

A Reflection on Public Policies, Labour and Industrial Relations' Practices, Development or Underdevelopment in Africa's Postcolonial States - A Marxist Analysis for Emerging Democracies

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Abstract

This paper revisits the character of public policies, to delineate labour and industrial relations' practices to determine if the current character of L&IR in Africa's postcolonial states promotes development or underdevelopment. It argues that, it is a policy shortfall with ominous political, economic and social malevolence to alienate L&IR's practices, especially labour in goods/services. It asserts that, L&IR being the root of all human survival. Obviously, the formal practice of L&IR starts from policymaking to fashion labour, and ends in goods, services including consumption. Using Marxist analysis and the elite theory in policymaking, the paper reiterates that, the few people - elites, who claim wealth, knowledge and power in labour issues; use such power to impose their labour preferences upon society's politics and economies; to alienate labour and industrial relations practices. Consequently, L&IR becomes a gratuitous beneficiary of underdevelopment policies, which gyrate to secure decisive positions in society for elites to perpetuate social strata that indecorously estrange the masses. Thus, Africa's masses continue in sordid material conditions and economic factors, which dilute L&IR's noble place in societies. The paper develops a basis that not only reveals the inseparability of labour/worker from goods and services, but also the weaknesses of labour economics and human resource management theories in capitalist societies.

Key words: Policy, labour, industrial, development, underdevelopment, economy, Marxist, Africa

Introduction

Herein we revisit this paper to augment its academic contents, because, postcolonial African states asphyxiate in debilitating underdevelopment in human history. However, this might no longer represent a news item; or a striking research problem. An attention-grabbing research problem could be for instance, to examine the causes of the incessant and endemic underdevelopment in Africa; away from the over-flogged culprits – slavery and colonialism.¹ Several decades since self-rules, even these culprits should be exculpated. So, to understand the causes of Africa's underdevelopment, one must understand the characters of labour public policies churned by nascent Africa's political leaders. Policies are *par excellence*, the most single vital agents of growth or undergrowth, next in eminence only to God. For instance, to understand the character of labour and industrial relations' practices in postcolonial Africa's states, one's best path is the public policies rolled into societies by Africa's ruling cliques, using the elite theory.²

As these policies shape L&IR practices, L&IR practices shape the level of human cognitive capabilities and the ensuing material conditions and economic factors; hence, development or underdevelopment ensues in societies. As Adebayo,³ asserts, “given Africa’s current underdevelopment, arguably prodded by the West and abetted by Africa’s nascent punchline political leaderships, issues related to articulating development-oriented public policies towards L&IR practices to synchronise increased wealth creation, reduce poverty and accelerate human and material growth in Africa, resonate with trepidations in worrying dimensions; not only to wage-earners but also to the continent’s conscientious employers of labour.” Essentially, the wage-earner, referred to by Karl Marx (1818 – 1883)⁴ as “the proletariat” has inexplicably undergone untold distortions, from a full-fledged workaholic, to a lethargic non-achiever, who although created into a socio-economic milieu endowed with abundant natural resources lives in abject poverty, with calamitous socio-economic and political alienation.

¹ Ake, C., (1981), *A Political Economy of Africa*, London: Longman

² Onimode, B., (1983), *Imperialism and Underdevelopment in Nigeria*, London: Macmillan Press Ltd

³ Adebayo, B. D., (2019), *Development Perspective on Employment Relationship in Africa*, Lagos: MECK Books

⁴ Marx, K., (1986), *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy Vol.1*, Moscow: Progress Publishers.

Thus, policies outcomes on labour and industrial relations from punchline African leaders continue to thwart and dilute the noble position occupied by labour as the substratum for wealth creation, poverty mitigation, and accelerated development *par excellence*. Consequently, this paper mounts to discern the core beliefs, which characterise the dominant public policy thinking, on labour and industrial relations practices and how this abet Africa’s current underdevelopment level. It argues that, it is sheer mischief for a person in any system of political, economic or social life to alienate labour from goods, services, because, cyclically, the whole idea of labour and industrial relations starts with policymaking, which creates the character of labour, then ends in goods and services. Undoubtedly, these are inseparable bedfellows for wealth creation in societies; with labour being the foremost.

Thus, Marx sharply typifies labour, its importance, utility and its place in the production process, including the ignominy associated to the working-class, thus: “...those individuals in society, who sell or mortgage their labour power for a collateral (usually paltry wages) and who do not own the means of production; and for not owning the means and forces of production, do not receive any enviable share of the product of their labour power: money, goods or services, respect for their labour; and thus become alienated from the products of their atom of energy, are the same people who capitalist societies either milk to death or banish into

poverty.” As Marx argues, “...although these people are disastrously maltreated by mainstream capitalist societies, they are actually at the centre stage for propelling societies’ political, economic and social life, all of which are the outcomes of policymaking. Accordingly, the paper proceeds with examining the nexus between the elite theory, labour and industrial relations practices, and the ensuing development or underdevelopment in Africa.”⁵

Elite theory, labour and industrial relations practices, development and underdevelopment in Africa

As Lenin⁶ once said, “...the repulsive character of labour and industrial relations practices in various human societies is lavishly emitted by self-seeking public policies, incarnated by insensitive ruling elites against the masses.” Similarly, as Damele and Santos⁷ note, “...in the last few years, keen attention has been paid to the contrapositions held between people – the masses and elite, perceived as a fundamental talk of the anti-elitist discourse.” Herein, both the masses and the elite supposedly express a conception of a will of homogeneous interest. But, criticisms levelled against elitism, typically focus on how their views distort the values and ends of democratic procedures, especially how it misconstrues the masses through biased policy insinuations, which surround the use of labour power. Certainly, this is not strange, because of the existence of a tradition dating back to the nineteenth century’s that sought to identify the internal dynamics of elites against the masses. With changes in societies, which increased franchise in the West, V. Pareto⁸, G. Mosca,⁹ and R. Michels¹⁰ saw unbridled policy cruelty against the masses.¹¹

⁵. *Ibid.*, p.67

⁶. Lenin, V.I., (1920), *Imperialism as the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Moscow: Progress Publisher

⁷. Damele, G., and Campos, A. S., (2022) *Elite Theory: Philosophical Challenges*, Topoi Dordr, February, 41 (1) pp 1 - 5

⁸. Vilfredo, P., (1848-1923), *The Transformation of Democracy*, London: Penguin Classics

⁹. Gaetano, M., (1858–1941), *Non Political Classes*, New York: Little Brown and Brown

¹⁰. Robert, M., (1876–1936), *The Iron Law of Oligarchy*, London: University of London Press

¹¹. See Yakima, F., (2010), *Labour Movements, Manpower and Development in Africa*, Lagos: JESS Books,

While insisting that politics is always a game of power struggle in and out of the ruling elite, these authors centred their analysis on the unintended political consequences of rational behaviours, especially by establishing a distinction between the ‘rhetoric of legitimation and true motives, which in turn mirrored a more significant and fundamental social distinction between the ruling class and the ruled (per Mosca) or between the elite and the non-elite (per Pareto), all of which arose from policymaking. Definitely, “...democratic elitism played a prominent role in distorting democratisation that took place after the Second World War by

providing a conceptual and explanatory framework for the emergence of regimes,”¹² which are exceedingly dependent on well organised, centralised dominant parties, and which primitively appropriated the products of labour, by creating alienated workers’ inhuman material conditions and economic factors in societies. Hence, “...this framework and its practical effects has been challenged recently not only by populist political movements but also by theorists of deliberative and participatory democratic policymaking, who emphasise the direct involvement of citizens in informed processes of collective decision-making, since such movements accuse democratic elitism of being either a perversion of democracy or no democracy at all.”¹³

Accordingly, scholars¹⁴ outline, elitism as involving elements, which are anti-labour and growth in Africa, thus:

- a) The primary objective of every elites is to preserve power and privilege against any opposing forces.
- b) The rule of the elite is based upon force and fraud through policies that reinforce their preferences in societies.
- c) The elite social structure is sustained by a political formula that typically must correlate with; and generally be accepted as religion, ideology or myth by the whole society.
- d) Every elite has two opposing tendencies: (a) an aristocratic tendency, by which the elitism seeks to preserve the ruling position of its members and to prevent others from entering its ranks; (b) a heretic democratic tendency by which (i) new elements force their way into the elite from below or (ii) the ruling class self-recycles by absorbing only elements from their ranks.
- e) Elites adore undue paradigms shift in their composition and structure in situations of social upheavals.

For Pareto¹⁵ the elite theory is truly premised unto falsehood, and the misuse of labour and industrial relations practices; a view which serves as the primary instrument against the masses. Thus, the choking of labour and industrial relations practices must never be of concern because of the inner features of elitism. Thus, in most societies power and means of production are held by minority. So, if labour and industrial relations must survive; even in democratic societies, popular rule must prevail, hence, Marxist resolve on seizing the means of production.¹⁶

Both Mosca and Pareto tried to translate the simple, but almost obvious, observation that all organised societies consist of a vast majority without any political power, with a small minority of all-power-holders. And as they assert,

¹². *Ibid.*, p. 39

¹³. *Ibid.*, p.40

¹⁴. Hirschman, A. O., (1991), *The Rhetoric of Reaction*: Cambridge: The Belknap Press of H. U. Press.

¹⁵. Vilfredo, P., (1848-1923), *The Transformation of Democracy*, London: Penguin Classics

¹⁶. Lenin, *Op. Cit.*, p.15

this represents the object of a true science of undemocratic and misleading politics that is meant to provide profound understanding of how the political class recruits itself, maintains itself in power, recycles and illegitimizes power and how this class deprives the masses of their true self-actualisation obtained through their own labour power. Thus, the elite creation and control of labour laws such as law No 92/0092 of 14th August 1992¹⁷ in Cameroon, like elsewhere in Africa, flourishes theoretically but empirically, such laws demean the character of labour and industrial relations practices between the state, employers and employees, mostly at the detriment of labour – the worker. For example, in Cameroon, despite this law, there is no robust, solid and popularly organised labour/workers' movement, with clear democratic paraphernalia to engage into collective bargaining, enviably progressive social dialogues or any kind of negotiations with the state for the purposes of injecting democracy into labour practices. Said differently, Cameroon, like in most of Africa, except in Nigeria, South Africa, organised and democratic labour movements do not exist as an alternative government, capable of challenging state authorities to address socio-economic and political issues of national interest, especially labour.¹⁸

Justification of the Marxist analytical method in this paper

Essentially, this paper seeks to prove that, elitist theory negatively drives labour and industrial relations practices, which in turn shape underdevelopment in Africa. To achieve this ambition, the paper adopted the Marxist analytical method, because of its capacity to discern and explain phenomena from their causes and consequences. Originating from the annals of the skewed social relations between the state, employers and employees, the method's philosophical position is that, labour power offers value to industries and the market, which serve as a form of socio-economic outlet of goods and services, but such labour is alienated due to the self-seeking character of public policies foisted unto society by the ruling elites. The method rejects the various political and socio-economic categories and structures that practically appear inequitable but constitute the mainstream trends concerning the forms and modalities of income and expenditure mobilisation, allocation and distribution in societies. It further rejects what it describes as capitalism's policies trends, which have no respect for labour. It suggests that, the management of public affairs, such as labour and industrial relations practices should be anchored upon soundly articulated democratic public policies, which are peoples' friendly and development-

oriented. Nonetheless, multiple critiques of the Marxist method of analysis exist today, which commonly but falsely agree that: ¹⁹

- Labour and capital have historically specific forms of social relations, and that labour is not the source of all wealth;
- Labour is the other side of the same coin as capital, labour presupposes capital, and capital presupposes labour;
- Labour must be subjected to money, which must be decided by means of production, which goes for the whole economy.
- Labour is a category specific to the mode of production, and gains its composite values only by the caprices of capitalism.
- The individual does not exist in some form of vacuum but is rather enmeshed in social relations of production to diligently serve another person for a wage, as it has been sanctioned by the sovereignty character of the state. But what sovereignty?

¹⁷. Law No 92/0092 of 14th August 1992, Relating to the Labour Code

¹⁸. Mosca G. *The ruling class* (1939), New York: McGraw-Hill; See also Pareto V. *The mind and society*, (1935), New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co; 1935.

¹⁹. Dror, Y., (1984), *The Capacity to Govern*, London: CASS

Consequently, at the roots of the foregoing, is the revelation that, for Africa to develop, elitism must accept to work with the masses, because true sovereignty belongs to the masses. Africa must possess dedicated individuals with democratic mindsets, grounded in policymaking, attuned to the enviable distinctions of statesmen and women, who preside over what Dror¹⁹ calls, “national and international relations high order tasks,” in the management of public affairs, especially in labour and industrial relations, it being the primordial human discipline, through which the scientific, technological and artistic processes of wealth creation, poverty reduction, nation-building, and the eventual national development efforts are galvanised and attained.

As Ackers²⁰ stresses, “...since the 1980s, international relations have virtually been visited with barrages of successive disputes over the foundations of aspects of labour and industrial relations, which until then had been taken for granted. Thus, scholars²¹ have increasingly challenged the persistent core assumptions, for instance, about the meaning of sovereignty as argued by most African countries, which oppose international interference in their labour issues, or the implications of anarchy and policies on human labour vis-à-vis the production and consumption of goods and services. Yet, another core concept has been frequently addressed in various guises and rubrics but till today has never been systematically

disentangled even at the level of interdisciplinary debates such as the human labour element in international relations and in particular foreign policymaking.²²

Essentially, be it at the national or international relations, man must work, because work is his primary economic activity; and the purposes of man's economic activity is to harness his own material conditions and economic factors of life,²³ including his dignified self-placement and relevance in his pursuit of his existentialism. Thus, man becomes dominantly different from other creatures, given his higher cognitive level in national and international affairs. In making man's labour relevant, there must exist good relations between the employer and employees.

In Engels (1770 -1831) words:

"...the failure of the man in emerging states is a function of his inability to conquer nature through his cognitive capacities, especially in utilising his atom of energy - labour with dignity in the processes of production. These cognitive capacities become the central vector in policymaking, which prod dignified labour and industrial relations practices to enhance development in societies."²⁴

Thus, while in England, Engels became horrified by the disdainful character of child labour, environmental damage, low wages, bad conditions, poor health, death rates – and the 'social and political power of your oppressors'. Thus, said differently, the frameworks and channels through which industrial and labour relations is regarded as a man's dependable, necessary, inevitable and respected partner in the processes of national development are radiated by the

²⁰ Ackers, P., and Adrian, W., (2003), *Understanding Work and Employment: Industrial and Labour Relations in Transition*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dror, Y., (1984), *The Capacity to Govern*, London: CASS

²¹ Boyer, G., and Robert S., (2001), "The Neoclassical Tradition in Labor Economics." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 54 (2), pp. 199 –223.

²² Ake, C., (1981), *A Political Economy of Africa*, London: Longman

²³ *Ibid.*, p.3

²⁴ Engels, F., (1770 -1831), *The Conditions of the Working Class in England*. London: ME Press

nature of public policies for managing politics, economics through the concept of human atom of energy, otherwise called labour. Furthermore, the fashioning of an enabling or coercive character of labour - skilled or unskilled, cognitive, psychomotor or affective domains, respected or snubbed arises from the mindsets of managers of public affairs – the State, its government and people thereof.

As Williamson²⁵ observes, "...it is these policies that finally fashion the oddity of industrial and labour relations between the state, public or private employers of labour and the workers, at the individual or collective scale; and which finally produce exhilarating or humdrum character of societies and citizens' livelihood therein." In the believe that, labour has the capacity to overturn world hunger, poverty and sordid material conditions and economic factors

a Cameroonian²⁶ musician sang, “...*le vrai magique ce le travail*” translated as “...true magic for obtaining wealth is doing a conscious economic activity, which is work”. Actually this makes the pertinence of labour as a viable politico-social and economic-cultural instrument of development. But to the scholar of public administration, political science or sociology, the ensuing question is: What is labour and how can we, beyond rhetoric of capitalism characterise the utilisation, utility and benefits of labour, vis-à-vis the products of such labour, such as goods and services and development in societies?

Labour and industrial relations practices versus capitalism: A brief exposition

Essentially, in a domineering posture, capitalism holds that, labour and industrial relations must be subjected to the caprices of private property, in exchange for a wage, hence, there is need to expound the concepts of labour, industrial and relations in their three operational meanings, namely: industry, labour and relations. Industry refers to any combination of efforts in the production of goods or services in which an individual or group of individuals invest financial resources. It could be a sugar industry, the beer industry, the palm oil industry, the cocoa industry, the car industry, the education industry, the insurance or banking and finance industries, and so on. By labour we refer to the human atom of energy exerted in using the objects and instruments of labour – the brain, hands, legs, knives, hoes, machines, land, and so on; to actualise the means of production. Herein, we also mean the human atom of energy to realise a specific wealth creating task. By relations, we mean “the intra and inter interactions that must exist in or between industries, especially between the employer and employee. As Kay²⁷ opines, “The term labour and industrial relations connotes those politico-economic and socio-cultural activities, which stem directly or indirectly from union/worker - employer relations, geared to wealth creation from which capitalism strategises to exploit the workers, thereby reckoning labour as a commodity from which oppressors must garner private wealth.” Nevertheless, the separation of ownership from control within the individual firm and the role played by the state in directing and planning capitalist production, has denied L&IR much of its overwhelming significance. To claim that private property is now a historical relic of an earlier phase of capitalist production would perhaps, be to exaggerate

²⁵ Williamson, O., (1985), *The Economic Institutions of Capitalism*, New York, Free Press.

²⁶ Kamga, J.M., (2021), *Le vrai magique de l'argent ce le travail*, Yaoundé : CMC

²⁷ Kay, G., (1982), *Development and Underdevelopment: A Marxist Analysis*, London: MacMillan

the importance of what Galbraith²⁸ calls the “*techno-structure*” whereas, it is true saying that, the personal gains of the individual capitalist still remains the means through which the principle of primitive accumulation of wealth thrives as a social force against L&IR practices, especially in Africa.

Thus, the working class struggle is not a historical constant, both in its form and content, rather it changes in response to the development of capitalism. It is not that once demands are obtained, such as eighth or ten-hour day work, free education and full employment, and so on; labour loses its significance however partial this satisfaction might be. But that the ongoing struggle of the working class for higher wages and against sordid material conditions and economic factors must themselves be changed by the development of capitalism. As the mode of production develops and capital realises itself ever more fully as a negated relation of production, working class struggle is continually transformed to wrestle the immediate and contingent forms of capitalism; wherein labour challenges the very foundations of capitalist existence. So, the terrain of class struggle ceases to be any particular set of property relations but becomes the against capitalism itself. Therefore, as Marxists opine, as the ownership of the means of production ceases to hold against labour, the centre stage of the struggle against capital is forced by the objective conditions of labour to become a struggle against primitive gathering, subjugation, alienation and exploitation.²⁹

The objectives of labour and industrial relations

According to Kaufman,³⁰ certain objectives incarnate L&IR practices, namely:

1. To safeguard the interest of labour and management by securing the highest level of mutual good-will among all those within the industry, for the benefit of wealth production, social harmony and human development;
2. To avoid industrial conflict or strife by developing pleasant relations, which are an essential factor for productivity and industrial progress of a country;
3. To raise the productivity levels, during the periods of full employment, by lessening the trends of low turnover and frequent absenteeism;
4. To establish and promote the growth of an industrial democracy based on labour/management partnership in the sharing of profits and of managerial decisions, so that individual's personalities may grow its full stature for the benefit of the industry and of the country at large;
5. To eliminate or minimise strikes, lockouts and ghost towns by providing reasonable wages, improved living and working conditions, otherwise called fringe benefits;
6. To improve the economic conditions of workers and the country; and enhance national development;

7. To provide theoretical and empirical constructs, explanations, understanding and scholarship of the nexus between labour and industry; and employees, employers and the state;
8. To socialise industries by making the state itself a major guarantor of labour, with deep concerns for industrial harmony through soundly articulated public policies that enhance national cohesion.

²⁸ Galbraith, J., (1967), *The New Industrial State*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.

²⁹ Knight, F., (1967), "Laissez Faire: Pro and Con." *Journal of Political Economy*, 75, (6), pp. 782–95

³⁰ Kaufman, B. E. (1988), *How Labour Markets Work: Reflections on Theory and Practice* by John Dunlop, Clark Kerr, Richard Lester, and Lloyd Reynolds. Lexington: Lexington Books.

In order to understand the theoretical and intellectual underpinnings of these concepts, Budd³¹ discusses four schools of thought, namely:

- (i) the Neoclassical Economics School,
- (ii) the Human Resource Management School
- (iii) the Industrial Relations School, and
- (iv) the Critical Workplace Sanity School for dealing with what has historically been referred Labour and Industrial Relations.

Similarly, he identified three types of Labour and Industrial Relations, namely:

- a) Labour relations i.e., relations between union-management (also known as labour-management-relations);
- b) Group relations i.e., relations between various groups of workmen i.e., workmen, supervisors, technical persons, and so on;
- c) Employer-employee relations i.e., relations between the management and employees.

All reasoning about a theory – or theories – of industrial relations has to be based on the fact that, the concept has double signification:

- on the one hand, it refers to the practice which is related to the employment relationship in working life, in the labour market and in politics;
- on the other hand, it refers to the research and education activities which have this practice as their object of study.

Thus, the object of study of labour and industrial relations as a field of research and education can be defined as “the study of the employment relationship, its purposes, politics, policies, economics, social and cultural settings.” This definition seems to be accepted all over in the international literature on labour and industrial relations, research, although inside this, theory problems still arise.³² The employment relationship can be studied with the help of the

theoretical and methodological tools of many social science disciplines: economics (particularly labour economics), business studies, sociology, psychology, labour law, political science, public administration, and history and economic history. The fact that almost a whole social science faculty can be mobilised in order to study the employment relationship has a great deal to say about the complexity of this discipline and the necessity of L&IR. This multi-disciplinarity may contain strong internal tensions, sometimes finding expression in shifts of centres of gravity, sometimes also demarcation battles, which can be explained by the lack of hardcore coherent theory of labour and industrial relations, similar to, for instance, neo-classical theory in economics.³³

Despite all these internal tensions, most (L&IR) scholars³⁴ seem to regard the following items as being related to the employment relationship, and thus are included in the field of research of labour and industrial relations: The interest of organisations in the labour market, their mutual relations and their relations to the state.

- The collective bargaining system at different levels; especially in the wage formation systems.

31. Kaufman, B. E., (1988), *How Labour Markets Work Op. Cit*, p.36

32. *Ibid.*, p. 38

• 33. *Ibid.*, p. 45

- Labour law legislation, its application and effects, particularly as regards conflict resolution, security of employment, employee rights to information and consultation or self and co-determination.
- The roles of the state as a third party concerning legislation on employee protection, incomes policy, the public employer functions and conflict resolution in the labour market.
- Wage systems and other forms of remuneration.
- Work organisation and production technology.
- The consideration of labour as an important aspect for respect and dignity of man in the workplace.

Prior to presenting the four theoretical perspectives at the middle level, however, I am going to discuss the relationship of Industrial and Labour Relations research to the two great all-embracing bodies of theory:

- (i) The Dunlopian Systems Theory; and
- (ii) The Related Pluralistic Theory - and Neo-Marxism.³⁵

Irrefutably, the ultimate philosophy, which should inform all public policymaking approaches especially in the crafting of the theoretical roots of the academic and professional spheres of

the industrial and labour relations is the character of relationship that must exist between the employer, worker and goods/services, in the processes of wealth creation in societies. That human atom of energy, otherwise called labour, which is exerted during work activity, is naturally personified in man, and manifested through employment/work. It is thus, the fundamental idea, which persuasively stands as the bedrock for wealth creation in societies. Goods and services are thus, the dependent variable, which become the products of labour, once labour power being the primordial and primary economic, political and social capital is exerted upon any asset - land, water, air, trees, animals, fishes, minerals and so on.³⁶ Nonetheless, like the other social sciences, the discipline of labour and industrial relations is a formal scholarly venture in the social sciences, which dates to the early 1920s³⁷ in North America, the late 1940s in the United Kingdom, and one to two decades later in other countries and regions, such as Africa and Latin America and so on; even if it has been at the central the controversies between employers, employees and the State.

As an identifiable area of teaching and research, its roots extend back into the nineteenth century,³⁸ and over this period, researchers have attempted identifying the core principle that distinguish the subject-matter of industrial and labour relations from other labour fields, such as labour economics and build upon these principles or theories, which attempt to explain key labour and employment processes and outcomes.

³⁴. *Ibid.*, p.60

³⁵. *Ibid.*, p.61

³⁶. *Ibid.*, p.61

³⁷. *Ibid.*, p.61

³⁸. Wright, Patrick, Benjamin Dunford, and Scott Snell. 2001. "Human Resources and the Resource Based View of the Firm." *Journal of Management*, Vol. 27, No. 6, pp. 701–21

Given the insufficient literature in this domain, particularly in emerging democracies - Africa, Latin America and parts of Asia; there appears to exist great inhibitions that dwarf the offering of succinct theoretical explanations, understanding and empirical knowledge; irrespective of the fact that, the discipline of industrial and labour relations is wholesomely devoted to the important task of wealth creation for mankind; through man's economic activity of work – labour; initiated by God through Adam for man's survival in the world (Gen 3: 17 – 19, Holy Bible, KJV).³⁹ Given the vast intellectual lacuna in this academic and professional discipline, this paper divulges the public policies implications for labour and employment relations vis-à-vis the goods and services produced by labour; as the substratum societal wellbeing.⁴⁰ In

particular, I attempt discerning five contributions loaned from Hyman⁴¹ to buttress the Africans' thinking about the importance of the pragmatic application of policies on labour and industrial relations theory, thus:

- (i) Analysing the historical analysis to identify the field's core theoretical and normative principle, which is the postulation that labour is embodied in human beings not as a commodity, which can be traded like any other market commodity, irrespective of any recourse to human face principle that projects human dignity.
- (ii) Applying this principle to develop a theoretical explanation for the twin dependent variables of industrial and labour relations, the use of human labour to crystalise employment relationship and its attendant labour problems on the one hand; and the usage of the product of labour – goods and services, which are separated and alienated from the worker.
- (iii) Development of this theoretical explanation using concepts from labour economics, the US industrial and labour relations' intellectual home base, and in so doing helping to mix original and new versions of labour needs for human progress, prosperity and happiness.
- (iv) Using the identified theoretical framework as a platform for producing wide-ranging critique of neo-classical labour economics and, to a minor point, human resource management theories.
- (v) Advancing this framework to gather new concepts and hypotheses about the work relations amid the employer and employee, including the delineations of the field's central proposition, which puts it on the scale of independent a valuable academic and professional discipline endowed unto man in society⁴².

³⁹. Gen. chap. 3: The Holy Bible, KJV, p.2

⁴⁰. *Ibid.*, p.2

⁴¹. Hyman, Richard. 1975. *Industrial Relations: A Marxist Introduction*. London: MacMillan

⁴². *Ibid.*, p. 34

The concept and context of labour and industrial relations in Africa: An overview

The subject-matter and key structures of labour and industrial relations must first be delineated, especially in emerging democracies in Africa. Certainly, a number of researchers and scholars⁴³ have defined and conceptualised labour and industrial and labour relations in Africa nevertheless much and in-depth analysis is still necessary. In this direction, two points deserve highlight as a passage to the postulations that follows. The first is that, industrial and labour relations needs both broad and narrow acceptance in Africa. The original pre-World War II, labour and industrial relations paradigm made its core - the employment relationship and positioned itself as a critique an alternative to the labour theory of classical/neoclassical (orthodox) economics, which attempted to teach economic theories to Africans.⁴⁴ Substantially, further, in the US than elsewhere, early labour and industrial relations comprised not only collective bargaining, negotiations and union studies; but also in equal measure the study of personnel/human resource management and labour and occupational law.⁴⁵ Below are some opinions drawn from scholars⁴⁶ in the field:

- a) rules of the workplace (Dunlop 1958);
- b) job regulation (Flanders 1965);
- c) social regulation of production (Cox 1971);
- d) the employment relationship as structured antagonism (Edwards 2005); (v) social regulation of market forces (Hyman 1995);
- e) the process of capitalist mode of production, incarnated by peoples' labour wealth creation efforts, but Individualized accumulation and appropriation of wealth;
- f) the derived and skewed political and social class relations (Caire 1996);
- g) conflict of interests and pluralist forms of workplace governance (Kochan 1998);
- h) class mobilisation and social injustice (Kelly 1998);
- i) the advancement of efficiency, equity, and voice in the employment relationship (Budd 2004);
- j) collective representation and social dialogue (European Industrial Relations Observatory 2002); and
- k) representation and political regulations of different interests (Eberwein, Tholen, and Schuster 2002).

Certainly, these propositions portend individual merits and demerits.

The core principle of labour and industrial relations: Brief historical antecedents

Formal engagement into the discipline of labour and Industrial relations originated as a response to the worldwide “Labour Problem” or “Social Question” that emerged and grew in aggressively industrialising countries in the period roughly spanning 1870–1920.⁴⁷

⁴³ Hassan, S., (2013), *The Labour Movements in Africa: A Study of the Nigerian Labour Congress*, Lagos: PET

⁴⁴ Asobie, A. H., (2015), *Labour, Manpower and the Pilferers of National Economies*, Nsukka: UNN Press

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 35

⁴⁶ Robbins, L., (1932), *The Nature and Significance of Economic Science*. London: Macmillan.

⁴⁷ Franck, P., (2007), *Human Labour the Growth of the European Enterprise*, Stockholm: Man Press

The overarching goal of American industrial and labour relations founders was to solve this Labour Problem but within the context of a democratic capitalist economic system. This United States’ ambition was indicated in the remarks by Commons (1934a:143)⁴⁸ that, his life objective was, “to save capitalism by making it good”, yet capitalism has been at the forefront of downgrading labour. Early labour and industrial was thus positioned as a “middle way” programme between laissez-faire capitalism and socialist revolution. The labour and industrial relations diagnosis of the Labour Problem was that, it grew out of the dysfunctional and inhumane intellectual foundations of the labour and industrial relations field.

A somewhat mainstream position was established by Léon Walras in his Elements of Pure Economics (1954),⁴⁹ the natal place of neo-classical theory of general equilibrium (GE). He claimed that, the focus of economic science is market exchange and “that, the task for economics was to determine the laws to which purchases and sales tend to conform spontaneously. Indicatively, as Kaufman (2010:3)⁵⁰ opines, “...this outcome depends critically on the assumption that, the goods or services traded are homogeneous, the property of commodities such as shares of stock and bushels of wheat.” Thus, when Walras came to factor markets, he proceeded to model labour as just one more of N commodities for which price and quantity are determined by demand, supply, and competitive bidding in a perfect market.

This handling of labour became standard in the practice of industrial and labour relations, which has wrongly remained so till date among many economists. Thus, the additional example from the history of thought as this concerns the usage of labour is the subject of this paper. For instance, in his famous Managerial Dilemmas Miller Gary (1991:36),⁵¹ asserts that, “...the general case that, the normal value of everything, whether it be a particular kind of labour or capital or anything else, rests, like the keystone of an arch, balanced in equilibrium between

the contending pressures of its two opposing sides; (i) the forces of demand press on the one side, and (ii) those of supply on the other.”

Consequently, as Miller and his likes believe,⁵² the differences between the two are not fundamental from the point of view of theory. These examples illustrate that a commodity theory of labour and a frictionless demand and supply, and sell high syndrome of the employment relationship was at the core of early neoclassical labour economics. The theory of demand and supply as a core tenet in capitalist production system provides, in turn, an intellectual irrational rationale for a laissez-faire and unregulated regime of free trade in labour, unilateral and harsh labour management practices, with commercial money ethos that regard the output of canned fish as more valuable than the health of the children producing it, and seemingly, this suggest profanity in human material conditions.

⁴⁸ Chandler A., (1963), *The Total Enterprise*, Chicago: Little Press

⁴⁹ Zareto, F. G., (1996), *Human Labour, Human Knowledge and Productivity in Societies*, Glasgow: Ulster Press

⁵⁰ Adams, C., and Noah, M., eds., (1994), *Industrial and Labour Relations Theory: Its Nature, Scope and Pedagogy*, London: Metuchen: Scarecrow Press

⁵¹ Miller, G., (1991), *Managerial Dilemmas*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 78.

Policymaking’s implications for labour and industrial relations: The nexus and benefits for development

So, it is prudent considering the character of policy sequence in the historical, social, economic and labour evolutionary practices, which Schumpeter (1954)⁵³ labeled, as “policy, economics, labour and sociology nexus.” Evidently, the nexus between public policies and labour and industrial relations appears too thin and tight to be ignored in Africa’s postcolonial states, which must seek to use labour power in positioning themselves in the annals of human development. Of particular interest to Africa’s labour reformers, are the historical economic and social trends, which provided the theoretical threshold and support for Germany’s pioneering labour and industrial relations programmes in the 1880s regarding that countries policies priority to labour issues, such as accident, unemployment, hygienic conditions, healthcare, and old age social insurance, wage levels, importance of creating solid democratic frameworks within the movements amongst other practices. These programmes were widely accepted and catapulted into the US as the opening blocks for socialist trends within the US with a core market economy in a core capitalist society.⁵³

According to Rutherford (2001),⁵⁴ In the 1910s historical and social economics from German ideas procreated the American School of Institutional Economics (ASIE) and its labour subfield, the industrial and labour relations; and the strong influence of the German tradition

on Wisconsin labour scholars is well illustrated in the pages of McCarthy's book, *The Wisconsin Idea* (1912: 30–31)⁵⁵. In it, he explained that German labour and industrial relations professors repeatedly came to Wisconsin and had been surprised by the entrenched German spirit in the university's labour and industrial relations department. Therefore, it is only natural that the legislation of Wisconsin should receive an impetus from men who believed that laws can be constructed as to lead to progress and at the same time preserve to the fullest of all human betterment.

Thus, the advice from scholars may be sought to the extent that, it was discovered how public policies soundly articulated based on promoting theoretical and empirical practices on labour and industrial relations had made Germany happy and prosperous, so much that, same could be catapulted and duplicated in the US or elsewhere, where the mindsets of public authorities are attuned to human development governance. In opposition to orthodox economics, Ely⁵⁶ asserts, "...labour movements and organisations are often of a great advantage to national economies, because they balance what is otherwise a "one-sided determination of the price and conditions of labour and they remove almost unlimited control of the employers over employees within defined democratic legislations,"

hence these movements evoke development as opposed to underdevelopment. From the foregoing analysis, this paper divulges that, labour and industrial relations properly represents:⁵⁷

⁵³. Schumpeter, J., (1954), *History of Economic Analysis*. New York: Oxford University Press.

⁵⁴. Rutherford, M., (2001), "Institutionalism Then and Now," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, (15), pp. 173–94.

⁵⁵. McCarthy, Charles. 1912. *The Wisconsin Idea*. New York: Macmillan.

⁵⁶. Ely, R., (1884) *The Past and Present of Political Economy*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press

⁵⁷. Edwards, Paul, (2005) 'The Employment Relationship and the Field of Industrial Relations.' In P. Edwards, ed., *Industrial Relations: Theory & Practice*, 2nd (ed.), London: Blackwell, pp. 1–36.

1. an independent domain of study and practice distinct from labour economics or economics; and that it covers the totality of the employment relationship.
2. it is a corpus of theory based on man's political and social conceptions of labour as the human agent; the strategic interdependence that exists between imperfect markets and competition and imperfect organisations and cooperation; the structuring and guiding role of institutional forces emanating from the state, society, history, employer and employee organisations. It is a systems perspective that organises employment relationships into discrete models and patterns;

3. a welfare function that includes not only consumers' interests and economic efficiency of organisation and the state, but also workers' interests and distinctly the social and humanistic goals, such as procedural and distributive justice for the utilisation of labour; protection of basic human rights, such as freedom from child labour, discrimination, involuntary servitude; labour mobility; freedom of association – viable trade unionism; provision of elemental democratic procedures at work (such as participation, representation, due process of law, choices and opportunities for human self-development and self-actualisation at work;
4. a discipline that welcomes abstraction, formalisation, and mathematics, but insists on empirically informed and congruent priors at strategic places; and recognition with significant parts of the employment world, which violates marginalist conditions of divisibility, incompleteness, continuity and stationarity. It is a holistic and integrative approach that draws from and endeavours to meld theories, concepts and techniques from all the disciplines that touch on the work relationship.

Table 1: 2008 - Selected African countries employment share as indicators of human growth indices

Region Total	Employment Share by Status	Male	Female
Africa 28.4 %	Wage and Salaried Workers	35.4 %	18.0 %
2.8 %	Employers	4.0 %	1.0 %
40.2 %	Own account workers	41.3 %	38.7 %
28.6 %	Contributing family workers	9.4 %	42.4 %
North Africa 50.0 %	Wage and Salaried Workers	3.5 %	39.6 %
9.8 %	Employers	12.4 %	2.2 %
22.2 %	Owned account workers	22.6 %	21.2 %
17.9 %	Contributing family workers	11.5 %	37.0 %
Sub-Saharan Africa			

23.5 %	Wage and salaried workers	30.0 %	15.2 %
1.2 %	Employers	1.5 %	0.8 %
44.2 %	Owned account workers	46.8 %	40.9 %
31.0 %	Contributing family workers	21.7 %	43.1 %

Source: Rüya, G, K., and Susan, H. (2011), Comparative Study of Labour and Industrials Relations in selected African Countries, Amsterdam Institute of Advanced Labour Studies, December, ILO Working Paper 116

Generally, the tendency in Africa's labour and industrial relations is to focus on common challenges that countries face on the degree of policies responses on labour issues. Thus, to acknowledge and distinguish commonalities and peculiarities in African labour and industrial relations, it was necessary scrutinising specific country's responses that emerge out of common patterns such as shown in the table above. This, obviously, requires to examine organised labour and industrial relations practices in African countries, while acknowledging country specific national arrangements. Such an endeavour would be a valuable resource for policy makers to design own national legislations and policies that support fundamental principles of freedom of association in democratic assemblies; the effectiveness to the right to collective bargaining, raising of own union finances (check-offs) from reduction at the sources from workers' wages; and contribute to inclusive development. This provides a basis for encouraging discussions to harmonise and coordinate policies and laws in Africa. Against this context, the paper discerned that, organised labour and industrial relations in Africa face serious challenges from public policies, although there exist several opportunities and strategies that portend enabling free-thinking unbiased actors to collectively cope with changes and contribute to solving Africa's structural problems of underdevelopment.

Conclusion

This paper re-examined the character of public policies, to succinctly delineate the character of labour and industrial relations practices; so as to determine if the current character of labour and industrial relations (L&IR) in Africa's postcolonial states promotes development or underdevelopment. In the foregoing, we discerned a strong nexus between policies and labour practices. It argued that, it is a massive policy deficit with ill-omened political, economic and social malevolence to alienate L&IR's practices, especially labour in goods/services. The paper discerned that, public policies are irrefutably the heartbeat and bedrock of societies, hence, after God, they follow in importance and relevance to all creatures.⁵⁸ Policies, undoubtedly

fashion, man's livelihood and environment. Thus, using the Marxist analysis and the elite theory, the paper discovered that, elitism characterises public policymaking in Africa's postcolonial politico-economic and socio-cultural governing processes. Thereafter, such policies negatively fashion the ensuing character of labour and industrial relations practices, hence, the sordid underdevelopment rather than development in Africa.

Thus, African countries continue to nurse underdevelopment indices such as the prevalence of erratic economies, political systems, overbearing centralised dictatorial regimes, dominant political parties disguised in multiparty politics, overbearing corrupt practices, nepotism, ethnic cleavages, coercive, conscripted and state capture syndromes in the public services. Poor healthcare, education, security, agricultural, environmental, haulage delivery systems and lack of any development agendas. Others are constant conflicts over state resources and manipulated national constitutions and office tenures. In all these, labour and industrial relations practices have been negated, alienated and banished to mercies of the poor in society.

⁵⁸ Fehr E., Falk A., (1999), "Wage Rigidity in a Competitive Incomplete Contract Market." *Journal of Political Economy*, 107, (1), pp. 106–34.

The paper divulges that, as policies shape L&IR practices, these practices shape development or underdevelopment of African societies, in terms of opening humdrum character of material conditions and economic factors to citizens. It argued that the elite theory used to propel labour and industrial relations practices in Africa, constitute a major policy shortfall with severe political, economic and social, which has malevolently alienated L&IR, 's variables, especially labour from goods/services. This paper advocates public policy change from the elitism to the rational-comprehensive standpoint, because the later allows development factors that achieve actual not superficial democratic labour and industrial relations practices. As Fehr and Armen (1999)⁵⁹ note:

- 1) L&IR is distinct from other disciplines, though it covers the totality of the politics, economics and social relationships of wealth creation, while nourishing development through work - as well as mediating all politico-economic behaviours and problems that arise from employment relations.
- 2) It has a corpus of theory based on human and social conception of labour as human agent for development.
- 3) It portends a welfare functions that include not only consumers' interests and national economic efficiency, including state's survival but also workers' interests as well as procedural and distributive justice for the utilisation of labour; protection of basic human

rights, such as freedom from child labour, discrimination, involuntary servitude; labour mobility; freedom of association – trade unionism; provision of elemental democratic procedures at work (such as participation, representation, due process of law.

- 4) It welcomes abstraction, formalisation, mathematics, and insists on empirically informed congruencies, and discourages marginalist conditions, divisibility, exclusiveness, discontinuity and disunity.
- 5) It has an inclusive network of holistic and integrative approach that draws from and endeavours to meld theories, ideas and methods from other disciplines for easing labour and industrial relations practices in Africa.

⁵⁹ Stiglitz, Joseph. 2000. "Democratic Development as the Fruits of Labor." *Perspectives on Work*, 4, pp. 31–38.

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