dialogue and it is institutionalized in many countries. It consists of negotiations between employers, a group of employers or employers' representatives and workers' representatives to determine the issues related to wages and conditions of employment. Successful collective bargaining results in collective agreements. Collective bargaining can be centralized at national level or decentralized at sectoral, regional, enterprise or bargaining unit level. It can be regarded as a useful indicator of the capacity for social dialogue within a country to engage in national level tripartite policy dialogue. Following Compston (2002; 4), policy dialogue is defined as "the codetermination of public policy by governments, employers, organizations and trade union confederations". Tripartite policy dialogue or "social dialogue" can be regarded as the "full bloom" of social dialogue whereby "employers', workers' representatives and governments have developed a reflect for acting in a concerted multifaceted manner to address all major nation economic and social policy issues by seeking consensus".

However, this is only possible when the government fully reorganizes the legitimacy and constructive functions of social partners' participating in national policy-making. The results of successful tripartite policy are sometimes manifested in social pacts. Any of these forms of social dialogue can be informal and ad hoc or formal and institutionalized. However, in reality social dialogue often takes place as a combination of the two. Informal processes are often as important as formal ones. The primary goal of social dialogue is to promote consensus building through representative and democratic involvement, based on mutual respect, among the main stakeholders. As we all know, successful and fruitful social dialogue structures and processes have the potential to resolve important and knotty economic and social issues. It is one of the acknowledge means of encouraging good governance as well as advancing and accelerating social and industrial peace. It is a powerful instrument, capable of securing industrial stability and helping to boost and promote economic progress.

As congenial conditions are a prerequisite for the healthy growth of a plant or tree to produce better fruit, so also, certain favorable and enabling conditions are a must for the healthy evolution of social dialogue. These include:

1. Strong independent workers' and employers' organizations with technical capacity and access to the relevant information to participate in social dialogue.
2. Political will and commitment to engage in social dialogue on the part of all the parties.
3. Respect for the fundamental rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining.
4. Appropriate institutional support.

The state, of course has a definite and explicit role cut out for it in this process. The social partners look to the government with hope and expectation in this regard. An ideal state is responsible for creating an enabling political and civil climate for autonomous and independent organizations of workers and employers to operate freely and also for providing adequate legal, institutional and other frameworks to enable these partners to act effectively without fear of any kind of retribution to enumerate the rewards and gains of social dialogue.

One of the key functions of social dialogue is the building of mutually satisfactory and rewarding relationships between the social partners, which leads to decent working environments, job satisfaction and good enterprise performance and, in general, outcomes with rewards for all. Both tripartite and bipartite dialogue with greater transparency and mutual respect for each other's views and needs, especially on voluntary basis, engender greater trust and cooperation. Effective workers and employers' organizations can certainly help build good relationships. An important issue that requires careful attention by all the social partners is how to make social dialogue a more powerful instrument of consensus building within the tripartite mechanism.

A fine-tuned social dialogue process adopted with the consensus of all stakeholders plays a key role in achieving the objectives of promoting opportunities for all to obtain productive and decent work. Social dialogue is a means of achieving decent work and is an end itself. A judicious, skillful and enlightened use of the social dialogue mechanism can work wonders in promoting employment policies, aiding and assisting social protection policies, encouraging and fundamental rights at work, in addition to enhancing other employment conditions. With more and more countries, regimes and organizations embracing the democratization process, it is imperative to define more clearly the respective roles of social dialogue and participatory democracy. Social dialogue is a crucial step towards solving any problem or dispute. Social dialogue between labour, management and government takes many forms around the world.

Effective social dialogue can come only from strong social partners. The importance of effective social dialogue in the design and implementation of critical economic and social policies cannot be over-emphasized. The tripartite structure of the ILO itself reflects the conviction that the best solutions arise through social dialogue and tripartite cooperation. Social dialogue has a fundamental role to play as an instrument of democracy. Therefore, the capacities and the services of the parties to the social dialogue have to be enhanced through means like workers education; strengthening and consolidation of trade union structures and enhancement of workers' education are to be given prime importance. Preventing disputes altogether may be a tall order. The attempt therefore, has to be reduced or minimize them. In the process of dispute resolution, social dialogue plays the most important role. It assists the concerned parties to settle their grievances and disputes peacefully and in an orderly way through agreed-upon machinery with minimum disruption of work. Different perceptions are likely to lead to disagreements at time. Social dialogue is one of the potential instruments for effective prevention and settlement of labour disputes and for creating an atmosphere conducive to efficiency, economic growth and development (Sivananthiran, 2003).

**Table 1.** Potential benefits from Social Dialogue.

<b>For the participants</b>	<b>For the society</b>
Development of "human capital"	Local economic development
Improved operational efficiency	Job creation
Organizational innovation	Community infrastructure regeneration
Increase access to resources	Improved quantity or quality of services
Better access to information	Improvement in health and education services and standards
More effective product and services	Decrease in crime and violence
Enhanced reputation and credibility	Better ethnic tolerance and celebration of any or all aspects of diversity in the community and workplace
Creation of a stable society	Overall improvements in quantity of life, strengthening citizens' awareness and their liability to engage individually and collectively in dialogue and negotiation

**Source: Nelson and Zadek, 2000: pp.27-28.**

ILO convention (2001) revealed that social dialogue at the local level could contribute positively to both the processes and outcomes of measures to tackle unemployment, poverty and exclusion and optimize local policy coordination and integration. Local social dialogue schemes can facilitate a multidimensional approach to problems, drawing upon the knowledge, skills and resources of different partners. ILO's definition of social dialogue is very broad to include "all types of negotiation, consultation or simply exchange of information between or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy" (International Labour Organization 2008).

Social dialogue at local level can contribute to economic growth and social prosperity through:

- i. Job creation, training and the support of local enterprise;
- ii. Helping to provide improved and better targeted social services and facilities and
- iii. By involving and empowering local communities and excluded groups.

## FORMS OF SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Social dialogue exist as a tripartite process with the workers representatives, employers' representatives and government as an official party coming together in accordance with the requirement established by laws. Thus tripartite dialogue usually takes the forms of discussions leading to advice to government to enable it to make better decision as a result of receiving the view point of workers and employers. Bipartite social dialogue involves direct relations between labour and management with or without indirect involvement of government. It can take place at the national, regional, sectoral or at enterprise level. It is generally accepted that some prerequisites are essential for the promotion of tripartite co-operation.

More specifically, Sarfati (2001) argued that the main prerequisites for an efficient social dialogue are:

- a) Representative social partners
- b) Proper institutional framework;
- c) Commitment to dialogue and to the achievement of results by the parties involved;
- d) Shared knowledge of relevant information;
- e) Partners' authority and ability to negotiate and to enforce decisions;
- f) Facilitating dialogue and adapting regulations by the state.

Another study has found that a number of prerequisites for the success of Social Dialogue exist (ILO, 2000). These include:

- a) Clear identification of the benefits to be gained by the participants;
- b) Strong leadership
- c) Skilled management and project staff.
- d) Strong shared local identity.
- e) Active involvement of all partners in the shaping and
- f) Implementation of strategies.

Furthermore, Table 2 presents the most important prerequisites for an effective social dialogue, especially on a tripartite basis, according to the proceeding of the conference organized by the ILO Convention on Foundation for the improvement of Living and Working conditions.

**Table 2: Prerequisites for Tripartite Social Dialogue**

Clear Goals	Tripartism requires targets, aim and objectives e.g. economic stability, competitiveness, security at work, income policy
Visible Results	Delivery of measurable results is necessary for the agendas of the social partners, e.g. safety and health at work, vocational training, employment creation, income and guarantees
Bipartism	Well-functioning bipartism is seen as essential for building tripartite structure
Multi-level approach	The diffusion of national models down to regional, local, municipal and enterprise level is important.
Civil society	Further discussion is needed on where the involvement of civil society is necessary and desirable, and on the representativeness of civil society organizations.
Monitoring	Institution and models need constant review and must develop the ability to adapt, change and be flexible.
Responsibility	It is important to adopt a problem-solving approach, accept compromises and trade-offs and create a shared understanding of each other's difficulties

**Source:** ILO Foundation for the improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2002.

### **Social Dialogue And Consultation As Tools For Managing Industrial Conflict.**

The machinery for settlement of industrial disputes in Nigeria is of twofold: the internal machinery and the external machinery. With mutual understanding between the management and the employees, most of the industrial conflict in organizations could be

settled internally by the parties involved in the organization where social dialogue and consultation are fully developed. In Nigeria the Federal Government places high premium on consultation and social dialogue among stakeholders in industrial relations to promote sound and conducive industrial relations atmosphere.

Social dialogue would provide opportunity for a robust discussion among social partners with a net target of coming out with recommendations that would help the country to achieve industrial peace and harmony for the attainment of social-economic objectives (Ambassardor Ibrahim Kazaure, 2001).

## **ISSUES IN SOCIAL DIALOGUE**

### **i) Promoting and managing change**

The role of social dialogue in promoting and managing change is more essential in the industrial and labour relations indeed, if social dialogue were used more often to manage change in a planned and balanced manner, then this would reduce the rate of industrial conflict in an organizations. The ILO believes that promoting and managing change is one of the ways in which social dialogue can contribute most effectively to meeting the shared interests of employers, workers and governments- in other words, a win-win situation for all the parties. Social dialogue has been used most effectively in this way in countries with relatively mature systems of industrial relations and where there are strong, representative social partner's skills, particularly among the leadership of the social partners, who are required to move away from more traditional methods of bargaining to a more consensus-based approach with a focus on problem-solving.

### **ii). Managing crises**

Another trend which can be observed is the use of social dialogue to manage financial and economic crises. Ireland successfully used a process of social dialogue in the late 1980s to address its disastrous economic situation of rising unemployment (the highest in the EU), spiraling public debt, negative growth and rapidly falling living standards. Suffice it to say that the Irish economic was transformed over a period of 5 to 10 years from being one of the poorest countries in the European Union to being one of the most successful in terms of economic growth, employment levels and income growth. Social dialogue played a key role in this transformation. Based on a series of social partnership agreements, the IMF prescription of devaluation was avoided, and the parties focused on improving competitiveness, productivity and accepted wage freezes until the corresponding productivity gains were achieved. Social dialogue facilitated implementation of difficult economic decisions in this country and achieved stabilization and economic growth and also handling the conflict of interest between the employees and employers.

### **iii) Poverty Reduction**

The importance of the poverty reduction discussion at international level follows growing recognition acceptance that the policies of structural adjustment pursued by the international financial institutions during the 1980s and 1990s had failed to tackle poverty. This should describe the country's social, economic and political policies and programmes over a three year or longer period, identify who the poor are and propose strategies for overcoming poverty. One of the main features which distinguish this approach from previous approaches of the World Bank and the IMF is that the PRSP is supposed to be owned and developed by each country through a wide participatory dialogue. Through a process of social dialogue, elements of the decent work agenda are being incorporated into the development and poverty reduction process in most of the developing countries. In addition, the ILO has encouraged the formal involvement of the social partners and the labour ministries not just in the preparatory stage of PRSPs but also in the monitoring and implementation stages.

Another important outcome of this work is the growing recognition by the World Bank and the IMF that social partners have a key role to play in creating a genuine sense of national ownership. In return, the World Bank and the IMF must accept that the social partners should have an opportunity to influence the poverty reduction agenda. These institutions are also learning that the social partners can contribute not just to identifying the problems but also to solving them. So, here we find the process of social dialogue being used in a number of developing countries to influence the substantive content of PRSPs and also to create a wider and more participatory dialogue. Thus social partner have been able to contribute, through social dialogue, in a constructive way to the poverty reduction policies and strategies of their countries.

Social dialogue deals with social protection measures, both focused on concrete groups of workers or companies and provide ad-hoc or with measures to change existing legislation, for example, the law dealing with statutory control of employment claims in the event of employers insolvability. However, in the field of labour legislation there are disagreements between employers and workers especially on the issue of regulation of dismissal, where the proposed changes have impact on the stability of employment or on working hours. Wage policies in another area of frequent and intense national-level dialogue especially between the social partners themselves. Governments rarely called for a general wage freeze, but call for moderation and for respect of companies' capability to pay have not been rare. In some cases, the crisis was an opportunity to discuss and to adapt the minimum wage most of the measures contained in the "packages" are to be implemented through individual laws and by-laws (Tayo Fasoyin, 2009). In some countries, the adoption of a more comprehensive anti-crisis law or laws has also been considered in order to simplify and accelerate legislative procedures as the crisis developed at the end of budgetary year many government included anti-crisis policies in budget proposals for 2009.

In some cases, anti-crisis measures were embodied in tripartite or bipartite documents. Most of them (pacts, agreements, declarations, joint guidelines, opinions etc.) are not enforceable by law but have undeniable

political importance. Not only do they contain concrete recommendations for governments and social partners, but they also send important political messages in such sensitive areas as wages and redundancies, sometimes containing guidelines for socially responsible restructuring.

Some of them have strong ethical messages concerning mutual trust and solidarity, the protection of vulnerable sectors, or socially responsible management. Social dialogue can provide an important impetus for democratic change leading to greater awareness of the need for respect for the fundamental rights of the masses.

## **OTHER TOOLS FOR MANAGING CONFLICT**

### **Collective bargaining**

This is the process whereby the employers and employees in conference, from time to time, agreed upon the terms and condition under which labour shall be performed. Collective bargaining, then seeks an agreement whose terms not only prescribe uniformity of treatment of employees but also diversify and permit variation of treatment of employees. Collective bargaining can be defined as negotiation of working conditions and terms of employment between employers, a group of employers or one or more employers' organization on the other hand, with the view to reach agreement ILO. However, with the advent of industrial relations system in Nigeria, in 1978, collective bargaining is also at two levels. All the issues affecting working relationships were grouped into two under procedural agreements concluded between the employers' federation and industrial union in 1979. Under the new arrangement thereof, the group which the union consider more important because it has to do with wages and other monetary fringe benefits is negotiated at the national level between the national union and employers' federation. Thus collective bargaining involves the formulation of labour agreement, the application of those agreement to the production process involves and the solution of the inevitable difference which arise over their interpretation and application.

**Table 3: MAN-DAY LOST BY INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE 2007**

YEAR	NO OF DISPUTE	NO DISPUTE RESULTING IN STRIKES	NO DISPUTE RESOLVED	DURATION OF DISPUTE(DAYS)	NO OF WORKERS INVOLVED	TOTAL MAN-DAYS LOST
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1990	126	102	89	371.5	275895	1,373,539.76
1991	125	120	106	267	269530	2588825
1992	187	187	153	890	262309	1,185,380.5
1993	137	137	94	1586.5	1112052	12,908,411.6
1994	156	155	138	2137	1498287	23,3684,771
1995	45	31	31	362	295690	32,773,.36
1996	29	17	18	124	19826	94,664
1997	31	24	30	333	59977	359,801
1998	16	11	14	29	7694	47,631
1999	52	27	39	570.0	173858	3,158,087
2000	49	43	43	674	344722	6,287,733
2001	24	20	24	335.67	57188	1,030,199
2002	52	25	22	410	49155	2,578,692
2003	77	28	57	645	249697	5,690,952
2004	36	26	32	277	127377	2,737,399
2005	149	57	110	675	280606	4,-08,013
2006	189	63	79	910	208589	7,785,99
2007	250	79	212	1264	414543	13,227,957

**Source:** Bulletin of Labour Statistics, 2007

### **SOURCES OF INDUSTRIAL CONFLICT IN UNIVERSITIES**

The external sources of industrial conflict include; government's industrial and economic policies, nature of national economic mismanagement and general distribution of wealth and power in the society. However, some of the external sources of conflict might not directly instigate industrial conflict but do influence general expectation, substantially determine nature of worker's demands, have a bearing on intensity of conflict and the whole tenor for the conduct of industrial relations.

Sandra (2005) sees the crises in the Nigerian Universities system as having resulted largely from the assault University autonomy, partly from internal mismanagement and partly from the dynamics of change in the wider Nigerian society. He recommended that any attempt which is directed at resolving the crisis will need to relate to the various groups whose interaction have led to the emergence of the crisis in the first. He further argued that one of the main roots of the current conflicts in University administration in the country is the failure o all concerned to persuade and promote the common goal. In the light of the above exposition, there is the compelling in Nigerian Universities in order to be able to prescribed relevant proposals for the management of the conflicts.

### **III. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

The target population is the Non-academic staff, student and Union executives of Lagos State University, Ojo, Nigeria. They consist of individuals with different sex, different culture, educational qualification, backgrounds and perceptions.

The university is a comprehensive public institution, founded in 1983 by the enabling law of Lagos state of Nigeria for the advancement of learning and establishment of academic excellence. The university caters for a population of over sixty one thousand enrolled in full time and part time programmes at the diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate. Lagos state university (informally LASU), located in city of Ojo, Lagos, Nigeria, is the only state university in the former British colony.

The university mission is to foster student learning and development by providing the highest quality programs and services that enhance the student educational experiences that prepare student to better contribute to the growth of Nigeria society and elsewhere.

The University offer diploma, degree and post graduate programmes and its MPA programme is reputed to be one of the highly revered in the country. The citadel is also know for various staff union agitations especially the Lecturers' ASUU, non teaching staff's SSANU, NASU and others while various unrest has been witnessed with the activities of the students union informally called LASUSU also known as the Lagos State University Student Union.

#### **THE POPULATION AND SAMPLING SIZE**

The targeted population of this study comprises of the Non-teaching staff, Undergraduate student, Postgraduate student and Union executives in Lagos State University Ojo, Nigeria. The total population for this study comprises of ten non-teaching staff, five post-graduate student, two undergraduate student and eight union executives which made up of a total of twenty-five respondents.

#### **DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES**

The instrument of data collection involves the use of in-depth interview. This will be used to elicit information from the key informants on some cogent issues on social dialogue and industrial conflict at Lagos State University Ojo, Nigeria.

The key informants for the in-depth interviews are:

1. Ten non-teaching staff
2. Five post-graduate student
3. Two undergraduate student
4. Eight Union Executives

A total of twenty five (25) in-depth interviews were conducted.

#### **METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS**

The qualitative data from in-depth interview conducted were analyzed using simple percentage, frequency and content analysis. Responses are presented using simple categorization of variables and field data are presented using Z-Y index tables.

### **IV. Data Presentation, Analysis And Interpretation**

#### **Social-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

Data were collected from twenty five (25) respondents through the in-depth interview. The interviews were conducted among Non-Academic staff and students (represented by 10 non-teaching staff, 5post-graduate student, 2under-graduate student and 8 Union Executives).

The demographic break down of the respondents is presented in Table4. Since the interviews target persons in decision making positions is not surprising that 96% of targets are males. This supports the earlier evidence that in most cases males occupy the decision making positions in Nigerian educational institutions.

The ages of the respondents were grouped into four categories. Respondents between the age group of 51-60years were in the majority (88%), 41-50 years (4%), 30-40 years were (4%), while those that fall in the category of > 61 years were 4%. This shows that the staffs in management positions in the university fall into the older age range, and with an average of 20+ years in the service of the University. The mean age for the total population is 53.7years. (Males 53.7years and females age 53years).

The educational qualification of the respondents showed that majority are Masters' holders. It shows that the composition of respondents might also give expectations on the level of educational attainment. This is because the research was carried out among staffs and student that are in the institution. This explained why Masters Holders constituted 68% of the respondents.

The religious affiliation of the respondents inferred that the majority (84%) are Christians, 12% Islam, while 4% practice Traditional Religion. The preponderance of Christians is because the South Western Nigeria where this University is dominated by Christians.

The distribution of the respondents showed that 91.7% of the respondents are from monogamous family type while 8.3% are from polygamous family type. This could be a function of the Christian Religion with the doctrine of one man, one wife.

**Table 4:** Percentage Distribution of Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	NO	
Male	24	96.0
Female	01	4.0
Total	25	100.0
<b>Age groups</b>		
31-40years	01	4.0
41-50years	01	4.0
51-60years	22	88.0
61years and above	01	4.0
Total	25	100.0
<b>EDUCATIONAL LEVEL</b>		
HND	01	4.0
BSC	05	20.0
MSC	17	68.0
PHD	02	8.0
Total	25	100.0
<b>RELIGION</b>		
Christianity	21	84.0
Islam	03	12.0
Traditional	01	4.0
Total	25	100.0
<b>FAMILY TYPE</b>		
Polygamous	02	8.0
Monogamous	23	92.0
Total	25	100.0

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2014

**Key findings on socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents reflected the following:**

- i. Male occupy mostly the decision making position in the targeted university.
- ii. The respondents have a mean age of 54years, showing that the respondents are older staff and student, with long years of working experience with the university.
- iii. Majority of the respondents are Christians Nigeria because the research was carried out in the Southern Western part of which is dominated by Christians.
- iv. Monogamous family type is the most predominant among the respondents.

### 4.3 Industrial Conflicts in Nigerian Educational Institutions

The Nigerian university system is threatened by industrial crises which are direct results of poor funding and lack of government commitment to the growth of the education sector. Interview with the non-academic staff showed that conflict in Nigerian tertiary institutions were as a result of the following conditions: poor developmental planning; inadequate of educational funding; unresponsiveness of the government to employees' welfare; refusal to implement collective agreement. In most cases the agreements duly signed by the Government and workers' Unions were to be reviewed every three years to reflect social and economy changes including inflationary trends and cost of living. This becomes a basis for intensive contest between the two parties, and thereby leading to regular industrial strike and actions. Working conditions for workers in Nigeria are far from ideal. Conditions of service are deteriorated markedly because of repression; underfunding; irregular payment of salaries; non- payment of leave entitlements and pensions.

### 4.4 Trends in Industrial Conflicts at LASU Ojo

To put strike actions at LASU Ojo into a proper perspective, the following question were asked:

- How would you describe strike actions at LASU
- What are the causes of these strike actions?
- How have these strike been managed?
- How would you describe the management style at LASU Ojo?
- The notoriety of LASU as a centre-piece of industrial actions was defended by the Union Executives. LASU is noted for its activism across Unions. The Unions portend the image of 'a defender of the

oppressed’, and ‘an armory against totalitarian leadership’ both at Local and National levels. Common causes of industrial actions were itemized by the Union leaders as (see Table 5).

- Inadequate educational funding
- Poor condition of service
- Illegal deduction of salaries
- Communication gap
- Misinterpretation of Government circular.

The views of the Post-graduate student were in some ways similar to the Union leaders. They also identified increment of the school fees, poor condition of service, poor funding and misinterpretation of Government circular as the main causes of industrial conflicts in the University. Notable, the non-academic staff did not identify factors that could indict them.

Generally, other Non-Academic staff and Union Executives identified illegal deduction of salaries, communication gap and poor leadership as major causes of disputes in the university. Also Ajala (2003) opined that good communication is one of the key skills to be acquired in other to maintain harmonious relationship in the workplace.

A common opinion held by the non-academic staff is that the Nigerian private sector should presents a better working environment compared to the public sector (see Extract 1)

**Extract 1: In-depth interview with one of the Non-Academic Staff**

The conditions of service for workers in Nigerian universities are far from ideal. Civil servants and employees of private companies have relatively good offices and facilities, health care, and wages, but that is not the case for staff. Imagine, two lecturers sharing the same office and this is not the case in an ideal setting.

**Table 5:** Respondents’ views on the major causes of Industrial Conflicts at LASU

Causes of Industrial Conflict at LASU (Responses)	Non-Academic staff (No=10)	Post-graduate students (No=5)	Undergraduate student (No=2)	Union (No=8)	Executives
Communication gaps	-	+	+	++	
Inadequate funding of the university system	++	++	++	++	
Illegal deduction of salaries by management	-	+	++	++	
Poor condition of service	+	++	++	++	
Poor leadership	-	+	+	++	
Misinterpretation of government circular by Union members	+	-	-	-	

Source: Researcher’s Field Work, 2014

**Key:**

- ++= where opinion was expressed by 3 or more persons
- += Where opinion was expressed by 1 – 2 persons
- = where opinion was not expressed at all

Generally, management style in the University was assessed positively; Union leaders reported a participatory administrative system, which allowed its members to positively contribute to the running of the University. The use of ‘committee system’ in university administrative allowed the spirit of consultation and participation. In certain instances, the Union Executives reported the use of coercion and authoritarian leadership, especially in cases relating to staff welfare. Union Executives expressed the view that methods used in the management of industrial conflict often determine the end result of any industrial conflict i.e. whether ‘constructive’ or destructive (see extract 2 and 3).

**Extract 2: In the in-depth interview with one of the Union Executives.**

‘Whether a union is constructive or destructive determine largely by the way how the conflict is managed by the conflicting parties the outcome of conflict is determined largely by the conflict management behavior exhibited by the parties involved in conflict’.

**Extract 3: In-depth interview with one of the Student**

‘Sometimes, the union members (NASU) locked everybody outside irrespective of who you were and barricaded all the entrance even sometimes they came around with sticks pointing to the management that if management refused to meet up with their demands their next action would be disastrous. Can we then sit that this kind of attitude is constructive? No, in many and many cases they a destructive’.

It was inferred that the university resolves industrial conflict through the use of committee system, application of strict rules and regulations, and social dialogue. The use of committee system for resolving conflict was the most emphasized. Before any conflict erupted, the senate who has summoned relevant committee(s) to one or two meetings on the issue at hand.

**Table 6:** The System of Conflict Management at LASU

Identified means of resolving at LASU	Non-Academic staff (No=10)	Postgraduate student (No=5)	Under-graduate student (No=2)	Union Executives (No=8)
Through committee system	+	++	++	++
Application of strict rules and regulations	-	++	++	++
Social dialogue	+	+	++	++

**Source: Researcher field work, 2014**

**Key:** ++=where opinion was expressed by 3 or more persons

+ = where opinion was expressed by 1-2 persons

- = where opinion was not expressed at all.

#### 4.5 The Use of Social Dialogue for Conflict Resolution

This section examined the respondents’ understanding of social dialogue, process and its uses. Key questions for exploring these views are:

- Have you heard of social dialogue?
- Has this institution ever employed social dialogue?
- What are the processes involved in social dialogue?
- How would you comment on social dialogue?

Majority of the respondents (92%) were aware of social dialogue and the processes involved, except for 2 post graduate student who were only familiar with collective bargaining. Generally, respondent explained the concept of ‘social dialogue’ as a process whereby both the stakeholders allow for the free sharing of information with the aim of reaching a collective agreement. It was agreed that the use of ‘social dialogue’ for conflict resolution is not new in the university. Social dialogue helps to build consensus between opposing parties and to ensure transparency in governance.

Respondents identified both the merit and demerits of social dialogue. Union executives opined that management could use social dialogue for their benefits, for example, “a mechanism for delay tactics” and “to break the momentum for strike actions”. In the same view, Undergraduate student said, agreement reached through social dialogues could be used against the management by Unionists ‘as blackmails’ (see Extract 4)

#### Extract 4: In-depth interview with one of the Non-Academic staff

“ Unionist are always careful with the use of social dialogues so that information provided during this process is not used against individual members by those in management positions”

**Table 7:** Respondents Understanding of Social dialogue and its uses

Responses	Non-Academic staff (No=10)	Postgraduate student (No=5)	Undergraduate student (No=2)	Union Executives (No=8)
I understand social dialogue	+	++	++	++
I don’t understand social dialogue	-	-	+	-
It enhance industrial harmony and peace	+	++	++	++
It create room for assessment of information	+	++	++	++
It brings transparency in governance	+	++	++	++
It is time consuming	-	+	+	++
It can be used as a disguise by the management	-	-	-	++
Information given can be used against the individual	+	-	-	-

**Source: Researcher’s Field Work, 2013**

**Key:** +++ where opinion was expressed by 3 or more persons

+ = where opinion was expressed by 1-2 persons

- = where opinion was not expressed at all.

**Key Findings:**

- a) Popular causes of industrial conflicts in the Nigerian educational system were identified as: poor planning; inadequate funding; poor condition of service; increment of school fees and refusal of government to implement collective agreement.
- b) Internal causes of conflict at LASU were identified as: illegal deduction of salaries; poor condition of service; increment in school fees communication gap between management and staff; and poor funding.
- c) The use of committee system of governance in the university has promoted democratic style and prevented authoritarian leadership.
- d) Management of conflict has been through committee system, application of strict rules and regulations, and through social dialogue
- e) Social dialogue is found to enhance peace, industrial harmony and democratic governance.

### **V. Discussion Of Findings**

Social dialogue, which is an embodiment of democratic or participatory management style, is adopted by the University management. This has helped to manage industrial conflict at LASU. Dispute over management decisions making process, and their interests protected. This corroborates the study of Sivananthiran (2003) that social dialogue is one of the potential instruments for effective prevention and settlement of labour disputes and for creating an atmosphere conducive for efficiency, economic growth and development. Industrial conflict tends to be amicably resolved without resulting in strike action. When the exchange of information, consultation and negotiation process on issues relating to employment relations are democratized. The higher the level of involvement of union executives in decision making, the lower would be the labour dispute in the institution.

Ebbinghaus (2001) opined that social dialogue developed a shared understanding of problems; facilitate the discussion of policy alternatives, their implications and the findings of compromises to achieve common responses. It is a widely shared opinion among those involved in social dialogue that social dialogue is desirable as a means of minimizing conflict and promote social peace (Compston, 2002). However for crises involving members of the university community and the Federal Government, social dialogue is usually difficult to achieve. This is because the University internal mechanisms may lack control over extraneous factors from government.

### **VI. Summary, Conclusion And Recommendations**

This chapter presents summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations. The study examined social dialogue as a tool for resolving industrial conflict at Lagos State University, Ojo, Nigeria. This was with the view to answering a number of research questions and meeting stated objectives. The introductory chapter presents the background to the study, the statement of the problems, objectives, and research questions, organization of the study, definition of relevant terms and significance of the study. Chapter two reviews the available literature and covers review of relevant theories pertinent to this study. Chapter three presents the methodology adopted, focusing on the following: (research design adopted), study population, samples and sampling procedure, and research instrument. The procedure for gathering data was also discussed. Results of descriptive analyses were contained in chapter four.

- Also, males occupy most of the decision making positions in the targeted university.
- The respondents have a mean age of 54years, showing that the respondents are older staff, with long years of working experience with the university.
- Majority of the respondents are Christians because the research was carried out in the South Western part of Nigeria which is dominated by Christians.
- Monogamous family type is the most predominant among the respondents.
- Popular causes of industrial conflicts in the Nigerian educational system were identified as: poor planning, inadequate funding; poor condition of service; and refusal of government to implement collective agreement.
- Internal causes of conflict at LASU were identified as: illegal deduction of salaries; poor condition of service; communication gap between management and staff; increment of school fees and poor funding.
- The use of committee system of governance in the university has promoted democratic style and prevented authoritarian leadership.
- Management of conflict has been through committee system, application of strict rules and regulations, and through social dialogue.
- Social dialogue is found to enhance peace, industrial harmony and democratic governance.

## VII. Conclusion

This study made an attempt to examine social dialogue as a tool for resolving industrial conflict. Notably, industrial conflict is an inherent feature of labour-management relations in the workplace, and for this to be effectively managed, there is need for all institutions to develop a more robust and conducive environment for effective social dialogue to take place.

However, the study submits that industrial conflict can be effectively managed without resulting to strike action, when social dialogue is employed to embrace persuasion, lobbying, effective exchange of information, consultation and negotiation with the parties involved. This will definitely foster sustainable industrial peace, harmony and democratic governance since social dialogue is a desirable means of minimizing conflict.

## VIII. Recommendations

The importance of social dialogue in resolving conflict cannot be over emphasized. Social dialogue should be strengthened more to establish a relatively permanent peace in the Nigerian educational sector.

It should be noted that, communication between the management and Union Executives should be enhanced this will promote the inflow of information thus reducing the misconception of the unions about the management.

There should be considerable improvement in the living and working environment of universities generally. Universities should also encourage constant dialogue with the workers representatives at all levels. Parties to conflict should use the democratic norms of dialogue, due process and fairness in resolving their differences. Universities administrators should therefore put in place adequate machinery for dialogue, for parties in conflicts to discuss their disagreements in a mutual relationship. In this wise, dialogue would be well recognized as at the best option for conflict management.

The state as the third party to industrial relations should always endeavor to adhere to collective decisions reached at the negotiation table. This will reduce the re-occurrence of the same problems. The above recommendations, if carefully considered, can potentially reduce the level of conflict in Nigerian educational system.

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**APPENDIX**  
**IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE**

1. Industrial conflict (strike action and school closure) seems to be a regular part of educational institutions in Nigeria in the recent time, could you please explain why this is so?
2. How would you describe industrial conflict at LASU?
3. What are the causes of strike actions at LASU?
4. How have these strikes been managed?
5. How would you describe the management style at LASU?
6. Have you heard of social dialogue?
7. Has this institution ever employed social dialogue?
8. What are the processes involved in social dialogue?
9. How would you comment on social dialogue?

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