

Chapter 10

Information Seeking Behaviour of Trade Unionists: A Review of Associated Challenges in Digital Era

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ABSTRACT

Trade Unionism is mostly like a reactive movement rather than proactive. Its activities and programmes have witnessed setbacks overtime, notwithstanding the originality of intent and positivity of disposition to democratic process. Trade union is a major component of the system of modern industrial relations in any nation. Constitutionally, it has own set of objectives or goals to achieve. Change in the political, social and educational environment gives it an interface of a forum that protects and advances workers' interests, improves the quality of life and condition of workforce, enlarges their traditional capacity of establishing terms and conditions of employment. This chapter entrenches trade unionists' information needs in terms of capacity building towards organizational productivity as well as the seeking behavior using digital sources. The challenges of meeting up with the needs and management of information by Information Resource Centre of Michael Imoudu National Institute for Labour Studies' (MINILS) in the era of digital divide is review with recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing pressure to explore relevant information resources to better the lot of Trade Union has been the subject of a number of studies (Imbun and Ngangan, 2001). It is obvious that knowledge-based resources determine the rating of the growth and development of an organization in the contemporary society. The scope of the factors of production- Land, Labour, Capital and Entrepreneur has been logically expanded to accommodate 'knowledge'. Knowledge, as it were, is considered worth added to existing four factors of production (Azubuike, 2012). Trade unions are a major component of the system of modern industrial relations in any nation, each having their own set of objectives or goals to achieve

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-0296-8.ch010

according to their constitution. It also has its own master plan toward achieving those goals. This is in line with the International Labour Convention of International Labour Organization, ratified by Nigeria thus: 'Workers and employers without distinction whatsoever shall have the right to establish and, subject only to the rules of the organization concerned to join organization of their choosing without previous authorization; they must have the right to draw up their constitution and rules, to elect their representatives in full freedom, to organize their administration and activities and to formulate their programmes and public authority must refrain from interference which would restrict these rights or impede their lawful exercise, their organization must not be liable to be dissolved or suspended by administrative authority and their organizations must have the right to establish and join federations and confederations and to affiliate with international organizations of employees and employers (Abiala, 2011)

A trade union is an organization formed by workers to protect their interests and improve their working conditions, among other goals. It is a continuous association of wage earners for the purpose of maintaining and improving working conditions. In the developing countries, the exclusive right to form a union and bargain collectively protects workers from exploitative tendencies of employer(s) at work and mounts pressure on employers to share productivity gains with their employees. This therefore necessitates unionization, in the developing countries and even beyond, so that the working population can reap the benefits of economic growth stemming from wealth created by the work force. It will surely cost the trade union greatly if little or no attention is paid to Information. Information as the physical surrogate of knowledge (Aina, 2004) is therefore indispensable. It is though viewed as been ambiguous yet described as a 'process'; as a 'knowledge'; and as a 'thing' by Buckland (1991). Information is a process when it is performing the function of informing, which involves transmitting idea from the source to a recipient. It is knowledge when it is performing the role of imparting knowledge to an individual, where it reduces uncertainty. Information is a thing when it is packaged, thereby making it tangible as record or document. The information need and seeking behavior of Trade Unionists shall be assessed with the view to identify relational challenges in the digital era for possible improvement to exact the indispensability of effective and proportionate information resources so as to strategically position trade unionists for the challenges of globalization. Looking at the development of ICT from general perspectives therefore, the impact felt is varied in certain field of human endeavor from others. However, it is evidence that is a vast and increasing gap.

Every work organization is made up of human beings. Consequent upon this, there is the tendency to be interactions among the stake holders that relate to the organization. Labour relation is simply defined as the web of interactions that exist among actors in the work place. In other words, it is concerned with how workers and the constituted authorities relate among themselves within a work place. It is therefore concerned with the study of confliction and harmonious dimensions of relationships or interactions within a work environment. Labour relations from this perspective and in this context of trade unionism covers: the interplay between workers and government - being the largest employer of work force; interactions between the work force and the management – being the representative of either the government as employer or the proprietor of the employing organization; and interrelationships among workers (inter - union and intra – union relations). Consequently, in this chapter, the terms labour relations and industrial relations shall be used relatively as components of trade unionism

There will always be conflicts and disagreements between employers and employees, either on wages or on the general condition of service of the workers. This chapter is to ascertain the degree of information need assessment in trade unionism, as well as application of the identified information by the trade union officials while interfacing with other stakeholders in the world of work to primarily advance the

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