Strategies for Social Engagement: The University of Zambia Student Unrests

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Abstract: - **Students in higher institutions of learning have several needs to satisfy. At that level of education, they are impatient to end their dependence and strive for autonomy, to take on responsibility in various sectors of the society. This study uses a normative approach, the study of which refers to university unrests contained in different documents including; newspaper reports, published materials and views of students. Therefore, both primary and secondary data techniques were carried out by means of online research, interviews and observations. Data analysis was qualitative. The root causes of student unrest at the University of Zambia were due to accumulation of the unsolved issues. A combination of causes and the recurrence of these cases have contributed to student's impatience. The analysis model used showed that in managing and resolving students' unrest, the involvement of university management, government and students body is pertinent. The lack of early warning mechanism to detect problems and take immediate steps as soon as the symptoms of student's unrest emerged caught the university unaware of what would happen.**

Key words: **University of Zambia; social engagement; unrest; riots**

I. CONTEXTUAL OVER VIEW OF STUDENT UNREST OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

The University of Zambia, the first public university in the country, was established by the University of Zambia Act of 1965 and consequently opened in 1966. The University had an initial challenge of producing professional and trained human resources to meet the needs of the rapidly growing economy that characterized the post-independence period.

The University has undergone a number of transformations regarding its governance and operations since the first University of Zambia Act (No. 66) of 1965. Among the provisions of the Act, the Chancellorship of the University was vested in the Head of State. The Chancellor, under the Act, was given the authority to appoint the Vice-Chancellor and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. The University started with three Schools in 1966, namely Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences. In its first academic year, 1966, the University enrolled 312 students.

The University Act of 1992 was repealed and replaced by the University Act No. 11 of 1999, which is the one in current use. Under this Act, the Minister of Education has considerable powers over the operations of both the public as well as private universities.

Teaching and learning are central to the University of Zambia functions. They are an important part of its mandate of providing education to appropriately qualified persons. Historically, the quality of graduates from the University of Zambia has stood the test of time, as these graduates have been absorbed in the job markets widely, thus benefiting public and private sectors both locally and internationally. Due to the ever changing environment in the job market, demand for professional upgrading of individuals from private and public sectors is increasing and the University of Zambia is committed to meeting this need.

The University of Zambia provides a variety of services to various stakeholders through consultancy, outreach and extension activities. The stakeholders in consultancy services include the private sector, non-governmental organizations and the Government. Outreach services normally operate on partnership basis with communities which are responding to a particular need. Extension services are normally offered to the communities which require introduction to, or upgrading of, particular new knowledge and skills that enhance the development endeavors in their environment.

From the foregoing it can be realized that a university that was created when Zambia had only an estimated number of 4 million people is the same facility now for a current population of Zambia, which is about 14 million people. The growth of the University therefore comes with many challenges such as poor water and sanitation, conflicts of diverse genesis. And these short coming as a result of an increase in number of students often have led to unrest and riots among students. Vandalism of facility from unrests lead to poor infrastructure of the university and as well as disruption of the normal operations of the university.

II. RIOTS AS A SOCIAL ISSUE AT UNZA

Perhaps it would be worthwhile to examine the nature and background of student unrest at the University of Zambia. Just how and why do ordinary, law-abiding boys and girls straight from grade 12 suddenly transform into rampaging, stone-throwing rioters?

In contemporary times, hardly a year goes by without news of student unrest at the University of Zambia. The problem of student unrest, and other associated maladies, is a soluble one, if only all stakeholders could openly and honestly put their minds and energies to it!

Student unrest is quite damaging to institutions. Severe unrest damages institutional property and threatens the lives of the people. In whatever form, the unrest disrupts institutional activities and has contributed to poor educational standards. There is the incessant closure of institutions of learning whenever there is a demonstration, which adversely affects the scope and curriculum of programmes offered (Aluede and Imhanlahimi, 2004:1-2).

Communication can be used to prevent conflicts between management and students. A number of scholars have attested to this fact. Appleby (1994:204) argues that communication enables organizations to carry out their operations smoothly. Communication can be used to break through the barriers of resistance and promote mutual understanding between an organization and its publics. In Zambia, University of Zambia (UNZA) has experienced several incidents of unrest since their inception. The demonstrations have on a number of occasions led to closure of institutions. For instance, 5 between 1971 and 2002, amongst the several incidents of unrest that UNZA experienced, 13 led to the closure of the institution (Musepa, 2003:97-98).

One of the contributing factor to this problem is the stifling of student union. Stifling of student's union is continuing, without any credible plan to find a lasting solution to the problem of campus unrest. When students demand their rights – often the issue is lack of electricity and water as earlier eluded to, universities close campuses and order the evacuation of halls of residence, suspend student leaders or dissolve their unions.

Stakeholders have come up with concrete suggestions on how to ensure students concentrate on their studies and lecturers focus on teaching and research. Central to this solution is to create a culture of dialogue on campuses, without which there can be no meaningful progress.

2.1 Immediate problems leading to unrest

There is a well-known pattern of actions related to electricity supply problems and resulting student unrest in public universities, and it is this:

- Lack of electricity supply provokes serious disruption of activities on campus, including teaching and research. Students become angry.
- The absence of electricity leads to lack of water in hostels, causing health and hygiene risks. Tension mounts.
- The authorities are unable to find proactive solutions to these problems.
- There are spontaneous protests and disruption of activities in the administrative wing of the university, where regular supplies of electricity and water are ensured by other sources of electricity such as generators.
- Student protests increase and turn violent.

- The senate is summoned and the university is shut down until further notice.
- Students are made to pay for damages and their leaders are suspended or otherwise punished.
- The university finally reopens. Tired of staying at home, students return and within a few weeks examinations are conducted without syllabuses being completed.
- One consequence is 'illiterate' and unrefined graduates who are unemployable and join a swelling jobless army that is a social time bomb.

III. WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO DEAL WITH THIS ISSUE

Students in higher institutions of learning have several needs to satisfy. At that level of education, they are impatient to end their dependence and strive for autonomy, to take on responsibility in various sectors of the society (Searle, 1971:161-169). They would like to be recognized as important stakeholders for they believe they are mature enough to not only understand the importance of the education they are pursuing but also to analyze the whole environment surrounding them both at campus and national wide and express their views. Students have several acceptable channels through which they can express their views. Unfortunately, they sometimes resort to demonstrations due to many factors.

i. What was the nature and development of students' unrest at the University of Zambia between 2000 and 2018?
ii. What was the root causes of students' unrests at the University?
iii. What were the consequences of students' unrests at the University?
iv. What measures were applied by the university to manage students' unrest?
v. What alternative measures could have been applied to resolve students' unrest?

3.1 The Manner in which Incidents of Unrest Originate

There has been an observed general pattern in all the unrest at the university of Zambia. The pattern is as follows:

1. There are periods of indefinite duration during which real or imagined grievances build up. The grievances usually build up when students' experiences in the institutions do not match their expectations.
2. An attempt is made to reach out to someone who will listen and do something. Unfortunately, the person they report to may not have the answers to their grievances and their requests made through the channels get lost in the administrative bureaucracy. This makes students to become frustrated and demand immediate action.
3. Normal channels are exhausted and communication breaks down. When this happens, emotions replace

reason, threats are perceived and fear is felt, and a distrust of verbal reassurances which is superseded by militant language and sloganeering is developed.

4. Both sides take harder lines as they see their credibility threatened. The administration and sometimes faculty come under pressure from students who oppose the dissidents and persons outside the campus who believe that capitulation would result in anarchy spreading to other higher institutions of learning. The protestors, meanwhile, extend their claims to include amnesty for all participants in a direct action.

IV. CRITICAL ANALYSIS

4.1 The Conflict Resolution Process

There are many theories of explaining the causes and management of students' unrests. Many researchers have come out with a good number of these conflict theories. For instance, Swindle (1976), Rahim (1980), Benyon and Solomon (1987), Cronk (1987), Festinger (1957), Ehiametalor (1979) and Banning (1978). Some of the theories for the causes of students' unrest are Cognitive Dissonance, Relative Deprivation, and Campus Ecology. Others are; the Structural Theory, Deprivation Frustration Theory, the Human Needs Theory, the Medical and Friction Theory, the Conspiracy Theory, the Social Identity theory, and the Riff Raft Theory.

4.2 Nature, Causes and Control of Aggression

According to Baron and Byrne (1997), there are five theories which explain nature and causes of human aggression as analyzed by Mkumbo (2002). These are Instinctual Theories, Biological Theories, Drive Theories, Social Learning Theory and Cognitive Theory.

a. Instinctual: The theory believes that people act the way they do because it is their nature to behave that way. The pressure burns inside a person until it finds an outlet to another creature of the same species. The theory supports Darwinist Theory of Survival of the Fittest where one organism wants to maximize pleasure and minimize pain in expense of others sufferings. This tendency can take place in human being who oppose one another sometimes violently. The weaker ones will lose while the stronger ones will survive.

b. Biological: This refers to the characteristics of the brain and central nervous system especially the endocrine system are designed to lead to aggressive behavior in response to special stimuli. So biological position plays an important role in explaining the nature of human being to act aggressively. Scientist disagree that this tendency is not innate but the interaction between their genetics (nature) and environment (nurture) may cause such behavior.

c. Drive Theories of Aggression: This is a situation whereby aggression is caused by external conditions as frustrations related to some attainment of goals, arouse a strong motive to harm. Myers (1990) called it frustration aggression axis,

which aims to harm others or objects primarily perceived cause of frustration.

The Social Learning theory: The theory insists that aggression is learnt as other complex social behaviors from direct or observing others (Baron and Bryn 1997). So people learn which persons or group are appropriate targets for aggression, what actions by others, either justify or require aggressive retaliation and what situation or contents are the ones in which aggression is appropriate or inappropriate. So is an experience in the current reinforcement.

e. Cognitive Aspect: This deals with behavior interplay between current moods and experience. In this case people decide to act aggressively such as going to war, beating groups of people or killing others in order to steal their properties or doing harms to others (Baron and Bryne, 1997)

Theoretical Framework Frustration-aggression in conflictual situations. Frustration hypothesis is a theory of aggression proposed by John Dollard and updated by Miller et al in 1939, Roger et al in 1941 and Leonard Berkowitz in 1969 and Friedman and Schustack in 1999.The theory says that aggression is the result of blocking, or frustrating person's effort to attain a goal. It is also known as the Frustration-aggression or Displacement Theory. The theory attempts to explain why people scapegoat. It attempts to give explanation as the cause of violence. Frustration causes aggression but when the source of aggression cannot be challenged, the aggression gets displaced onto an innocent target. For instance, if a man is disrespected and humiliated at his work, but cannot respond to this for fear or losing his job, he may go home and take his anger and frustration out on his family. This theory is also used to explain riots and revolutions. Both are caused by poorer and more deprived section of society who may express bottled up frustration and anger through violence. Is a condition which exists when a goal response suffers interference, while aggression is defined as an act whose goal response is injury to an organism. However, aggression is not always the response to frustration. Rather a substitute response displayed when aggressive response is not the strongest on the hierarchy. Furthermore, this theory raises the question if aggression is innate problem. There is little empirical backing for it. It suggests that this frustrated, prejudiced individual should act more aggressively towards outgroups they are prejudiced against, but studies have shown that they are more aggressive towards everyone. The theory has limitations for example it cannot say why some outgroups are chosen to be scapegoats and why others are not

A starting point for dealing with conflict is to identify the overriding conflict style used by yourself, your team or your organization in this case the University of Zambia. The most important thing is to look at the circumstances, and think about the style that may be appropriate. Then set good environment for negotiation, gather information of the needs, find solution for the problem, allow win win solution and solutions must be understood by all. Conflict management

therefore, is part of a larger process of ensuring that man lives in peace and in orderly way conflict should also be channeled towards positive effect in every human community (Ramsbothan et.al., 2011). In the view of Fisher et al. (2001) bringing about peace in a conflict situation is a process which involves different stages, the best and most of which is conflict transformation. The stages are:

1. Conflict prevention. Aims to prevent the outbreak of violent conflict.
2. Conflict settlement. Aims to end violent behavior by reaching peace agreement
3. Conflict management. Aims to limit and avoid future violence by promoting positive behavior in the parties involved.
4. Conflict resolution. This addresses the causes of conflict and seeks to build a new and lasting relationship between hostile groups.

V. RATIONALE

These theories of aggression emphasized elements which cause aggression to people. According to the theories, there are natural situations which can irritate people and reacts aggressively as the way of retaliation to all blocks prevent the attainment of aspired goals. This is relevant to university setting whereby students have goals to achieve (graduate) and when these goals seem to be blocked naturally will react aggressively against management, teachers, students, government and the like. The social psychological theories can be grouped into two major groups; theories related to interaction of organisms, environment and situations. The second one was the group of theories related to deprivations of needs.

Conflict management is another way of controlling conflicts before (pre-crisis) or during (conflict stage) or after (post conflict) it has occurred. According to Onigu and Albert (1999), it is more elaborated and wide in conception and application, when necessitated; it involves conflict resolution and transformation. It is more of a long term arrangement involving institutionalized provisions and regulative procedures for dealing with conflicts wherever they occur. Conflict management refers to the elimination, neutralization of conflict from erupting into crises or to cool a crisis in eruption, Zartman (1989).

Unrest results from human interaction in the concept of incompatible ends and where one's ability to satisfy needs or ends depends on the choices, decisions and behavior of others. It is therefore possible to argue that unrest is endemic to human relationships and societies. It is the result of interactions among people and unavoidable concomitant of choices and decisions and an expression of basic fact of human interdependence (Adejuwon and Okewale, 2009). Some scholars posit that there is need to occasionally stimulate it so as to have innovations and improvements in organization or society as a whole. Thus it is seen as "necessary evil" which finds expressions in human

interactions. that it will be impossible to see a conflict less society or organization contrary to the makeshift belief of the Marxist that a classless society or organization will end unrests all over the world. The point, however, remains that unrest cannot cease because it is innate in man. (Baradat, 1999). In most cases, unrest between individuals raises fewer problems than unrest between groups. Individuals can act independently and resolve their differences. Members of groups may have to accept the norms, goals, and values of their group. The individuals' loyalty will usually be to his or her own group it is in conflict with others (Armstrong, 2005). In the view of Imobigbe, (1997) unrest is a condition of disharmony or hostility within an interaction process, which is usually the direct result of clash of interests by the parties involved. Wilmost and Hocket (1998) assert that unrest is an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceived incompatible goals, scarce resource and interference from other in achieving their goals.

Wilmost and Hocket (1997) said that unrests bring both danger and opportunities to both parties that are involved. In other words, unrest can be destructive and constructive. Similarly, Bloisi (2007) sees unrest as disagreement between two or more parties who perceive that they have incompatible concerns. To him individuals, groups, departments, organizations, countries etc. do experience unrests whenever an action by one party is perceived as preventing or interfering with the goals, needs or actions of another. Horowitz and Borden (1995) define unrest as a result of disagreement over social issues, beliefs and ideologies. Unrest has also been described as disagreement on the procedure of distributing power and resources in an organization. Basically, unrest is what occurs when two or more parties have divergent interest over distribution of resources and or issues touching on their development. It is what can come up in the event of staff and student's interactions. It can emanate from university administrative cadre, among students or sometimes it can come up between the organization and its host community. Unrest refers to a situation in which people are angry and likely to protest or fight. It usually refers to troubled conditions, conflicts, demonstrations, the occupation of buildings and even some minor riots by students. They are a result of grievances or demands tend to vary from country to country

VI. CONCLUSION

In managing and resolving students' unrest the university administration should involve workers and students in decision making. There should also be improvement in communication between students and administration, government and sponsors. Government should provide on time sufficient fund for meals, field and accommodation allowances, establish early warning system, improve infrastructural and learning environment. The university should create office for guidance and counselling, revisit and implement constructive recommendations made by commissions Mbwete and Ishumi (1996). The crisis resolution

mechanism included negotiation, bargaining, reconciliation, mediation, arbitration and intervention approaches (Ramsbothan, 2011). The use of force, expulsions and suspension to students do not bring permanent solutions to student's unrest (Fisher et al. 2000).

The root causes of student unrest were due to accumulation of the unsolved issues. A combination of causes and the recurrence of these cases have contributed to student's impatience. The analysis model used showed that in managing and resolving students' unrest, the involvement of university management, government and students body is pertinent. The lack of early warning mechanism to detect problems and take immediate steps as soon as the symptoms of student's unrest emerged caught the university unaware of what would happen. The absence of guidance and counselling services widened the possibility of university crises, such kind of issues is part and parcel of management.

6.1 Recommendations

1. The administration should improve the level of involvement of staff and students in the decision making process and other university affairs and respecting staff and student's interests and rights.
2. Management, government and sponsors should honor their promises to students. If there are anticipated delays, should be put explicitly to those concern. If there are changes in policy, these should be articulated in advance.

3. There is a need to improve communication system between the Students' Organization, students and the university administration. The Students Organization can be asked to write regular reports on students concerns so that can be given priority by the administration. The administration can conduct seminars and orientations to students, students and faculties to ensure forum and open discussions. Sponsors and trainers should communicate frequently and exchange notes on student's issues

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