

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN A THIRD WORLD SETTING: ANALYSIS OF DUNLOPIAN APPROACH

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Abstract

The emergence of industrial relations in Nigeria probably began with colonial administration. Ever since then the practice of the trade among union members, has borne with it the foot print of the imperial masters. What then this implies is that there is yet a sort of neo-colonialism in our practice of labour. The paper then posits that industrial harmony, if ever will be witnessed, must strip itself of every form of imperial practice. There is need union members take cognizance of regional differences; such as the peculiarity of our culture climate; environmental needs; and above all; our humanity as a people. Five union leaders were interviewed to this regard, and with the use of likert's scaling approach, the conclusion of the paper is that the major challenge to our practice of industrial relations in a third world setting is the adoption touch of traditional approach against regional difference. The paper hinges its position on dunlops system approach.

Key words: Industrial relations; third world setting, Dunlopian approach

Introduction

Industrial relations practice in a third world setting has been about the formulation of procedural rules and conflict study. Flanders and Margerison seem to be the exponents of these models. From Flanders his position about industrial relations should be about the formulation of rules which on the other hand is the theoretical foundation for policy formulations in organizations. According to this model, industrial relations system of best practiced on the basis of procedural or substantive rules.

For procedural rules, these define status and union relationship between parties. As well, it provides principal dispute and managerial issues for working conditions.

And then the substantive rules tend to legislate over rewards and compensation system of job, wage rates; leave or holiday packages and period or working hours. What then is left here Flanders opined is that the study of industrial relations should concern itself with job regulations. It completely ignored the issue of the social system as a necessary approach in the study of industrial conflict. Charles Margerison; for one, seems to be the major exponent of this approach; having

hinged his own model on conflict development and its nature. His position remains that conflict and its nature should be the concern of industrial relations approach. But also left with this model is that it did not pay recourse to the study of the sociological formulation of the social system from which emanate.

The paper then posits that industrial relations practice, with most of the third world states; Nigeria for one, has been about rule making and conflict studies. This is not too good, considering the present distress in Nigeria's equations. There is need practitioners incorporate the micro and macro system in their study of industrial disputes. What then is left with the paper is to find out, descriptive wise, the extent to which policy makers pay attention to regional differences in their formulation of industrial policies. In other words, the following objectives and research questions with the paper intends to determine.

1. To find out if Nigeria's social conflict state stems from that of the system as a problem or the absence of procedural rules and the understanding of conflicts as argued by flanders and Margerison.

2. To find out if Dunlop's the extent to which policy formulation adopts the system in its rule-making processes.
3. To find out Dunlop's position about the system approach is peculiar to Nigeria's case, thus against the position of Flanders and Margerison.

Research Questions

- (1) Does Nigeria conflict in Nigeria stem from the absence of the system as a focal point in the formulation of policy or in the absence of rules and nature of conflict untold?
- (2) To what extent does rulemaking in Nigeria adopt the system in its procedural process?
- (3) Is Dunlop's approach peculiar to Nigeria's case as against the position of Flanders and Margerison?

Conceptual Issues in Industrial Relations

Practice

The scope of industrial relations practice widens across the issues of collective bargaining; mechanism for settlement of industrial disputes; workers' participation in managerial issues; treatment of labour; trade unionism etc. Each of these needs is not without the current approaches to industrial relations. Globally, there are three of these approaches to the study of industrial relations, thus:

1. The system approach
2. The Oxford approach
3. Industrial sociology approach

The System Approach

John T. Dunlop of 1958 was the one behind this approach. In his framework proposed, he argued for a radical departure from the previous position of historical descriptive scholars who taught that industrial relations is a specialized adoption of other disciplines such as economics; law; psychology; sociology and organization theory (Egeonu, 2015).

Dunlop, having been influenced by Parsons and Semesters (1956) then averred that the system approach as he intended was to analyze the working condition of a people as it varies from

country to country and from people to people. In other words; from here industrial relations could be seen as an instrument that attends to the working condition of a systems eg the political system; the economic system. It also contributes its quota to the general working community. As captured in Egeonu (2015) an industrial relations as a system is burdened with common properties and structures. Thus:

"Every industrial relations is laden with three structures, thus: the workers and their organizations and government agencies concerned with workplace and work community. Every industrial relations system created complex rules to govern the work place and work community. These rules may take the form of agreements; status; orders, degrees, regulations awards; practices and customs."

It then follows that Dunlop's system approach to the study of industrial relations has continued to make sway. Although it has been criticized for being too revolutionary; conservative and being too concerned about institutions to the neglect of human interest issues, such as that of work motivations, attitudes and perceptions. Bain and Clegg argued against this approach; then followed by Flanders whose position was that Dunlop's system approach did not take cognizance of informal groups and that of individual influences in the practice of labour. Also, in Hyman (1970) the position of Dunlop was too conservative to the very extent that it down played the unavoidable place of conflicts in human interactions, especially as it concerns the structures of ownership and the control of labour.

It then follows that Dunlop's system approach would later give way for the Oxford approach to the study of industrial relations.

The Oxford Approach

Allan Flanders (1970) advanced for this approach which consequently, would have influence in the way and manners scholars view industrial

relations in United Kingdom and in Nigeria. The reason for this, most practitioners argued, was that it maintains some theoretical basis for the policy formulation of the Donovan Commission.

As well, the approach detailed a wider contribution to the internal problems associated with industrial relations practice between workers and employees, especially in the issue of policy formulation for a true industrial harmony.

According to Flanders then, the Oxford approach to the study of industrial relations is the issue of procedural rules that could help define working conditions and union relationship. Agreements and disputes arising are to be spelt out clearly for union members to understand.

Flander would further posit that these rules whether emanating from management or the state are to be determined through the process of collective bargaining which as a mechanism for fairness and equity is always there to check excesses.

What then is left is that Flander and Fox (1969) would cater capture their approach with the equation below, thus:

$r = F(c)$ meaning then the process of industrial relations as:

1. r = rules governing in the practice of labour between the management and staff or between the state and the management.
2. b = Collective bargaining process as a mechanism or instrument that can help check excesses of any sort
3. c = Conflict addressed through the process of collective bargaining.

The above thus was the claim of Flander, but is not without the critical position of modern scholars. The approach has been criticized for its overemphasis about power-structure and rule

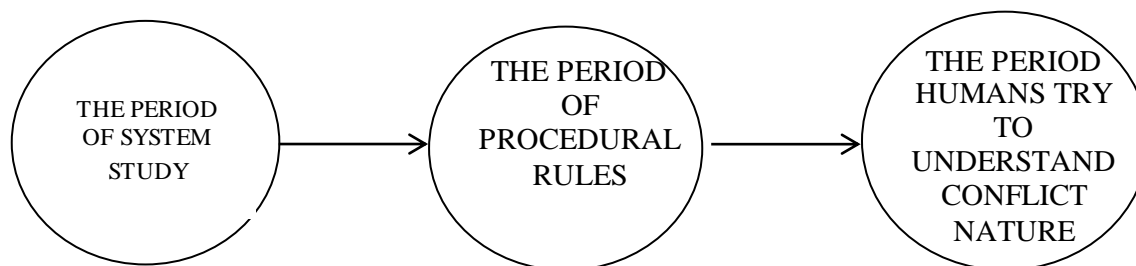
process without recognition to other variables such as the analyses of market forces, sociological and technological factors etc. These, according some scholars, are possible variables that can determine changes in rules.

Industrial Sociology Model

Modern day industrial relations practice now seems to align with this model. Being advanced by Charles Margerison, the approach interrogates industrial relations study by paying attention to the development of conflict. For one, the exponents Opine, conflict is best resolved when practitioners understand its nature. Dunlop and Flanders did not concern themselves with the nature and development of conflict. They did not regard procedural rules as means of resolving conflict. Margerison then would calve a point of departure here; arguing that:

"It would appear therefore, that industrial relation as it is at present construed is more concerned with studying the resolution of industrial conflict than its generation."

The emphasis tends therefore, to be put more on the consequences of industrial dispute than on its causes. It would seem from Flander's view that industrial relations problem do not arise until they are within the formal orbit of the rules of the industrial relations system. To counter this, would suggest conflict is the basic concept that should form the basis of the study industrial relations" Margerison (1969).



Interperiodic Lane in the Study of Industrial Relations Practice

Methodology

The paper adopted likert's scaling method concerned was to find out the attitudes of five union leaders about the various approaches proposed by scholars.

Research Question Two

Does conflict in Nigeria stem from the absence of the system as a focal point in the formulation of policy or in the absence of rules or nature of conflict untold?

ITEM ₁	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total	LA
The problem with industrial relations practice in Nigeria for one, is that the system is not properly underscored before the formulation of policies	5	4	3	2	1	15	3
	4	1	-	2	-	7	
	20	4	0	4	0	28	

From the above response it is observed that five union leaders are of the position that industrial conflict in a third world

setting stems from the system not being carried along. It is rather not the issue of procedural rules.

Research Question Two

ITEM ONE	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total	LA
Rule making in Nigeria does not involve or hover around the system	5	4	3	2	1	15	3
	3	2	0	0	2	7	
	15	6	0	0	2	23	3.3

Observed from the above data is the position that rule making in a third world setting, e.g. Nigeria does not hover

around the system, hence the remarks (3.3)

Research Question Three

ITEM ONE	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total	LA
Do you see Dunlop's approach to be peculiar to Nigeria's situation?	5	4	3	2	1	15	3
	3	2	-	-	2	7	
	15	6	0	0	2	23	3

Also from the above data is the concession that Dunlop's system approach seems to offer a better guide to the problem of Nigeria's industrial relations practice. Thus the absence of the system in the formulation of policies is the major source of conflict engenderment.

Conclusions

The paper then posits that the problem with the study of industrial relations practice in a third world setting is that the concern of practitioners is on the emphasis of rulemaking and conflict study. Not much attention is really given to the social system where such conflicts emanate. It is worthy of note that conflict resolution and rule-making require the knowledge of the social system.

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