

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **Cognizance of collective bargaining and its benefits in relation to teacher's welfare and working condition in public secondary schools in Delta State**

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The study focus mainly on the cognizance of collective bargaining and its benefits in relation to teacher's welfare and working condition in public secondary school in Delta State, Nigeria. Two research questions were asked and answered in regard to the extent of awareness of Delta State public secondary school teachers of the principle of collective bargaining and the benefits of collective bargaining in public secondary school in Delta State. One hundred and twelve teachers were randomly selected from fourteen secondary schools in Delta Central Senatorial District in Delta State, Nigeria. The questionnaire which was rated on a five point Likert Scale was administered as the main instrument and the reliability coefficient was 0.90. Descriptive statistical procedures were employed in the analysis of data. The study revealed that the awareness of collective bargaining in public secondary school in Delta State was moderate as the respondents were not all members of the teachers' union. The resolution of issues relating to better working conditions, welfare, promotion, recognition and reward of staff were done through collective bargaining. Furthermore, some of the benefits revealed from findings of the study were better working condition, staff welfare, recognition and promotion. The study recommends that teachers should have better and clear understanding of collective bargaining; finding out their grievances and discussing various issues leading to addressing general school disputes and not just focusing on wage increment only.

**Key words:** Collective bargaining, welfare, working condition, union, education.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Collective bargaining is viewed as the practice of negotiation and reaching shared consensus on request of employees regarding certain upgrades in the terms and conditions of employment (Okene, 2009). It is also viewed as the meeting of unions and management in negotiating and deliberating over employment terms and

conditions (McKersie and Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 2009).

In education, collective bargaining is a process by which management and labor (school boards and educator) negotiate to reach an agreement on working conditions such as salaries, hours of work and benefits (Badoi, 2014).

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Negotiation entails official or unofficial discussion with the intention of reaching a consensus. It is therefore imperative that negotiations be done in good faith so as to have an effective collective bargaining. Here, good faith implies that parties involved in the bargaining are to be honest and helpful in their intention. Good faith is voluntary and persistent efforts of the two parties involved in bargaining and are not imposed by law (Yonlonfoun and Agbajeola, 2019). The success or failure of the bargaining process is dependent on the level of maturity and strength of the workers' and employers' organisations or their representatives (Awe and Obala, 2012).

In Nigeria according to Okolie (2010), provisions were made for collective bargaining in 1990 under the labor Act Cap. 198 Laws of the Federation. It ensures that both the employers and employees voices are equal in the negotiation process so as to have a fair and equitable bargain outcome (Olulu and Udeorah 2018). Though, according to Olulu and Udeorah (2018), the agreement scope is restricted by the provisions of the law. Therefore, shared agreement cannot be achieved by contract what the law disallows. To attain efficiency and fairness in the work place, there is need to protect interest of both employers and employees which can be attained only through collective bargaining. To conclude a collective agreement which bind the signatories of those concerns is the aim of collective bargaining.

In the secondary school setting, principals play very vital roles as head of the organizations. They plan, direct, organize and coordinate teaching, learning and other related activities in the school. They are in position to care for their staff, reduce as much as possible stress situations at work including issues related to salaries and remunerations. According to Yonlonfoun and Agbajeola (2019), principals belong to various union and they therefore stand in better positions to calm their teachers in times of conflict. Quality of life is part of employment relationship as explained by (Maslow, 2000), thus, employees self-actualization must be facilitated by management in order to satisfy important needs which breeds overall employees' satisfaction. Principals need to ensure that their relationship with teachers, Parent Teachers Association (PTA), parents, and the community are cordial. This is because strain in the management and employee relationship as a result of absence of empathy could lead to conflict in collective bargaining (Brown et al., 2014). In addition, Mushumbusi (2018) claimed that conflict, social exchange, and collective bargaining are integrally connected since collective bargaining is a social incidence.

The teachers in the school have the right to collective bargaining with employers in respect to issues concerning their interest and work in general. This is done through the teachers union known as National Union of Teachers (NUT) which is formed to ensure improvement in teacher's condition of service by ensuring that they

are not oppressed and exploited (Cloutier et al., 2012; Adi and Sambe, 2018). The assurance that NUT will represent their interest regarding welfare and condition of service motivates and make them to be more committed to their job.

Disputes and crisis has been common occurrences in public schools. This is as a result of differences in opinion, leadership styles and ability of management to meet up with employees' demands, poor working condition and promotion of staff. These problems need to be properly handled and resolved and this is where collective bargaining comes in. Conflict is one of the numerous challenges in secondary schools which could be resolved amicably if principle of collective bargaining is applied. The success of any bargaining process is the arrival to a collective agreement.

Thus, this study is about finding out answers to these two research questions;

1. What is the extent of awareness of Delta State public secondary school teachers of the principle of collective bargaining?
2. What are the benefits of collective bargaining in public secondary school in Delta State?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The concept of collective bargaining

Sydney and Beatrice Webb, a founder of the field of industrial relations in Britain was the first to use the term Collective bargaining in 1891 (Rose, 2008 cited in Ugbohmhe and Osagie, 2019). Webbs propounded the classical model of collective bargaining in their renowned book titled "industrial democracy", which was principally an economic model (Sidney and Webb, 1987 cited in Mushumbusi, 2018). According to Webb, collective bargaining was solely the method adopted by trade union without the employers having direct or indirect interest. It replaced collective opinion for personal bargaining. Webb sees the technique of group bargaining as replacement for personal bargaining where employers' role and the role of their association are ignored. The strategy of collective bargaining is that negotiations are between the employer and the workers so as to reach a compromise or agreement. The process of collective bargaining covers such issues as salaries, wages, increments, job ranking and categorization, work duration, annual leave, promotions and retirement. These issues are capable of resulting to industrial disputes if not properly negotiated.

Collective agreement is the result of the bargaining process. According to Ugbohmhe and Osagie (2019) collective agreement "is enshrined in Article 2 of the Right to organize and Collective Bargaining Convention of 1948. In terms of the Act, collective agreement mean, any agreement in writing for the settlement of dispute relating

to terms of employment and physical conditions of work concluded between: (a) an employer a group of employers or organizations representing workers or the duly appointed representative of anybody or workers.” Therefore, collective bargaining means the coming together of management and union representatives to negotiate on issues affecting them as regards the terms and condition of employment. Awe and Obala, (2012) asserted that Negotiation and Agreement are two key words that are noteworthy in the concept of collective bargaining.

### Origin of collective bargaining

Collective bargaining inception in Nigeria cannot be separated from the formation of industrial unions. Industrial unions were part of industries in Nigerian when civil service union was formally formed by government workers in 1912. After the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Protectorates by Lord Lugard in 1914, it was changed to “Nigerian Union of Civil Servants” (NUCS). The Nigerian Railway Workers Union (NRWU) and the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) (which comprised teachers in nonpublic schools) were later formed in 1931. In 1938, unions were legalized which resulted to fast formation of union during World War II due to the Colonial Development and Welfare Act passed in 1940 by the British government (George OJ, Owoyemi O, Onokala U, 2012). By implication, there cannot be collective bargaining in an absence of an umbrella body or group with which employers and employees union can negotiate.

Trade or industrial union can be viewed as a group of employees that liaise with employers on issues that concern work condition of group members. Also, the industrial Unions Act Cap. 432, section 1(1) of The Law of Federal Republic of Nigeria 1990 in the study of Ughulu and Nwokike (2020) defined trade union as “Any combination of worker or employer, whether temporary or permanent, the purpose of which is to regulate the terms and conditions of employment of workers, whether the combination in question would or would not, apart from this Act, be an unlawful combination by reason of any of its purposes being in restraint of trade, and whether its purposes do or do not include provision of benefits for its members.”

Since independence, the employer-employees relationship in the workplace has been fostered through the enactment of various decrees, laws, acts and amendment. The most recent labour act is the 2005 Trade Unions Amendment Act. Its main objective is to provide and ensure union and labour democratization and liberalization as well as guaranteeing Nigerian workers the right and freedom to form and join any association (Ughulu and Nwokike, 2020).

The amendment of the Principal Act reveals collective bargaining pointing out the formation of Electoral College

by all registered unions. The Electoral College will be responsible for the election of members who will serve as the union negotiating representatives with employers.

### The benefits of collective bargaining

There are various benefits that may ensue from effective cognizance of freedom to collective bargaining. Teachers’ voices are held in their place of work through collective bargaining (Wagaki, 2013). Bargaining helps in the assurance of fair pay and welfare packages, improves the recruitment and retention of teachers. Teachers also negotiate through collective bargaining better condition for teaching and learning. This means that every person connected to the school such as teachers, learners, professional supporters, taxpayers, administrators and parents benefit from collective bargaining.

The teaching and learning process in the school system can improve through the help of collective bargaining. The learning conditions of students are enhanced if the working conditions of teachers are well taken care of. This could be visible when issues relating to the school and the classroom are being addressed. Such issues may include putting limits on the size of the class, specifying the time for teachers and their assistants to effectively share classroom activities, issues of the health of school building and general safety in the school, and seeing to it that teachers invest and advance in personal professional development and learning (Wagaki, 2013; Yonlonfoun and Agbajeola, 2019; Egboro, 2019).

High quality educators can be attracted and retained through effective collective bargaining process (Yonlonfoun and Agbajeola, 2019). This can result to the level of compensation that will match or surpass other competing employers (Yonlonfoun and Agbajeola, 2019). The choice of education as a career or the decision to work as an educator in a specific institution is dependent on the incentive or pay package which is in form of the professional earned salaries.

According to Egboro (2019), research revealed that if teachers’ salaries are increase by eleven percent weekly would upsurge the percent of students by twenty-six percent who willing to join the teaching profession. The strength of teachers increases in numbers when they come together as a union helping them to bargain for better pay package. Traditionally, teachers are being underpaid when compared to their counterpart in other professions. Bargaining as a body will help leverage their power as regard compensation and remunerations as well as improvement in their working conditions.

According to Egboro (2019), in his study on union influence on teachers’ working condition and welfare stated that teachers work environment is disgusting as there are lack of facilities such as classrooms, teaching materials, laboratories, furniture, chairs, desks, libraries, books and hostels due to government failure to

**Table 1.** The extent of awareness of principle of collective bargaining in public secondary school.

Items on applicability of collective bargaining principles	Descriptive statistics			Remark
	N	Mean	Std. deviation	
I understand the term collective bargaining	100	4.25	0.903	+
My school follows the principle of collective bargaining process	100	3.62	1.135	+
I have witnessed dispute during collective bargaining	100	4.05	1.067	+
Control over conflict is one of the problems facing heads of schools	100	4.55	1.929	+
I am a member of the union team involved in collective bargaining	100	3.41	1.342	+
Issues are resolved by the school head through collective bargaining	100	3.74	1.160	+

+ (positive sign) = accepted.

Source: Field work, (2021).

make provision for them. Egboro (2019) further stated that the classes are overcrowded as there are limited classrooms to accommodate students. Corroborating, Ojeje and Adodo (2018) further stated that in some of these schools, some buildings are still in dilapidated state with falling walls, unfurnished classrooms, lack of water and electricity, without toilet and if any, very disgusting, and unequipped offices. Teachers are required to function in this unfavorable and ill-motivated environment and are still expected to deliver good outcome (Egboro, 2019). These are some of the reasons the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) overtime are concerned over the improvement in teachers' welfare and service conditions.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This is survey research which drew its sample from the entire population of 490 teachers' in 179 public secondary schools in all the 8 local government areas in Delta Central senatorial districts of Delta State, Nigeria. The stratified random sampling was used to group the schools into urban and rural, and the teachers into male and female. The simple random sampling technique was then used to select 14 (7 urban and 7 rural) public secondary schools and a total of 112 teachers (comprising of 5 female and 3 male from each of the schools) which was 23% of the total population were sampled for the study. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled 'Cognizance of Collective Bargaining and its benefits in relation to Teacher's Welfare and Working Condition in Questionnaire (CCBBTWWCQ).' The questions were graded on a 5-point Likert scale: 5 Strongly Agree, 4 Agree, 3 Undecided, 2 Disagree, and 1 Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire was checked by a senior lecturer in educational administration for clarity of content and to ensure that the items measures what they were supposed to measure. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to compute the reliability after administration to 20 teachers in secondary schools not included in the study. The reliability coefficient arrived at was 0.90. The researcher with two assistants administered the questionnaire personally to all the one hundred and twelve (112) respondents in all the 14 sampled schools in Delta Central. The total of 100 questionnaires was successfully retrieved after completion by the respondents.

Descriptive statistics showing mean scores and standard deviation were used to evaluate the research questions. The bench mark for accepting an item for the mean score is 3.00. Therefore any item with mean score from 3.00 and above was accepted while any item with mean score below 3.00 was not accepted.

## RESULTS

Research question 1: What is the extent of awareness of Delta State public secondary school teachers of the principle of collective bargaining? The descriptive statistics to answer research question 1 is shown in Table 1.

The data as displayed in Table 2 indicated that half of the teachers agreed that they are aware of the principle of collective bargaining while the others disagreed as can be seen from the mean and standard deviation scores.

Research question 2: What are the benefits of collective bargaining in public secondary school in Delta State? The descriptive statistics to answer research question 2 is displayed in Table 2.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of the study have shown that some of staff in the public secondary school in Delta State has no clear understanding of collective bargaining. They affirmed that their schools seldom follow the principle of collective bargaining. This finding corroborates that of Olulu and Udeorah (2018) who asserted that the idea of collective bargaining has been accepted and recognized internationally both in the public and private sector. In addition, the finding on conflict during collective bargaining agreed with Egboro, (2019) who opined that in bargaining methods and strategy, the interest of labour and management are often in conflict. Furthermore, the finding has the support of Mushumbusi (2018) claimed that Conflict, social exchange, and collective bargaining are integrally connected since collective bargaining is a social incidence. Adding that, in collective bargaining, two parties with contrary opinion and objectives come together to deliberate on matters of interests and needs. Supporting this Brown et al (2014) explained that strain in the management and employee relationship as a result of absence of empathy could lead to conflict in collective bargaining. The finding also agrees with Yonlonfoun and Agbajeola (2019) who reported that Principals are part of union bargaining team such as the Nigeria Labour

**Table 2.** The result of the benefit of collective bargaining in public secondary school.

Principle of collective bargaining approach	Descriptive statistics			Remark
	N	Mean	Std. deviation	
Union in my school strives for better working conditions	100	4.29	5.271	+
The welfare of staff is priority in my school	100	3.27	1.278	+
My school strives for equality in teachers' promotion schemes	100	3.43	1.305	+
My school recognizes my professional inputs and gives reward	100	3.22	1.374	+
My school always requests my contribution in education reform matters that affects me	100	3.14	1.356	+
Collective bargaining strategy improves my motivation and commitment	100	4.44	5.211	+

+ (positive sign) = accepted  
Source: Field work (2021).

Congress (NLC), Nigerian Union of Teachers' Registration Council (TRC), Science Teachers Association of Nigeria (STAN) and they also belong to a body committee of principals known as the All Nigeria Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools (ANCOPSS). They stand in better positions to calm their teachers in times of conflict. Several studies have shown collective bargaining as the best strategy of resolving conflict in the workplace (Chidi, 2010; Cloutier et al., 2012; Ojo and Abolade, 2014; Adi and Sambe, 2018). The finding on the role of the school head in resolving issues is supported by Yonlonfoun and Agbajeola (2019) who posits that principal interaction with their staff can pave ways for effective bargaining.

The benefits identified in the study includes; better working conditions, staff welfare, staff promotion, improvement in teachers motivation and commitment and recognition and reward. The finding is in concordance with Egboro (2019) who asserted that the improvement of teachers' working condition over times has been NUT concern. In Support of the finding, Wagaki (2013) is of the view that those teachers' trade unions through collective bargaining fights for the teachers' benefits and also involve them in the formulation of policies regarding education reforms. He stressed that increase in the salaries of teacher, allowances and promotion opportunities generally motivates teachers. When teachers perceive principals' bargaining strategy to be appropriate they grow in commitment, professional involvement, and willingness to strategize.

## Conclusion

Collective bargaining is a known concept in Delta State public secondary school. The awareness of collective bargaining has accrued lots of benefits to teachers in public secondary school in Delta State Nigeria. This study highlighted the relevance of collective bargaining which various school inspectors, supervisors, counselors and parents can utilize to ameliorate the current problem of coordination which teachers and principals face in the

course of performing their duties. It will enable stakeholders in education (principals, teachers, parents, communities and students) fashion out strategies to improve bargaining in secondary schools.

## Recommendation

The study recommends that teachers should have better and clear understanding of collective bargaining; finding out their grievances and discussing various issues leading to addressing general school disputes and not just focusing on wage increment only.

## Limitation and suggestion for further study

The vastness and the limited available time for the work make it difficult to access majority of the schools. This forced the researcher to limit the research to few schools Delta Central State. Also, the instrument used for the study would have included principals' questions also to enable the researcher have a clear understanding of the view of principal and teacher regarding the problem under investigation.

Similar studies on a broader scale that will cover a greater number of states in Nigeria should be conducted. This is to offer an idea of what has been obtained in other states.

## Contribution to knowledge

The findings from this study is an addition to shared knowledge as it reveals that not all teachers in secondary schools in Delta Central have clear understanding of collective bargaining and that there was less improvement in the welfare and working conditions of teachers.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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