

INFORMAL GROUP ACTIONS IN NIGERIAN WORK ORGANIZATIONS: ARE THEY EVOLUTIONARY OR REVOLUTIONARY?

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ABSTRACT

Informal group actions in organizations are contributory factor to their effective operations and performance. However, in context of Nigeria, workers in organizations tend to portray their actions either in evolutionary or revolutionary stance. Evolutionary and revolutionary actions of workers cannot be undermined as they level at which it is practiced tell of the organization's effectiveness. Therefore, this work explore on informal group actions in Nigerian work organizations with focus to their evolutionary or revolutionary tendencies.

INTRODUCTION

Human beings are social animals with intrinsic desire to interact with others. This intrinsic desire within worker leads to the development of informal relations within organizations (Wilson, 2017). Recent studies have shown that the pattern of introducing changes in work organization can either be revolutionary or evolutionary. One of the agents that can bring about changes in work organizations is the informal groups formed on the basis of what is existing in the wider society. Informal groups can occur in an organisation as a result of the mutually shared interest of the individuals (Greenberg in Cross, 2018). The question we are asking here is that given that they are yet to be formally institutionalized into the structure of formal organizations can there change pattern be described as evolutionary or revolutionary. Work evolutionary pattern can be described as a continuous progress from unorganized simplicity to organized complexity. It is a development form a rudimentary base to a more complex state. Experience has shown that in Nigerian work organizations changes brought about by informal groups in work organizations develop by degrees as a process of growth to a more highly organized condition a fact described by African elders as a doctrine of descent of all living things from a few simple form of life allowed to mask our insights of universal relevance (Goldman in Van Vianen & DeDrew, 2011).

First, a number of African entrepreneurs, the beneficiaries of relatively peaceful transfers of managerial power from colonial rule have claimed from the outset of independence to be seeking to promote revolutionary change with the objective of creating traditional African management system of one sort or another. Many of these managers in Nigeria did not survived into the 1990s.

Second, entrenched colonial managerial power, in countries such as Portuguese in Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Angola which avowedly sought to make revolutionary change an integral part of the process of throwing off formal groups or come to reinforce or create new forms of oppression on workers general welfare. To a lesser or eater extent, these two forms of dysfunctional aspect of the existing work organization are seen as related and mutually reinforcing. At the very least, as one version of the argument runs, managers in work organizations look to the informal groups for their fundamental value, the same time, such managers lack the informal groups small saving grace of entrepreneurial and productive dynamism. The values they hold to, and their gratification, are inconsistent with the welfare of their fortunate compatriots, the quality of whose lives could be dramatically improved by attention being paid to quite basic needs drawn on the basis of what operates in the wider African Society which same managers tend to ignored.

However, there is fast growing literature with empirical evidence on informal groups at work (Chukuigwe in Akpotu & Ginah, 2015). An extension of the argument would take in the points already made by some researchers, about agers lifestyle and the needs of the workers, but

would stress, on fact that managers should not think that they are not fundamentally - 'real' beneficiary of this system of relationships. This is because, if agers are allowed to hold to the contrary negative views about the influence of informal groups, managers will tend to see the informal ups as not possessing the autonomy of a true functional work National group. This implies that managers cannot build the economic, technological and infrastructural foundations for a allowed to mask our insights of universal relevance (Goldmann in Levi, 2010).

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An extension of the argument would take in the points already made by some researchers (Winch 1964), about agers lifestyle and the needs of the workers, but would stress, on fact that managers should not think that they are not fundamentally - 'real' beneficiary of this system of relationships. This is because, if agers are allowed to hold to the contrary negative views about the influence of informal groups, managers will tend to see the informal ups as not possessing the autonomy of a true functional work National group. This implies that managers cannot build the economic, technological and infrastructural foundations for a attempts (genuine or bogus) from the outset of their establishment to foster revolutionary change; and there are those work organizations that have experienced a revival of revolutionary change soon after their establishment, followed by a period when such change was discredited and eschewed by management or other beneficiaries of the work organization.

The experience of 'revolutionary' situations in all three categories delineated above may enable a researcher to draw some tentative general conclusions about the prospects of revolution in work organizations (Kaplan & Norton, 2012). For instance, the likelihood of new 'grass roots' revolutionary movements springing up in the form of informal groups. It can hardly be insignificant. Taking account, of course of the general preponderance of these groups in the work life of the African in the wider society, all the new revolutions have been initiated by managers and workers who share the same value and belief. Notwithstanding that their subsequent individual development may admittedly be very different.

Revolutionary change, as discussed here implies a movement towards significant improvements in the material conditions of, and services available to the beneficiaries of a given work organization. Implicit also is the more precise suggestion that , such change will lead to the creation of an indigenous management system. A full consideration of the range of variant informal groups that have been projected as African is beyond the scope of our present discussion. This is because that will mean discussing the features of such a system which will likely include:

1. Collective ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange and the provision of services, either through the process of organizational partnership, or perhaps through some system of workers participation in management;
2. The organization of production and the provision of service in such a way that these are oriented to the real needs and

Many of the questions pondered derive ultimately from the ideas of Khandwalla in Jaja and Chukwuigwe (1988) as developed in the light of twentieth-century movements in Organizational Behaviour Science and as applied to Marx's (1961, 1963) insights and those of his interpreters, notably Lenin (1977) to the task of creating work groups through revolution.

Further, it seems work noted that workers in Nigerian work organizations found it difficult to perfectly acculturate, because most work norms, values and belief which other formal groups accept do not possess communal spirit which were inherent in traditional African Society; and does not have self-reliance as an ideological base. Jefferies in

made a statement which is relevant to the discussion here. As the author posited:

The quest for self-reliance has had only limited success.

The Africanisation of work organization post 1960's has begun to be reversed by a growing dependence on indigenous manpower. There has been considerable industrial growth, but its emphasis on producing import substitutes has entailed a sharp increase in the import of industrial inputs. Nigerians have not markedly moved away from close trade and aid ties with the west (emphasis added).

By reference to Jefferies' works in Farveh and Osseh (2012), we do not intend to give some impression of the problems inherent in an attempt to introduce ostensibly Africanized policies into work organizations. Obviously, more could have been said about other facets of the problem. Nor do we want the impression be given that bureaucratic 'distortion' of work 'revolution' is a problem peculiar to formal organizations, although it clearly has special characteristics there. There has been a long tradition of criticism of the informal group and their work- inspired revolutions in the west on similar lines, and the problem may work organizations in any consistent manner is well known. It is also clear, however, that attempts to see informal groups existing in work organization as lacking some functional values in the broadest sense can no longer be seriously sustained. However, it seems if work revolution is to be meaningful in Nigeria, its practitioners will need to come to grips with this question of class conflict rather than seeking to deny its existence. As Owusu (1970) noted these obstacles are not small ones, they are more difficult to overcome than any alien government. In this sense, it seems from now on informal groups in work organizations will be fighting not men but nature.' 'But', as Liffé in Popescu (2013) comments quoting this speech, at the end of his history of Tanganyika, 'it was more complicated than that'.

Most managers may argue that organizational change introduced through revolution and brought about by informal groups existing in work organizations would show little indication that this is the solution to problem of workers in work organizations. But, a worker may argue that the visible emergence of informal groups at the workplace is one of the best developments he has ever witnessed in work organization. They might even contend that Trade Unions which emerged to balance the unbalanced power of management has since their creation failed to provide noticeable both social and economic advantages and thus have possess dubious socio-economic value and structural relevance. This sort of development, if real can make a worker an unwilling and distressed prey of management. This is because many of the Nigerian Trade Unions established were in any case ill-planned, inherently unprofitable and lacking in linkages which would spur wider development. Their generally dismal performance was, however, exacerbated by lack of bureaucratic experience and know-how, widespread corruption and diversion of funds, and over manning to provide employment for family and political allies. Meanwhile, the Trade Unions provided little more than a veneer of ideological education and local and national surveillance of the revolution and lost much of its earlier mass appeal and

organizational capacity. that. As a result of these contacts I grew markedly more realistic. What was truly remarkable, however, was the extent to which I understood the employees, their modes of thinking, their way of life, the priorities which guided their work lives and the problems they faced. There is no doubt whatever that this understanding was a key factor in the development of the work strategy, and the success with which it was put into practice (reported in Chukuigwe in Jaja & Chukwuigwe, 1998).

Thirdly, leaders of the informal groups also, have learnt to regard themselves, in the fullest sense, as an army of work organizational liberation, living on terms of equality with those they are liberating, discussing strategy and tactics with them, and never treating them as inferiors or as sacrificial pawns because of their weaker status. A fourth major feature of successful liberation struggle has been a strategy of creating liberated work groups which promote job security and new work related structures. Thus, some of the promises of the better life that will come after liberation can be put into effect while the desired change is still being waged. It is our belief that apart from its tangible value, it will also boost consciousness which will foster the successful completion of the struggle (Halmaghi & Rusu, 2022). One of our respondents in one of our previous work remarked about the problem associated with the revolutionary nature of informal groups in work organization. It was a difficult problem to solve for the struggle: how to prove to employees that they are exploited in their own work organizations. We could not mobilize people by telling them: unexisting unsolved problems. Rather it will be necessary to find appropriate forms to mobilize employees instead of using terms that workers could not understand. We never mobilized our workers on the basis of the struggle against management. It does not work. Instead we used simple language understandable by all: Why do we fight? (reported in Chukuigwe in Jaja & Chukwuigwe, 1998).

It is our belief that the pattern of work revolution adopted by informal groups in Nigerian work organization is likely to bring about

In my 1968 book, organizational order in Changing Work Organizations which otherwise builds extensively on the 1965 article the concept of organizational development was quietly dropped. I focus instead on what I conceive to be the critical relationship between workers participation and organizational institutionalization without worrying about the issue of which should be labelled organizational development'.

Clearly, though, the concept of organizational institutionalization is central to an understanding of organizational change, and whereas Almond and Powell in Jaja and Chukwuigwe (1998) for example, had assumed that institutions would develop to take account of other social forces, Huntington's point is that they will only do so if they possess certain attributes, notably adaptability, complexity, autonomy, and coherence.

Before elaborating on Huntington's view of these a little, it will be well to jump ahead to make clear Huntington's own particular organizational stance; not a particularly difficult task, since he makes no effort to disguise it. The largely unstated assumption of liberal organizational development theories like that of Almond and Powell was that organizational development was a process whereby liberal- democratic work organizational processes on the lines of the west, - one kind of critic would say an idealized model of the West - would necessarily emerge. Their model charted this process, they hardly needed to prescribe or advocate anything. Huntington's concern with the creation of organizational order is, by contrast, much more explicitly prescriptive. In particular, it prescribes what the work organizations in the West should do to maintain organizational order in life world of work organizations. After having pointed out that work organizational policy of organization in the West has from time to time stressed support for individual managers or 'structural forms' which incorporate workers participation. As Huntington in Robbins and Judge (2010) noted: that, all of these approaches are doomed to failure. Neither groupings and forces. This inter-dependence, he argues, is a key to organizational stability. It enables organizational institutions to stand above the pressure

inevitable in a 'modernising' situation and to control these forces. Notwithstanding that autonomy is measured by the extent to which organizational institutions existing in work organizations have their own interests and values distinguishable from those of other social forces' in the wider African Society. Such 'interests and values' are created when, for example an interest group 'articulates and aggregates the interests of several informal groups' rather than representing, for example, only the interests of labour, management or customers. Organizational institutions, in other words, are seen as standing above the hubbub of social forces, drawing from and manipulating them. 'Coherence' is also seen in terms of exclusivity aimed at control. Coherence in Huntington's sense implies that there are organizational in-groups and non-organizational out-groups. The successful in-group is the one that recognizes that its internal interests are of more consequence than interests from outside seeking representation and satisfaction and that the latter must not be allowed to disrupt the functioning and behaviour of work organizations.

CONCLUSION

We have sufficiently examined actions of informal groups in Nigerian work organizations. The search indicated that:

1. One of the major means by which informal groups in Nigerian work organizations generate new ideas or ways of doing things is through their involvement in work control and co-ordination.
2. Informal groups through their actions contribute to organizational change and development in Nigerian work organisations.
3. The pattern of introducing new ideas or new ways of doing things in Nigerian work organizations by informal groups is not revolutionary. Since everything which has a beginning must have an end, we shall bring our study report to an end by discussing the general conclusion and the implication. We shall also be presenting our recommendations in that chapter.

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