

Note de recherche

SYNDICATS ET MONDIALISATION: L'IMPACT DU NÉOLIBÉRALISME SUR LES OUVRIERS NIGÉRIENS

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Résumé

Avant l'explosion de la mondialisation, les études conventionnelles sur le rôle des syndicats présentaient l'économisme comme la principale force motrice étayant la lutte ouvrière pour un salaire décent et de bonnes conditions de travail, dans un univers de travail forgé par un modèle de reproduction sociale. La construction du rôle des syndicats a été exemplifiée et dominée par un modèle syndical nord-américain. Ce concept théorique antérieur suffisait peut-être à ces discussions, mais nous soutenons que l'introduction du modèle économique néolibéral a bouleversé le monde du travail au Nigéria, favorisant notamment l'essor de la précarisation. Il a suscité le besoin de nouvelles formes de lutte, qui exigent de nouveaux rôles syndicaux et des outils plus appropriés pour réagir aux manifestations de la vision néolibérale des travailleurs dans un monde maintenant dominé par la mondialisation. Sans négliger leur rôle habituel de lutte pour obtenir des salaires décents et de bonnes conditions de travail, nous suggérons que les syndicats devraient aussi utiliser toutes les plateformes possibles pour mener de vigoureuses campagnes mondiales pour de justes causes. Les revendications collectives des syndicats pour une justice sociale durable doivent reformuler et réorienter les politiques publiques vers un plein développement des forces productives dans le nouveau monde du travail. C'est le plan d'action le plus viable pour garantir un environnement approprié aux travailleurs.

Research Note

TRADE UNIONS AND GLOBALISATION: IMPACT OF NEOLIBERALISM ON NIGERIAN WORKERS

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Abstract

Conventional scholarship on the role of trade unions emphasised economism as the main impetus underpinning the struggle of workers for decent pay and good working conditions in a world of work shaped by a model of social reproduction prior to the expansion of globalisation. The construction of the role of trade unions was exemplified and dominated by a North American trade union model. While the older theoretical construct might have been sufficient in the relevant discourses, however, we argue that the introduction of the neoliberal economic experiment has changed the world of work in Nigeria, including the rise of casualisation, and has created the need for new forms of struggle requiring new trade union roles using more appropriate tools to respond to the manifestation of neoliberal ideas about workers in a world now dominated by globalisation. We suggest that the trade unions should not shirk their customary role of struggling for decent pay and good working conditions but they must also employ all platforms to vigorously campaign for good global causes. The collective advocacy of trade unions for sustainable social justice must reframe and redirect public policies towards the full development of the productive forces in the new world of work. This is the most viable course to guarantee a suitable environment for workers.

Introduction

In the contemporary categorisation of the working-class movement, the trade unions are singularly rendered against the backdrop of their purpose that tends to enjoy the binary treatment. On the one hand, trade unions are construed as social movements with overarching concerns spanning group identities, similar to non-profit organisations in the same sphere of play and non-governmental

organisations as if all serve as the stepping stones to political action. This context amplifies the neutralised and non-activist grouping of workers and conflates non-activist social organisation practitioners as politicians with active union organisers. But it seems within this charitable spectrum of characterisation that Da La Botz represented trade unions as social movements. On the other hand, in many cases, trade unions are constructed around the political agenda, with all the implications involved in leading strong electoral and legislative campaigns, including strivings to benefit from non-violent political protests, and signing petitions to lobby the political authorities. Fairbrother (2008) tends to subscribe to this latter clarification of the emerging extensive roles of trade unions.

Nevertheless, it is significant that these binary positions emphasise considerations, attributes and methods of work of trade unions. Thus, the positions constitute the backdrop that made it plausible to interrogate the historical argument that the trade unions were established to defend the economic interests of workers. In other words, the profound historical narrative of economism as the defining essence of trade unions may have changed dramatically in the new world of work. In any case, the economist considerations were chiefly associated with particularly the North American model of trade unions and not of universal application.

Scholars naturally emphasise this backdrop of work as a means of material and spiritual satisfaction and that it can only be meaningful for equitable social reproduction if approached from an international perspective. Hendrickx, Marx, Rayp and Wouters (2016) succinctly argued that the establishment of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) itself in 1919 was aimed to develop “international policies and norms on a broad range of labour-related issues. [Thus] the basic idea was to prevent the further deterioration in labour standards in a world recovering from war, based on the principle of social justice as a prerequisite for “universal and lasting peace,” whereby “the failure of any nation to adopt a humane condition of labour is an obstacle in the way of other nations which desire to improve conditions in their own countries” (Hendrickx, Marx, Rayp, & Wouters, 2016, p. 342; ILO, 1919)

The relevant argument we may deduce from all this indicates that work serves more than one purpose, meeting material needs. At any rate, the ILO Declaration properly envisaged that the world of work as the most appropriate platform for the self-actualisation of

the producers of wealth to create the items of consumption for the continued reproduction of humanity.

The changing world of work

The contemporary literature on the world of work still excitedly, describes it within global structural relations. This tendency accords with the preceding efforts to call the attention of workers to the international cord binding them. Since businesses had never ceased to maintain cross-border tentacles, the working class are inexorably exploited on a global scale. In sum, the new forms of work only replicate the past waves of mass production. The difference is connected to the more intensive, brutal methods exercised by the latter-day employers of labour. And so, this future of work, currently characterised as the fourth industrial revolution, involving the platform economy, robotisation, artificial intelligence and so on, have similar underpinnings. Even though the impact of technological progress could be beneficial to humanity, the advancement in the technology of wealth creation is not equal or neutral, uniformly spread or inclusive or mutually advantageous.

Nevertheless, there is no running away from the changing world that has globalization as its key feature. This is embodied in the “international trade liberalisation, international production or service provision, and new technologies, [which] are the driving factors of change, leading to the increasing economic interdependence of regions and countries” (Hendrickx, Marx, Rayp, and Wouters, 2016, p. 340). The snag, however, may be that interdependence does not wholesomely promote mutuality and humane interactions. This could explain that there are nation-state jurisdictional challenges to the pollyannish celebration of the fourth industrial revolution. One interesting example that has been highlighted repeatedly is the possibility of social dumping or regulatory competition to lower labour protection. Levi et al., (2012) discussed this context of social dumping in the broader framework of economies being increasingly global while social and political institutions are essentially local and national. Since the nation-state recipients of globalization are particularly weak in the Global South, they correspondingly may not imbue the capacity to regulate the globalization processes.

Stone offered further clarification of these arguments and explained in detail that

regulatory competition leads non-labour groups to oppose labour regulation on the ground that business flight hurts them. Thus, regulatory competition can trigger a downward spiral in which nations compete with each other for lower labour standards while labour, having lost its historic allies at the domestic level, is thus rendered powerless to resist. Globalization could be an impetus toward international labour solidarity and cooperation, but without meaningful international labour standards, it can pit labour organisations in one country against those in another (Stone, 2007, p. 572).

Furthermore, it is also true that “...traditional sovereign-state-based labour laws and labour systems are confronted with increasingly powerful, transnational non-state actors, which mean that legal intervention at the supra-state level is becoming increasingly relevant. Consequently, national and international systems of labour regulation have become “interlocked”... [and] lost the comfort of traditional geographical boundaries...” (Hendrickx, Marx, Rayp, and Wouters, 2016, p. 340)

This is why it is wrong to cursorily analyse globalization and even blame regulation to guide against lower labour standards. Rather, in discussing the new world of work, it is important to note that just as the fourth industrial revolution features prominently so also are the concerns about the solidarity of workers and the development of the ability to hold their own against the global bosses. This point is important as innovation and continuous improvement in the means of production define the progress of every epoch. But in local experiences, and this was evinced during the 40th anniversary of the Nigeria Labour Congress, the story of innovation and technological improvement is not class-neutral.

What is now known as the platform economy is an example albeit, recent in history that gained prominence in the early 2000s side by side with the growth of the Internet and modern communication technology. Together with the Internet, general improvement in the tools of labour define the parameters in the measurement of the future of the world of work. On the one hand, for workers, the fourth industrial revolution, innovation and globalization should provide opportunities for the production and delivery of a range of services through online marketplaces. On the other, while the platform economy provides

important income and employment opportunities for a growing number of workers, however, concerns remain about the conditions of work (Samuel-Olonjuwon, 2018, pp. 91-92). Indeed, regulating this form of work poses many challenges to the decent work agenda.

The point should be clear, therefore, that the fourth industrial revolution would exert an impact on the workers for good or ill. And the nature and character of that impact may not be too different from the experience since the 1980s in the Global South with the reign of the neoliberal economic experiment. To be specific, it has been recognised in a study of South African trade unions that “the impact of economic liberalism on unions [is implicated in] the inability of the unions to mount an organisational defence against the attacks on workers – and precarious workers in particular,” (Hlatshwayo, 2018, p. 379). Moreover, neoliberal ideas have historically influenced some negative attitudes toward trade unions “as means of justifying the concentration of capital, the subordination of the state to the market and an anti-socialist system of social control” (Cushion, 2020, p.13).

A South African trade unionist, Steve Faulkner, made this point about the class character of recent economic policies designed in the West liberal circle but uncritically transnationalised in the Global South. He spoke at the fortieth anniversary of the NLC in 2018 rather forcefully in his contribution to the debate and noted that

There is a class character to the fourth industrial revolution; it is not a neutral process that has no class content. Who is driving the digital revolution? Are they not the same forces accumulating the most obscene amount of wealth for themselves while the vast majority of the world's population becomes poorer and poorer? So you cannot say; you cannot fall into the trap of believing that the fourth digital revolution is without class content. It is being driven by those forces who want to continue to accumulate wealth while poor people and the working class who produce it become poorer and poorer. Our job is not just to sit back and wait for this fourth revolution to offer us opportunities to sit down at the table in Geneva with the bosses and with the governments. Comrades, if we wait, we will not only miss the bus, we will miss the road that the buses will be travelling on” (Faulkner, 2018: 26-27)

The new public management system and trade unions

Theoretically, the public management and governance system introduced in Nigeria in the mid-1980s stemmed from the adoption of the neoliberal globalization framework, prescribed by the international financial institutions (IFIs). The new management and governance system entails processes, in a formal and organized form, laws, norms, power or language of governing and leadership of the society (Bevir, 2013). The normative of the new public management canons are based on some fundamental assumptions, which could flow both within particularistic territorial jurisdictions and within the global governance narratives.

In the first place, the universalising tendency of the policy and system has socio-political perspectives relating to contemporary forms of governing, governance and governability (Kooiman, 2003). By this is evinced a process of the seamless interface between the varied societal and political actors, taking the interdependence in modern societies for granted and the interactions inherent in them as imbued with an all-inclusive universality. Although the Universalist outlook could be justified in the internationalist orientation of trade unionism, the overarching insight provided by globalising neoliberalism into modern governance has slanted perception. The emphasis seems more rooted in formal conceptualism in capturing the different elements, norms and structures of governance. The formalism of the logic confers contested universalism on hierarchies and even imposed meta-orders on the various configurations of modern governance. Larbi (1999) indeed, entrenched the new governance model into the layer of public management practices. Some of these emphasise cost savings in contracting and outsourcing infrastructural maintenance with all the potentials, risks and limitations.

On the other, the neoliberal ideas informing the new public management and governance system also, enjoin the engagement of international management consultants as advisors on public policy reforms. Hence, the new public management model features terms and platforms like public-private partnerships. For instance, in Nigeria, terms like SERVICOM were deployed in the ethical application of the management of public affairs. At any rate, the thrust of the development policies was either defined or superintended by international management consultants like Accenture or other international policy entrepreneurs.

Ordinarily, the new public management and governance system would have much to recommend for its adoption in societies to tackle corruption, the constraints or excesses of the free market and efficient organisation of policies of the government. However, around the specific interests constellations of trade unions, the specificity of adaptation demand that the overriding purpose of public management coalesces with endowing governance with the strength to pitch for the good life for all working people whether at the peripheral structures or relating to the citizenry in the metropolitan centres of the globalising world.

Given that, a basic challenge flows from the drivers of new public governance and management models, which happen to be chiefly, the pressures from the international financial institutions. In the context of Nigeria, the economic experiment of the structural adjustment programme (SAP) was found to have strongly impacted the associated new governance system, (Adekanye, 1999). As a result, the normative categories of downsizings, user fees, hiving-off of public sector agencies into autonomous executive bodies and the privatisation of state economic assets have come to define the new public management and governance system. This conforms to the findings of Larbi (1999) that suggest the new public management systems have become the new normal in developing countries.

The top-down methods of policy-making wholly promoted by the new public management model seem to derive provenance from the proverbial *magister dixit*; in fact, it could not have found better contemporary resonance. In other words, the leaders at the global centres of economic power claim to know best what is good for the rest of the world. This is despite that the world structures are imbued with analogous democratic testimony of the people. The metropolitan centres, nevertheless, seem to hold that they exclusively possess superior knowledge of what is good or bad, and how the rest of the world may conduct themselves. This confirms the assumption that “metagovernance – the establishment of norms at any level to shape governance process as a whole or as a part of the input and output of the governing system – has become an inseparable feature” (Kooiman, 2003, p. 171) of the new public governance model.

In brief, while it is beyond dispute that the new public management as applicable in theory has grand ambitions, this paper raises some practical questions on several grounds. These include the accrual of sufficient benefits to the trade unions to recommend

the model as utilitarian in the search for autonomous economic increase. Similarly, the application of the theory has yielded less than a positive impact on the development of productive forces. Besides, the new public management has not enhanced the prospects of decent work. The rampant casualisation of labour and unfair labour practices are thus concerning in Nigeria. And so, the new public management system needs to be restructured to strengthen rather than make trade unions so fragile that they cannot defend even the economic interests of workers.

Trade unions in Nigeria

Scholars tend to agree on the historicity and causative factors in the formation of trade unions in Nigeria. Beginning with the establishment of the Nigerian Civil Service Union (NCSU) in 1912, trade unions have featured prominently in social and political engagements in Nigeria. In 1931, both the Railways Workers Union and the Nigerian Union of Teachers separately aggregated along specialised lines and were registered as distinct unions from the NCSU. Importantly, each of the trade unions considered the welfare of its members as the primary objective (Egboh, 1968; Ananaba, 1969). This unilinear economism characterisation of the trade unions appeared perfunctory and a decoy as witnessed by the deviation from the norm when the Railway Workers formulated slogans for Nigeria's political independence in its 1945 cost of living allowance (COLA) strike.

The post-war era of vibrant ideas of freedom and justice also led to labour explosion as trade unions subsequently, proliferated. At a point, there were more than one thousand unions grouped under "four labour centres, viz., Nigeria Trade Union Congress [NTUC], Labour Unity Front [LUF], United Labour Congress [ULC] and Nigeria Workers Council [NWC]. The emergence of the NLC ended decades of rivalry and rancour involving the four centres and unions affiliated with them. The [various] unions, numbering over 1,000 were also restructured into 42 industrial unions" (See NLC website).

Egboh (1970) alluded to the resonance of the Cold War rivalry between the Eastern and Western blocs as also accounting for the increase of trade unions. This would be reasonably evinced by the affiliation of the labour centres with ideologically-inclined international counterparts. The principle and policy of workers solidarity and proletariat internationalism served as the defining

touchstones in the relations with foreign labour centres of the Eastern bloc. Of course, the ideological situational circumstances may not be isolated as Leong (1992) found similar features in the experience in Southeast Asia.

It should be interesting though, whether the new labour centres in post-1978 Nigeria were correspondingly designed, as they were in Malaysia, to combat the influence of communism in the unions. This represents a plausible point for comparative debate. However, the examination of the ideological character of the Nigerian trade unions had been amply discussed in Ananaba (1969) and so, outside of the remit of this article. It suffices to state that with the ostensible end of the cold war, it is equally worth curiosity if ideological debates and contestations had indeed receded or ended entirely. In this context, it would be reasonable to infer that in such circumstances, other influences, chiefly neoliberal paradigms and the pursuit of personalised agenda in the mould of a labour aristocracy may be filling the ideological void in Nigerian trade unions.

Another contested area in the literature on labour trends in Nigeria relates to the unequal representation of females in trade union leadership. A study by ILO suggested that Nigeria represents one of the three countries with Brazil and Ghana where only “there were 30 per cent women’s quotas” (ILO, 2012, p.52) representation. According to Shettima (1989, p.81), the characteristic relegation of the role of Nigerian women in socioeconomic development and in public affairs generally; this work in the background likewise percolated into the trade unions. Shettima implied there was scholarly neglect in the failure to interrogate the class and gender bias against women labourers as a possible limitation in its resolution. Other concrete causal factors have been suggested as well for the gender disparity in labour activism and leadership exemplification in Nigeria, ranging from a “lack of political will to male resistance” (p.54). All this has intriguing and worrisome implications for the emerging world of work.

There has lately emerged a creative turn of special seat quotas for education and training as well as the establishment of women commissions and committees which offer a perspective commitment to tackling the social pathology of gender bias. The measured qualitative leap may have become co-constitutive among the possible forms of remediation of the gender disparity. Perhaps, a possibility exists and may be developing imperceptibly with the recent election of a female union activist as president of an industrial

union affiliated with the NLC. Also, that two ex-officio positions in the leadership echelon of NLC-affiliated trade unions are reserved for female candidates to fill could evince hope. All this is in addition to the chairperson of the NLC women commission as statutory national vice president and her deputy and two ex-official members elected into the 14-person national administrative council. While it would seem that elected female leadership in the NLC national structure is minuscule, nonetheless, the conspicuous privileging of the principle of reserved seats for females could indicate conscious efforts at impactful remediation. Currently, females constitute almost thirty per cent of the nationally elected leadership, a practice that is replicated at the subnational layers. Undoubtedly, the indications of incremental progress need far-reaching engagement to scale up the course.

NLC and contemporary labour struggle

Currently at the forefront of the overarching struggle of workers is the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC). It was formally constituted as the only national federation of trade unions in the country in 1978. At its foundation, the NLC as a labour centre spanned both public sector and private employers unions. Organised under the rubric of the industrial unions concept, the NLC has some forty-eight affiliate industrial unions dispersed in all sectors of the country's socioeconomy. Although the state of play and membership density of the labour centres constitute a subject of interest due to the peculiar internal trade union politics, a healthy estimate of six million members has been applied for NLC and spread across affiliate unions.

Some Industrial Unions in Nigeria

- Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics
- Academic Staff Union of Research Institutions
- Academic Staff Union of Universities
- Amalgamated Union of Food Stuff, Cattle Dealers of Nigeria
- Amalgamated Union of Public Corporation, Civil Service Technical and Recreational Services Employees.
- Association of Nigeria Aviation Professionals
- Colleges of Education Academic Staff Union
- Iron and Steel Senior Staff Association of Nigeria
- Judicial Staff Union of Nigeria
- Maritime Workers Union of Nigeria
- Medical and Health Workers Union of Nigeria
- Metal Products Senior Staff Association of Nigeria

National Association of Academic Technologists
 National Association of Aircraft Pilots and Engineers
 National Association of Barbers and Cosmetology Employers of Nigeria
 National Association of Nigeria Nurses and Midwives.
 National Union of Air Transport Employees
 National Union of Banks, Insurance and Financial Institution Employees.
 National Union of Chemical, Footwear, Rubber, Leather and Non-Metallic Employees.
 National Union of Civil Engineering, Construction, Furniture and Wood Workers
 National Union of Electricity
 National Union of Food, Beverage and Tobacco Employees
 National Union of Hotels and Personal Services Workers
 National Union of Lottery Agents and Employees
 National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas
 National Union of Posts and Telecommunication Employees
 National Union of Printing, Publishing and Paper Products Workers
 National Union of Road Transport Workers
 National Union of Shop and Distributive Employees
 National Union of Textile, Garment and Tailoring Workers of Nigeria
 Nigeria Civil Service Union
 Nigeria Union of Agric. And Allied Employees
 Nigeria Union of Journalists
 Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees
 Nigeria Union of Mine Workers.
 Nigeria Union of Pensioners
 Nigeria Union of Public Service Reportorial, Secretarial, Data Processors and Allied Workers
 Nigeria Union of Railway Workers
 Nigeria Union of Teachers
 Nigeria Welders and Filters Association
 Non-Academic Staff Union of Educational and Associated Institutions
 Parliamentary Staff Association of Nigeria
 Private Telecommunications and Communications Senior Staff Association of Nigeria
 Radio, Television and Theatre Workers
 Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Polytechnics
 Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities
 Senior Staff Union in Colleges of Education, Nigeria
 Steel and Engineering Workers Union of Nigeria

Source: "List of Industrial Unions Affiliated to Nigeria Labour Congress." Available at <https://www.nlcng.org/>.

The NLC is also structured around regional conceptual principles and these are known as State Councils. With a corresponding representation in the seven hundred and seventy bottom-level administrative districts, this octopod spread enables NLC to work creatively with other social forces to advance the cause of the Nigerian workers and sometimes to even make effective forays into the social sphere as an active moderator and shaper of public debate concerning the general welfare of Nigerian citizens.

The NLC public sector unions, organised along professional lines embrace academics and secondary and elementary level teachers, research and health specialists, aviation and municipal workers and so on. The public sector affiliate unions become particularly critical in mass protests and industrial strike actions as their withdrawal of services could paralyse the bureaucratic remit of the state. Similarly, the private sector affiliates ranging from workers in electricity, manufacturing, chemical to petroleum segments, artisanal operators in trades and personal care and so on do often lead to the cessation of public power supply, shutdown of airports and grievous loss of industrial production when involved in strike actions.

The sectoral principles of union organisation have lately been extended to efforts to formalise the non-formal sectors bringing hitherto unproletarianised workers and small and medium scale enterprise operators under the umbrella of organised labour. The consociating moves occasioned the integration of foodstuff dealers, private telecommunication, private security personnel and so on which has resulted in the strictly enforced obedience to the demands of the struggle in the informal sectoral representations. All this has implications for the capability to compel the representative-holders of the authorities of the Nigerian state to come to the negotiating table for the resolution of pertinent labour-government disputes.

It is quite significant that the consensus-building method of engagement with other parties blunted the intrigues of the Nigerian authorities to dissipate the impact of trade unions with the creation of another federation known as the Trade Union Congress on “8 August 2005. Previously, TUC Nigeria had gone through various transformations beginning in 1980 as Federation of Senior Staff Associations of Nigeria, Senior Staff Consultative Association of Nigeria and finally TUC” (See TUC website). Thus, the ostensibly deft move by the Nigerian government to weaken the unity of

workers had been taken in stride that the Nigerian workers struggle in tandem through the two federations in confronting the domestic iterations of neoliberal challenges in the world of work.

As Houeland (2018; 2021) reported, the neoliberal framing of the “IMF-backed structural adjustment programmes have included the removal of fuel subsidies” (Houeland, 2021, p.498). The counter-development framing of the petroleum subsidy argument, for instance, has often been robustly contested by the trade unions to threaten regime stability. Thus the

successful popular resistance against subsidy removals is widely recognised but insufficiently understood due to inadequate consideration of the particularities of labour. The subsidy contestations are considered a barometer of Nigerian politics, and the 2012 subsidy protests – often referred to as Occupy Nigeria – was one of the largest popular mobilisations in Nigerian history (Houeland, 2018, p.14).

Another global example replicated in the practice of trade unionism in Nigeria centres on the agitation for a national minimum wage to ensure decent living for workers. While the 2011 minimum wage experience in Nigeria was tortuous but the joint action of the two federations in 2018-19 resulted in the detailed and comprehensive negotiations of a new minimum wage. The cooperative engagement dovetailed into the swift transmission of the Minimum Wage Bill to the national legislature within a few days of scheduled trade union action to protest the delay in the enactment of the new wage law. For its part, the national legislature expeditiously moved to consider the Wage Bill on the date it was transmitted. Ultimately, the president of Nigeria signed the new minimum wage bill into law in April 2019 within a week of its passage by the national legislature.

While some subnational structures are yet to fully implement the relativity and consequential adjustment of earnings entailed in the new minimum wage, some quasi-private sector organisations simply flout the obligations to pay a living wage to their workers. The treacherous concourse of the employment situation in Nigeria partly accounts for the flagrant repudiation of a duly enacted law on wages.

Labour casualisation in Nigeria

A critical propensity in the discourse of the new public management system resonates in the casualisation of labour. However, the incidence of labour casualisation is not uniform. According to the *Careersmart* blog, in the UK, higher education has reportedly become one of the most casualised sectors, second only to hospitality. Thus, universities and colleges are twice more likely to use zero-hours contracts than other workplaces. Professionals in the further education sectors are also increasingly being employed on fixed-term and hourly-paid contracts. In Nigeria however, casualisation is more noticeable in the private sector organisations ranging from banking services to the beverage sector, telecommunication companies and transportation services.

Adewumi (2020) reported the specific incidence of employment casualisation in Nigeria which tended to threaten the trade union survival strategies in the beverage sector in Lagos, Nigeria. Another survey of a total of 12 trade union officials implicated casualisation in the diminishing trade union relevance in light of increasing informalisation. Thus, the normative collective bargaining strategies of the union become ineffectual in addressing employment casualisation. This is despite the lack of provisions in Nigerian labour legislation for casual employment. It further validates Animashaun (2007) that casual employment in Nigeria is outside the precincts of labour contracts. Casualisation, therefore, exerts a hampering impact on trade unions strategic efforts for decent work for all.

The Nigerian trade unions have been in the trenches both with the various state and private sector employers of labour on casualisation. Through various methods of collective trade union actions and vigorous struggle ranging from appeals to picketing collective bargaining agreements were entered into with the telecom giant, MTN and an emerging industrial monopoly, the Dangote group. Cooperative engagements with the coverall employers' association, the Nigerian Employers Consultative Association (NECA), also accrued concrete actions to protect workers against the ravaging consequences. For example, the NLC and NECA executed a pact between the parties for the protection of employment in the wake of COVID-19. The Memorandum of Understanding signed on 20th June 2020, obligated both parties to, among others

jointly work together to prevent further loss of jobs in the private sector by engaging companies in a bid to getting them to adopt more humane options, provided that, such engagement would be in tandem with social dialogue principles, respect for rights of each party and in conformity with labour standard practices (ILO, 2020, para. 5).

The industrial relationship with public employers of labour has equally stressed dialogue rather than combat. Thus, public protests by the trade union centres have been aimed at waking the state institutions from lethargic conduct and drawing attention to critical issues pending resolutions.

New forms of trade union struggle

Recently, other forms have emerged, especially along the struggle concept. This goes to define the parameters of conscious actions instead of the sterility of the debate about other forms of trade unions conduct and the different methods to be adopted at the workplace. The struggle concept may not totally supplant the hitherto characteristic habits or easily result in the defeat of other more radical forms of trade unionism. However, the adoption of the limited forms of trade unionism may be in the offing, taking account of the emerging literature and ongoing debates between workers, their leadership and academics about forms of trade unionism. The most recent tendency of combining social and political activism clearly foregrounds some of the intriguing results of the increasing globalization of economies.

The effect of the changing role entails that trade unions are necessarily called upon to be involved in broader global issues or are persuaded to pay greater attention to the dialectical relationship between the conditions of work and the environment that drives and sustains the human-work interactions in the globalizing political economy. After all, a rich part of the history of the working class that “only a few weeks before the Allies landed in Normandy, the International Labour Conference met in Philadelphia in April and May 1944 to redefine the aims and purposes for the ILO. The gathering, largely inspired by the founding ILO Constitution, contained the profound statement that “lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice.” Accordingly, the tripartite delegates

from 41 member States which adopted a visionary declaration did not only underpin the survival of the ILO in the post-war era but also defined the social parameters of what is known today as globalization and interdependence” (Ed., 2019, p. 10). This cumulative history of proactive engagement has been passed down as the Declaration of Philadelphia which fundamentally seeks to secure the basic human and economic rights of workers.

The current changes in the world of work are far-reaching in their connection with the different trajectories contemporaneously taken to characterize the future of work. This is more so that globalization comes with its own new public management system. Of course, like many of the top-down policies promoted by the dominant players in the international system, the new public governance was imposed upon the peripheries. The powerful centres of policy diktat neatly correspond to the past colonial metropolises as the current dominant powers are chiefly located in Euro-America. Since globalization was the product of invading neoliberal economic experiments, anyway, it necessarily imbues altered parameters to define the new world of work.

When the addendum to the ILO Constitution (the Declaration of Philadelphia) alluded to the primary purpose of work, it seemed that it was appropriately responsive to the inherent challenges of the old world. Therefore, the organisation was clear that through the process of work “all human beings... [are enabled to exercise] the right to pursue both their material wellbeing and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity” (ILO, 1944, art. II(a)).

Globalization and trade unions

It is beyond dispute that globalization defines the future world of work. But it is difficult to precisely conceptualise globalization. The definitional problem stems from the fact that “it is a shifting and dynamic phenomenon” (Hendrickx, Marx, Rayp, and Wouters, 2016, p. 341). However, it is significant that the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization made definitive efforts to characterise the key features of globalization. They consist of “the liberalisation of international trade, the expansion of foreign direct investment (FDI), and the emergence of massive cross-border financial flows” (World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, 2004, p. 24).

The report further envisaged the possible results of globalization to involve “increased competition in global markets... [that] has come about through the combined effect of two underlying factors: policy decisions to reduce national barriers to international economic transactions and the impact of new technology, especially in the sphere of information and communication” (p. 24).

If we take the discourse in the context of the history of the international labour movement, it goes without saying that the understanding of the prospect of technological innovation and its impact on the future of work featured prominently in the International Labour Conference (ILC) of 2008. Indeed, the ILC anticipated the extreme need for clarity hence, the adoption of a Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization. Therefore, the Declaration was not only necessary to respond to and promote the idea of decent work but also, to be specific, it stresses the “need for a strong social dimension to globalization in achieving improved and fair outcomes for all” (ILO, 2008, p. 1). On closer examination, it appears obvious that the international workers through the ILO may have been prescient to have laid down some of the building blocks to deal with the challenges we now see in the trail of globalization.

In all, it is a good report that “in time the right of workers to organise gained ground the Treaty of Versailles and the original ILO Constitution in 1919 recognised “the principle of freedom of association. The ILO was not immediately successful in adopting standards to give substance to this right. This changed with the adoption of key Conventions Nos 87 and 98 covering freedom of association, the right to organise and collective bargaining in 1948 and 1949” (Ed., 2019, p. 11).

And so, this represented great progress since the right to organise was central to the struggle of the British miners for many years, antedating the formation of the ILO. It follows that globalisation may be skewed against the workers. With corresponding international solidarity, the time cannot be more urgent to defend the right to organise by the trade unions.

Globalisation and the public service trade unions

There are increasing challenges for trade unions connected with public service delivery. It is not a function of the alleged innate incompetence of public service workers. Rather, both the conditions of work and the tools and environment of labour have

been circumscribed by the policy regimes imposed on the Global South countries. Scholars have identified the problem of multi-issue investment in the social sectors and that resources for the not-for-profit obligations of the public sectors have been grossly inadequate. In addition, the nominal forms of democracy are not matched by accountability and as a result, the widespread intractable corruption. In other words, the “public services are poor if the state functions poorly, as well as if there is a lot of corruption and abuse of public facilities. Countries with authoritarian anti-democratic regimes that do not permit accountability to have a record of overstaffing and poor management of public funds. Reforms should not be aimed at deregulation and destruction, but rather seek to improve public service provision” (Keller and Hoferl, 2007, p. 176).

The massive reduction of investment in social sectors, like education, health and recreational services has gone to reduce the public services to a degree of inefficient responsiveness. For example, “the health budgets in sub-Saharan Africa and many Latin American countries were cut by 50 per cent in the 1980s. Even countries with efficient public health services, such as Jamaica and Sri Lanka, changed direction and moved towards privatisation. The mortality rate rose sharply everywhere. Not even ‘Black Monday’ on 19 October 1987, which had been triggered by 184 banks going into liquidation in the USA and which nearly caused a stock market crash of 1930s proportions, was enough to stop the onslaught of international capital flows in the form of stock market indices that had become completely detached from economic reality. On the contrary, the game went on: state pension systems and health services were now in the sights of profit-hungry investors” (PSI, 2007, p. 50).

As reported even in the developed Global North, the crisis of lack of skills has fundamentally affected public sector service delivery (Carter and Kline, June 2017). But the crisis is more pronounced in the Global South in the shortage of engineers to ensure a clean drinking water supply, and the shortage of doctors, nurses and other medical specialists for efficient outcomes in the health care system. Even in the bureaucratic segments of the public service where inadequate training, and lack of regular recruitment to fill vacancies, including the prebendalization of candidate selection, have equally resulted in poor civil service outcomes.

Global campaigns and trade unions

On the balance, we can make preliminary deductions that the poor labour laws and labour practices are necessarily a part of the form of globalization imposed by the metropolitan and developed economies, acting through the international financial institutions on most of the underdeveloped and balance of payment challenged countries of the Global South. Furthermore, the search for low production costs by the industries of the Global North seeks to maintain poor wages and thus perpetuate the de-industrialisation of the Global South. Inevitably, the economic activities confined to non-industrial production explains the underpinnings of their low-cost economies. Lately, the application of the new norms of globalisation has led to new employment roles as exemplified by the casualisation of work. Moreover, many of the businesses in the financial services and info-telecom sectors in Nigeria have developed anti-union employment terms, often requiring staff to sign non-unionisation pacts.

Some of these issues have also engaged the attention of trade unions. It is proper that the international campaigns in that regard, especially against the privatization of public services flow in tandem with climate change and tax justice, uneven labour migration and decreasing health services provisions should constitute issues of global concern. The trade unions should not shy away from the deserved engagement.

In Nigeria, some specific examples suggest that organised labour had confronted the neoliberal paradigm of poor wages and vigorously protested against the unexplained delay of the review of the minimum wage legislation both in 2011 and 2019.

Thus, the trade union campaigns can be rendered concrete from the broad multi-issue focus. In addition, collaborative engagements have been carried out with international NGOs like ActionAid, Oxfam and so on concerning tax justice in which Congress leadership featured prominently in street campaigns and hands-on training of rank and file leadership structures of Congress to take the tax justice system to the lowest of the grassroots bases.

Similarly, employing the new kind of global campaigns and the involvement of CSO in union campaigns have resulted in major policy shifts by the Government of Nigeria on the neoliberal framing of the question of subsidy of petroleum product prices and increase of electricity tariffs. The policy campaigns organised together with

international NGOs like Oxfam and ActionAid resulted in changes to public policy on social protection and the need to work towards matching wages against inflationary trends in the economy. All of these campaigns shaped by globalising canons help Nigerian workers directly in articulating a new agenda towards efforts in the improvement of wages and working conditions. The collective advocacy of trade unions and civil society allies for sustainable social justice has thus reframed and redirected public policies towards the full development of the productive forces not only in the new world of work but also, in social engagement with global causes relating to anti-poverty and transparency.

The policy campaigns organised together with international NGOs like Oxfam and ActionAid resulted in changes to government policy on social protection and the need to work towards matching wages against inflationary trends in the economy. All of these help Nigerian workers directly in articulating a new agenda towards efforts in the improvement of wages and working conditions. Ongoing work with Oxfam emphasises the defence of civic space embracing active media engagement with the democratic project and extending the reach of organised workers in shaping public policy. A valuable lesson has been learned including the unity between the forces of social progress across national borders to respond to the challenges of increasingly globalising multinational enterprises. This is especially important as the transnationalisation of the ideas incubated in the Bretton Woods institutions tends to “necessarily affect policy outcomes everywhere” (Ebhoimhen and Akenzua, 2018, p.3), which continues to exert negative impacts on domestic policy formulation in Nigeria as well.

Conclusion

We have argued that the current changes in the world of work have had far-reaching implications, especially in their connection with the different trajectories of struggle to characterize the role of trade unions and the future of work. A stark example relates to globalization with its own new public management system. It follows that trade union campaigns represent the veritable responses of international workers to the emerging challenges of globalisation. It follows that the response would necessarily entail forging solidarity across national borders and structural divisions. It goes without saying, therefore, that the utility value of global solidarity would

positively alter the responses of the workers in the confrontation with their bosses and the altered domestic policy space.

In Nigeria's experience, on-the-ground organizing and well-timed strikes have yielded positive outcomes in the enactment of new minimum wages between 2011 and 2019. Also, Nigerian trade unions have modified the form of struggle around wages alone as all platforms were *mutatis mutandis* employed to vigorously campaign for good global causes ranging from the subsidy of petroleum product prices to an increase in electricity tariffs. The strategic partnerships with non-state actors like international and local CSOs have demonstrably gone beyond the customary wage issues and instead, represent a long and viable way in the struggle against illicit financial flows, various forms of corruption of public service ethos, labour casualisation in the emergent framework of neoliberal economic experiments. All this inhabits the real possibility of continuously obtaining gains for the struggle of the Nigerian workers. Indeed, the global reach and influence in inter-union organizing would aid public policy formulation affecting workers, social protection and decent work. Consequently, the trade unions should not shirk their customary role of struggling for decent pay and good working conditions. Therefore, all platforms should be employed to vigorously campaign for good global causes. The collective advocacy of trade unions for sustainable social justice has to reframe and redirect public policies towards the full development of the productive forces in the new world of work. This is the most viable course to guarantee a suitable environment for workers.

Endnotes

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