



RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE ROLE OF TRADE UNION (GNAT) IN THE EDUCATIONAL SECTOR A CASE OF GHANA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS (GNAT), KOFORIDUA IN THE NEW JUABEN MUNICIPALITY

*George Sarpong,

Dr. Archana Chandra, Shuats (India)

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ABSTRACT

Universally throughout history, trade unions have struggled for the protection and improvement in the real incomes, security of tenure at the work place (by shielding members from unfair dismissals); safety and healthy working environment for their members. There is limited research that has only been done on such study. Many researches have been done in this area but there is limited research in developing countries specifically in Ghana. Also, there is government influence on the activities of the union. The purpose of this research work was to identify the role of trade union (GNAT) in the educational sector, where GNAT in Koforidua was used as a case study. A study of this nature would enable people and organizations understand the concept of trade union (GNAT) in Koforidua. The study will help to identify the role of trade union (GNAT) in the educational sector. Descriptive research design is adopted for the study. The total population was 312, out of which 104 represented the sample size. Information gathered from GNAT in the New Juaben Municipality in Koforidua. Primary data was used to collect data for the study. The convenient sample which is a non-probability sampling technique was used to select the respondents. The data collected was analysed using frequency, tables and percentages under SPSS. The findings revealed that GNAT helps members to understand national educational policies, especially at the pre-tertiary level. It was also indicated that collective bargaining was the main tool for the conduct of industrial relations. Among the recommendations made were that GNAT should exercise collective bargaining on behalf of its members as its main tool for the conduct of industrial relations. This will let members have more confidence in the union and will always rely on the union should anything occurs or happens to them. It is possible to conclude from this, that identifying the role of trade union (GNAT) is important in the educational sector

Key words: Educational Sector, GNAT, Trade Union.

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INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

Throughout history, trade unions have struggled for the protection and improvement in the real incomes, security of tenure at the work place (by shielding members from unfair dismissals); safety and healthy working environment for their members. Trade unions in Africa are no exception in the pursuit of these noble objectives. The principal instrument that has been used by trade unions either at enterprise or national level is collective bargaining. Trade unions are also increasingly engaging in lobbying governments and their agencies for legislations that favour workers and their families (Otoo, 2009). The underlying motivation for forming or joining unions and undertaking collective bargaining is, therefore, to equalize or at least reduce the power irregularity between employers and workers.

By this, unions are able to bring about equality, fairness, respect for human and workers' rights, and social and economic justice not only at the workplace but equally importantly, in the broader society. And this is based on the recognition that individually, workers are too weak and not resourceful to demand their rights at the workplace. There is also the recognition that there is strength in the unity and collectivism of workers. Trade unions in Africa have played very important roles in the political, social and economic development of the continent. In the 1960s, trade unions in Africa were very instrumental in the struggle for independence across the continent. During independence struggle, trade unions across the continent offered the most important platform for ordinary people to voice their frustrations and to demand for self-determination. Post-political independence, trade unions in the continent have been at the forefront of the struggle for good governance, democracy, equality, fairness, respect for humans and workers' rights and social and economic justice (Otoo, 2009). Under the Ghana Labour Act 651, a trade union means any association of workers, the

*Corresponding author: George Sarpong,
Dr. Archana Chandra, Shuats (India).

principal purposes of which are to promote and protect their economic and social interests.

The Rights of a Trade Union

The trade union has the right to

- Draw up its constitution and rules and elect its officers and representatives
- Organise its administration and activities and formulate its own programmes
- Affiliate to and participate in the activities of international workers' organizations

The Procedures for Registering a Trade Union

A trade union shall apply in writing to the Chief Labour Officer to be registered. The application for registration shall include the constitution, rules, and names of officers and office address of the trade union. When the Chief Labour Officer is satisfied, he or she shall issue a certificate to the trade union.

The Rules of a Trade Union

The rules or constitution of a trade union shall include provisions in respect of the following matters

- The name of the organization
- The registered office to which correspondence notice may be addressed
- The principal object of the trade union
- The qualifications for membership
- The grounds on which an officer or a member may be suspended or dismissed from office or membership
- The procedure for suspension or dismissal of an officer or a member
- The membership fees and other subscription payable
- The manner of dissolution of the trade union and disposal of its assets
- The manner of altering, amending or revoking its constitution or rules
- The power, function and duties of officers of the trade union.
- Source: Labour Act 2003 (Act 651).

The Ghana National Association of Teachers promotes the social well-being of workers in the educational sector. The researchers want to research into the role of trade unions in promoting the social well-being of workers in the educational sector, a case of Ghana National Association of Teachers in the New Juaben Municipality in Koforidua, Eastern Region.

Research objectives

- Identify the role of trade union (GNAT) in the educational sector.
- Identify services and benefits provided by trade union (GNAT) to its members.

The role of trade union (gnat) in the educational sector

The GNAT as an organization rests on a tripod. The three legs of the GNAT are the Trade Union leg; the Public Affairs leg and the Education and Professional Development leg.

Each of these legs reinforces the other. For instance teachers need to have decent salaries and conditions of service to be able to deliver their professional services in the classrooms. Conversely, teachers ought to be seen to be delivering effectively and efficiently to strengthen the hand of their union leaders to bargain for attractive conditions of service that would retain them in the profession (Lawrence, 2004). In addition to collective bargaining resulting to improved conditions, the GNAT as the largest public sector union with a very wide national spread embraces teachers who assume the role of credible opinion leaders and whatever views they express on public/national affairs is received with respect and trust. This puts the extra burden on teachers to expand and deepen their frontiers of knowledge on general issues such as the economy, politics, religion, culture, international relations, HIV and Aids, the environment, technology etc. so that they would be of utmost benefit not only to their students but to their communities as well (Lawrence, 2004). A number of principles inform GNAT's Education and Professional Development Role.

- Members of the Association must understand national educational policies especially at the pre-tertiary level
- The Association should participate in educational policy formulation (especially at pre-tertiary level) and where it is not possible to participate, the Association should be able to influence policy decisions from a professional viewpoint.
- The Association should be able to collaborate with GES and MOE in designing and implementing teacher training programmes namely pre-service, in-service and further education programmes.
- The Association should participate in quality assurance measures such as fixing standards for critical levels of pre-tertiary education such as at the BECE, WASSCE and professional teacher qualification examinations.
- The Association is also interested in giving feedback to the relevant authorities on quality issues bordering on the curriculum, logistics, infrastructure, supervision, monitoring and evaluation and financing of education. Source: Lawrence, 2004.

Services and benefits provided by trade union (gnat) to its members

Services Provided by GNAT to Its Members

Collective Bargaining

Workers and their unions have used collective bargaining as their main tool for the conduct of industrial relations. For the most part, Africa's industrial relations scene has been peaceful. Through collective bargaining, the social partners have been able to minimize conflicts and confrontation that often characterizes the relation between employers and workers (Khabo, 2008). Collective Bargaining refers to the process of negotiating standards to govern employment and labour relations. The collective bargaining process allows workers' representatives to make claims to a proportionate share of the fruits of their labour. It facilitates communication between capital and labour thereby allowing each party to gain insights into the challenges and aspirations of each other. A collective agreement becomes the outcome of the collective negotiation and may contain issues ranging from wages, working hours, benefits, job grading, promotions and dispute settlement among others.

Representation

GNAT represents the interest of their members not only at the workplace but equally importantly in the broader society. The fundamental rationale for workers to bond together in unions is based on the fear – perceived or real – that individually workers are unable to match the power of employers as they seek to protect their interests in the employment relationship. By forming or joining unions, workers hope to equalize the power relations at the workplace and they hope to better secure their interests (Chambati, 2007). Worker representation could take several forms. Workers required to be represented in wage negotiations as well as negotiations for broader conditions of work. Workers require legal representation at the national level including state enterprises and agencies such as the social security administration. For most countries in Africa, trade unions have fought for workers to be represented either by their union representative and chosen representative of the worker or group of workers in disciplinary hearings. Representation may take the form of an individual representation where an individual member of the union who has a grievance or disciplinary problem is accorded the services of the union. For instance, the South African Code of Good Practice of the Labour Relations Act states that “when an inquiry is held into an employee’s misconduct, the employee should be allowed the assistance of a trade union representative or fellow employee” (Tibajuka, 2005). Representation could also take the form of collective representation where unions represent groups of workers in disciplinary hearings. Collective representation normally takes place where the entire workforce of an enterprise faces possible retrenchment as a result of organizational restructuring.

In such circumstances, unions have represented their members as they negotiate for their redundancy package. Trade unions in Africa have had excellent record of representing workers interests in several enterprises restructuring particularly during the days of Structural Adjustment Policies where workers in the public service were hit with mass redundancies (Josephine, 2011). Most collective agreements spell out how grievances and disputes may be settled. For the most part disciplinary procedures are internal (they are without recourse to the law courts) and afford workers the opportunity to be represented or accompanied by their unions. Increasingly, workers are having the need to use the traditional court system to protect their rights. This has become so because, many of the emerging class of private employers are fiercely resisting the rights of workers. At the same time, traditional courts have operated on the basis of common law principles interpreting the employment relationship as one of master-servant with the worker being in a subservient position. Therefore, in some countries (Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa) unions have pushed for separate labour tribunals or courts to be established. And the unions have sought to assist their members by providing or paying for legal advice and representation for them (Fraser, 2009). Part of trade union representation on behalf of workers also take the form of advocacy, engagements and consultations with national authorities pushing for policies and programmes that are favourable to workers generally and their members in particular. Trade unions in Africa are involved in the development and implementation of public policies, the outcomes of which may be beneficial to the entire population. They have through public protest and resistance influenced changes in policies considered inappropriate

(Okolie, 2010). At the national level trade unions also represent workers interests in several state enterprises and agencies. One area where trade union representation has been visible across Africa is in the administration of social security where trade unions are represented on boards just so that the interests of not only their members but the workforce generally are protected (Fraser, 2009).

Benefits Provided by GNAT to Its Members

For workers and their unions in Africa as in the rest of the world, collective bargaining has offered an important and enduring platform to advance their interests in the world of work. As we have seen, through collective bargaining, unions have helped to enforce worker rights that have been provided for by law – statutory benefits. The specifics of these benefits vary from country to country. For instance, in most Anglophone African countries, the provision of pension, maternity leave benefits, sick leave benefits and work injury benefits have been mandated as employer liabilities. Employers are, therefore, by law mandated to provide these benefits to their eligible employees. Unions have sought to transpose these statutory benefits into collective agreements as they seek to enhance their enforceability (Josephine, 2011). In addition to these statutory benefits, trade unions have, through collective agreements, secured a number of important benefits that enhance the welfare of their members. Examples include rent allowance, housing subsidies, meals, transport services and paid study leave among others. Together with the statutory benefits, these are employer funded benefits. Beyond these employer-funded benefits schemes, unions across the length and breadth of the continent have instituted a number of benefit schemes that provide assistance to their members in a variety of ways. These union-sponsored and administered schemes have ranged from educational support to housing schemes, hire purchase, credit and saving schemes, transport and hospitality services among other schemes (Munro and Rainbird, 2000).

In the 1970s trade unions in Africa (learning from examples in Israel and Germany) were encouraged to establish credit and savings, cooperatives, producers, agriculture and craft cooperative and consumer and housing cooperatives. Based on the principle that the worker’s purchasing power depends not only on his direct and indirect wages, but also on the price of the services and commodities he/she buys, unions sought to provide goods and services directly to their members. It was envisaged that by cutting off profit-minded middlemen providing these goods and services directly to members would reduce costs to members and raise their purchasing power. Trade unions have also established financial services schemes that seek to provide loans to members who find themselves in financial difficulties. The loans are often given with no interest or at interest below the market interest rate. The Ubank in South Africa, the Teachers Financial Services and the Golden Pride (all in Ghana) are examples of unions’ contribution to the provision of financial products to their members and non-members alike (Josephine, 2011). Some unions have also entered the transport business offering subsidized transport to their members as they commute to and from work. In some countries (Ghana, South Africa, Kenya, Zambia and Zimbabwe) unions operate hotels and guest houses that provide subsidized accommodation to members. Some of the unions (Ghana) have also established insurance schemes that provide various insurance schemes at reduced premiums to members.

Table 4.4. Educational Policies

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	6	5.8	5.8	5.8
	Disagree	10	9.6	9.6	15.4
	Neutral	4	3.8	3.8	19.2
	Agree	52	50.0	50.0	69.2
	Strongly agree	32	30.8	30.8	100.0
	Total	104	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey, May, 2017

Table 4.5. Collaboration With GES And MOE

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	4	3.8	3.8	3.8
	Disagree	6	5.8	5.8	9.6
	Neutral	3	2.9	2.9	12.5
	Agree	37	35.6	35.6	48.1
	Strongly agree	54	51.9	51.9	100.0
	Total	104	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey, May, 2017

Table 4.6. Feedback To The Relevant Authorities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	7	6.7	6.7	6.7
	Disagree	8	7.7	7.7	14.4
	Neutral	4	3.8	3.8	18.3
	Agree	34	32.7	32.7	51.0
	Strongly agree	51	49.0	49.0	100.0
	Total	104	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey, May, 2017

Table 4.7. Collective Bargaining

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	15	14.4	14.4	14.4
	Disagree	5	4.8	4.8	19.2
	Neutral	3	2.9	2.9	22.1
	Agree	31	29.8	29.8	51.9
	Strongly agree	50	48.1	48.1	100.0
	Total	104	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey, May, 2017

Table 4.8. Provision of Work Benefits

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	5	4.8	4.8	4.8
	Disagree	4	3.8	3.8	8.7
	Neutral	1	1.0	1.0	9.6
	Agree	34	32.7	32.7	42.3
	Strongly agree	60	57.7	57.7	100.0
	Total	104	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey, May, 2017

Table 4.9. Advisory Services

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	9	8.7	8.7	8.7
	Disagree	4	3.8	3.8	12.5
	Neutral	1	1.0	1.0	13.5
	Agree	50	48.1	48.1	61.5
	Strongly agree	40	38.5	38.5	100.0
	Total	104	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey, May, 2017

In some countries (Ghana and Botswana) unions have established centers that provide a range of advisory services to workers, the unemployed and retirees. These advisory services include legal, career counselling, employment prospects, and social security claims among others (Josephine, 2011).

Analysis and interpretation of data

Objective 1:

To Identify The Role Of Trade Union (GNAT) In The Educational Sector.

Respondents were asked whether GNAT help them understand national educational policies, especially at the pre-tertiary level. The majority of respondents representing 50% agreed. The next majority of 30.8% strongly agreed, 5.8% strongly disagreed and 9.6% also disagreed. 3.8% were neutral. From the table, majority of respondents agreed that GNAT helps to understand national educational policies. It means that GNAT is playing a good role to understand national educational policies, to contribute to the educational sector. Respondents were asked whether GNAT collaborate with GES and MOE in designing and implementing teacher training programmes.

Majority of the respondents strongly agreed and recorded 51.9%. The next majority who recorded 35.6% agreed, while 3.8% strongly disagreed and 5.8% also disagreed. 2.9% were neutral. This indicates that GNAT plays a major collaboration role with GES and MOE in the educational sector. Majority of the respondents representing 49% said GNAT gives feedback to the relevant authorities on quality issues bordering on the curriculum, logistics, infrastructure, supervision, monitoring and evaluation and financing of education. The next majority of 32.7% agreed, while 6.7% strongly disagreed and 7.7% also disagreed. 3.8% were neutral. GNAT plays a good feedback role to the relevant authorities in educational sector.

Objective 2:

To Identify Services And Benefits Provided By Trade Union (GNAT) To Its Members. Field Survey, May, 2017. Majority of the respondents who recorded 48.1% strongly agreed that collective bargaining is the main tool for the conduct of industrial relations. 29.8% respondents as the next majority agreed, while 14.4% strongly disagreed and 4.8% also disagreed. 2.9% of the respondents were neutral. From the table, it shows that GNAT provides collective bargaining to its members. It is one of the services and benefits members enjoy from their union (GNAT). The majority of respondents strongly agreed by recording 57.7%, that provision of pension, maternity leave benefits, sick leave benefits and work injury benefits are mandatory as employer liabilities. 32.7% of the respondents who were recorded as the second majority agreed. On the other hand, 4.8% strongly disagreed and 3.8% also disagreed. 1% was recorded as neutral. This means that GNAT ensures that working benefits are provided to its members by their employers. Respondents were asked whether GNAT provides a range of advisory services to them. The majority of respondents representing 48.1% agreed. The next majority of 38.5% strongly agreed, 8.7% strongly disagreed and 3.8% also disagreed. 1% was neutral. From the table, majority of respondents agreed that GNAT provides a range of advisory services to them. It means that GNAT provides services and benefits to its members.

Summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations

Summary of findings

Objective 1: To identify the role of trade union (GNAT) in the educational sector. The first question to objective one revealed that GNAT helps members to understand national educational policies, especially at the pre-tertiary level. The majority responds of 80.8% indicated that GNAT plays role to the educational sector. The second question to the above objective revealed that GNAT collaborates with GES and MOE in designing and implementing teacher training programmes. 87.5% of the total respondents indicated that GNAT plays role to the educational sector. The third objective revealed that GNAT gives feedback to the relevant authorities on quality issues bordering on the curriculum, logistics, infrastructure, supervision, monitoring and evaluation and financing of education. 81.7% of the total respondents indicated that GNAT plays role to the educational sector.

Objective 2

To identify services and benefits provided by trade union (GNAT) to its members. Majority of the respondents revealed

that collective bargaining is the main tool for the conduct of industrial relations. 77.9% of the total respondents indicated that GNAT provides services and benefits to its members. Also, majority of the respondents revealed that provision of pension, maternity leave benefits, sick leave benefits and work injury benefits are mandatory as employer liabilities. 90.4% of the total respondents indicated that GNAT provides services and benefits to its members by ensuring that working benefits are provided to its members by their employers. The respondents revealed that GNAT provides a range of advisory services to its members. 90.2% of the total respondents indicated that GNAT provides services and benefits to its members.

Conclusion

Leaders of the trade unions are blamed for failure. Members approach their responsibility as they pay dues, but leaders have long ago abolished their true responsibility to uphold the ideals of the movement. Unconcern and hostility within the organization decreases the performance of the union, increasing the union's decline and ineffectiveness. Trade unionism as an ideology favours membership since it boosts the social esteem of members. Therefore, it can be concluded that the survival of trade unions is determined by the unions' ability to represent their members according to their expectations. Trade unions also derive the legitimisation to represent the interest of the workforce from a high degree of union density (Renaud, 2002). If there is a decline in membership these would lead to union's exclusion in negotiation and unions not in position to be actively involved in representing members. A decline in membership indicated that unions maybe regarded as not being effective. Hence, a large degree of unionisation enhances the bargaining power of trade unions. The implication of this study is that it will inspire the management of trade unions to come up with various interventions to promote the spirit of trade unions in Ghana. Similarly, other stakeholders in the industrial relations will understand the importance of the trade union in this era of participative management and transformation leadership. Trade union represents worker's interest and consists of a collective bargaining process in order to provide protection for members. It is also involved through consultation in the development, implementation, the review, and the modification in anything that concerns its members. Protecting employees from unfair labour practices, encourage training of members, offer incentives to member's e.g. medical insurance, legal advice and reduction in working hours.

Recommendations

From the analysis and conclusions made, the following are recommended in order to achieve a successful identification of the role of trade unions in promoting the social well-being of workers in the educational sector, where GNAT in Koforidua

Was used as case study

Objective one was to identify the role of trade union (GNAT) in the educational sector. With table 4.4, GNAT should ensure that it members understand national educational policies especially at the pre-tertiary level. This could be fulfilled by providing training programmes and workshops for members to be abreast with information and policies of the union. In table 4.5, GNAT should collaborate with GES and MOE in designing and implementing teacher training programmes. An

effective collaboration will ensure both GES and MOE initiate, design and implement an effective teacher training programmes to training competent and knowledgeable professional teachers. With table 4.6, GNAT should ensure there is feedback to the relevant authorities on quality issues bordering on the curriculum, logistics, infrastructure, supervision, monitoring and evaluation and financing of education. Objective two was to identify services and benefits provided by trade union (GNAT) to its members. With table 4.7, GNAT should exercise collective bargaining on behalf of its members as its main tool for the conduct of industrial relations. This will let members have more confidence in the union and will always rely on the union should anything occurs or happens to them. With table 4.8, we recommend that there should be provision of pension, maternity leave benefits, sick leave benefits and work injury benefits which is mandatory as employer liabilities. With table 4.9; we recommend that there should be a range of advisory services to its members. The advisory services would help let members to know how to conduct themselves, and know the ethics of the union and their various work places. It will also help them know how to cope with issues and circumstances that might arise.

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