

Decline of Trade Union Collective Action in the Epoch of Neo-Liberal Globalisation: The Experience of Tanzania Teachers' Union

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Abstract

Trade unions (TUs) in Tanganyika (later Tanzania) were relatively vibrant during the colonial period despite the ruthlessness of the colonial government. However, such vibrancy declined after independence despite the re-introduction of pluralist politics in the 1990s, which was expected to open more space for civil society organisations. Basing on Tanzania Teachers' Union (TTU), this paper seeks to shed light on the factors for the decline of TUs' collective action in the country. It explores the main benchmarks of the TTU evolution. Further, this paper analyses the factors that contributed to the decline of the trade union's collective action in Tanzania. Moreover, the paper recommends how TTUs can reform and act strategically. This paper is informed and guided by the Gramscian hegemony and counter-hegemony discourses. The study, adopted qualitative methods of data collection/generation particularly interviews, focus group discussion and documentary review. The study has shown that TTU lower-level organisations lack autonomy from the employer, thus unable to effectively mobilise members for collective action. Yet, the existing labour regimes derail TUs' activism. The study recommends that TUs, including TTU, need to strive for labour law reforms, which among other things, will allow for their independent organisations and autonomy from government bureaucracy.

Keywords: *trade union, collective action, activism, hegemony, teacher trade union.*

Introduction

A trade union is a workers' representative body established by workers in order to promote and preserve members' interests (Schillinger, 2005). To pursue their interests, TUs use various techniques, including engaging in collective bargaining or in collective actions¹ such as rioting, boycotting, protesting, picketing, and striking so as to persuade the employer to address or comply with workers' unfulfilled demands (Kelly 1998 Cohen, 2006; Epstein 2001). The success in such collective actions depends on the nature of the TUs and the environment within which they operate (Kelly, 1998; Artzeni & Ghigliani, 2013). A good study of TUs collective action must begin with the context under which they sprung and operate. In Africa, the prominence of TUs during the colonial period, and also in the struggle for independence, is well appreciated and documented by different scholars (Schillinger, 2005; Kester, 2016). In the context of Tanzania, different studies reveal that the independence of Tanganyika could even be impossible if it were not for the mutual cooperation between TUs and the nationalist party, Tanganyika National African Union (TANU) (Jackson, 1979; Babeiya, 2011; Rugeiyamu, 2018). As such, both TUs and nationalist political parties were acknowledged as revolutionaries, or as Mukandala (1999) puts it, they were all fighters. However, such spirit of TUs waned slowly after independence, leaving workers in degrading conditions (Thabiti, 2020).

In the past three decades or so, TUs seem to have lost their activism which they had during the colonial period and at the independence. Such state of affairs could imply that workers' demands have been addressed and fulfilled by employers. However, it has been reported by studies that workers in Tanzania have low job satisfaction and motivation due to unfavourable working and living conditions which degrade their statuses (Sumra, 2004; Mkumbo, 2016; HakiElimu, 2018). Elsewhere, some scholars have attributed the increasing decline of TUs activism in the ineffective articulation and promotion of members' interests (Michael, 2001; Salum, 2015). Other scholars postulate that internal conflicts, leadership problems, intimidation

¹ Collective action is defined as is an action which a group of individuals takes by exerting pressure to further their common interests (Kelly, 1998; Artzeni & Ghigliani, Olson, 2002). Forms of collective action which constitute the subject of this study include; strikes, go-slows, lock-outs, overtime bans, work-to-rule, and other non-co-operative actions.

from political leaders, and infancy of the private sector inhibit active confrontation of the state by TUs (Mukandala, 1999; Babeiya, 2011).

The conclusions drawn by the aforementioned studies relied heavily on internal conditions which constrain TUs in articulating members' interest. The existing studies paid little attention to lower-level organisations, and inadequately interrogated the dynamic relations of the TUs and the employer (Michael, 2001; Sumra, 2004; Salum, 2015). Thus, these studies can inadequately provide evidence on the decline of trade union collective actions. The current study, therefore, seeks to investigate opinions, perceptions, and views from the grassroots members and leaders of the TTU. It explores the historical development of TUs and the emergence of the TTU in particular in order to uncover the factors that have contributed to the decline of TUs' collective actions in the country. In that attempt, this paper begins with a historical evolution of TUs which depicts the encounters between TUs on the one hand, and the colonial state and the post-colonial governments on the other hand. Three main phases of the evolution of the TUs are explored: TUs during the colonial period, TUs during the post-colonial period, and TUs during the time of neo-liberal globalisation. Next, the theoretical underpinning of the study is presented. The methodology is then described followed by the presentation of the findings and its discussion. Finally, this article ends by providing concluding remarks and recommendations.

Evolution of Trade Unions in Tanzania

This section traces the evolution of TUs in Tanzania to unveil the potential challenges that they were facing over the past century. In revisiting this history, three main phases of the evolution of the TUs are identified: TUs during the colonial period, TUs during the post-colonial period, and TUs in the rise of neo-liberal globalisation.

Trade Unions during the Colonial Period (1920s-1960)

Trade unions in Tanzania emerged in the colonial period as a product of the introduction of the colonial wage labour (Bienefeld, 1979; Jackson, 1979; Chambua, 2002). The colonial permanent labour in social services, infrastructure, plantation agriculture, and mining sectors subjected African workers to unbearable working and living conditions. They were therefore,

compelled to form associations that could give them a collective voice in addressing such problems (Jackson, 1979). The earliest attempt to form TUs in the country was in the colonial public services especially among the railway and port workers (Bienefeld, 1979; Shivji, 1986; Mukandala, 1999). In 1927 African motor drivers and mechanics formed their union in Moshi and civil servants formed the Tanganyika African Government Servants Association (TAGSA) in the 1930s. Later, teachers (who are the basis of this study) formed the Tanganyika African Teachers' Association (TATA) on 4th August 1942 (Mlisi, 1995). However, these earliest formed associations, hardly resemble the modern day TUs, rather, they were staff associations in which members cooperated for mutual help at work and beyond. Yet, they were small, ethnic-based, and lacked unified goals.

Despite this weakness which constrained their success, such associations marked the beginning of labour movement in Tanzania which championed the rights and interests of African workers in the colonial period (Mukandala, 1999; Chambua 2002). They employed various tactics such as petitions, letter-writing and protesting to advance their demands. These actions suggest that the early workers' association had a strong sense of activism despite the unfriendly environment under colonial domination (Mihyo, 1979; Shivji, 1986). Shivji (1986) reports that in 1956, dock workers in Dar es Salaam and Tanga went on a strike, demanding for improved wages and better working conditions. It is estimated that in 1958 alone, sisal industry experienced about 46 percent of all work-related disputes in which 75 percent of all workers in the industry participated and 77 percent of productive man-days lost. In all the strikes, the colonial government reacted by harsh measures including detention and dismissal of strikers but the colonial government never succeeded to silence workers. Such workers' resilience is attributed to organic-link between earliest labour movement with their grassroots members (Shivji, 1986; Mukandala, 1999).

Trade Unions during the Post-Colonial Period (1961-1980s)

On 9th December 1961, Tanganyika (Tanzania mainland) attained her independence. Workers hoped that independence meant an immediate achievement of the goals they had been fighting for. However, the new

government put more emphasis on rapid economic growth and nation building while redressing workers' claims gradually through incremental changes of remuneration (Jackson, 1979; Shivji, 2014). Such dispensation contributed to the bursting of the friendly relations that existed during the nationalist struggles. After independence, TANU formed the government and determined to subject TFL under its control while TFL envisioned maintaining its autonomy from the state (Chambua, 2002).

Apart from the question of autonomy, railway and postal workers called for the dissolution of the East African High Commission for it was perceived to be biased against non-Kenyan workers and alleged of disregarding TUs' demands. The government on its part was determined to promote the integration of the region, and therefore, it could not disband the commission. Also, TUs demanded immediate total replacement of the non-African workers by Africans in the civil service, but the position of the government in implementing this was rather gradual. Consequently, the TANU government triggered workers' agitation and protest (Thabiti, 2020). Chambua (2002) reports that in 1962 alone there were 152 workers' strikes demanding improved pay and working conditions, involving over 34,000 workers with the loss of 417,474 man-days.

According to the then prime minister of Tanganyika, Mwl. Julius Kambarage Nyerere while in press conference in Accra Ghana, "the nationalist and trade union movements had been two arms of the same body, that their functions were complementary and were necessarily mutually non-antagonistic" (Mihyo,1979:244). Consequently, TANU succeeded in capturing the labour movement. The government's incorporation and politicization of TUs was unveiled through the appointment of TUs' leaders into government positions. For example, Mr. Rashid Kawawa, an influential trade unionist during the colonial period and the first TFL general secretary, and later, its president was appointed the Minister for Local Government and Housing in 1960, while retaining his TFL presidency. Later on, in 1962, Mr. Michael Kamaliza, the TFL's president, was appointed Minister for Health and Labour, and Mr. Kassanga Tumbo a famous trade unionist was appointed the country's ambassador to United Kingdom (Chambua, 2002).

Secondly, the TANU government had inherited a three-year development plan (1961 – 1963) from the colonial government, and it made no effort to reform it (Shivji, 1986). The plan seemed to have inclined on the creation of a conducive environment for investment and international capital, which implied the marginalisation of workers' demands. Broadly speaking, the TANU government supposedly committed itself to maintaining its dominance in the country by reforming and adopting new legislation in the country. In 1962, the government adopted the Trade Disputes (Settlement) Act No.43 of 1962, which virtually abolished strikes by setting up complex procedures for compulsory arbitration and settlement of labour disputes. In the same year, TFL was dissolved and replaced with the National Union of Tanganyika Workers (NUTA). Further, *Jumuiya ya Wafanyakazi wa Tanzania* (JUWATA) was established under the JUWATA Act in 1979. Similarly, the Organisation of Tanzania Trade Union (OTTU) established under OTTU Act No. 20 of 1991 to replace JUWATA. It can, therefore, be concluded that between 1962 and 1991 was a period during which workers' freedom of association and power to choose their leaders was made obsolete because the established national federations were just centrally created by laws rather than by members' will. As such, TUs' activities at grassroots became dormant or non-existent, and the whole autonomy of TUs was in jeopardy.

Trade Unions in the Rise of Neo-Liberal Globalisation (1980s to date)

Between 1970 and 1980s most African countries experienced severe economic crises. In sub-Saharan Africa the annual GDP growth rate fell from 6.4 percent in 1965 to 3.2 percent in 1980 (Chambua, 2004). In Tanzania, real wages fell by 83 percent and the state was unable to provide the minimum of social services (Niboye, 2013). Given the situation, the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) tailored the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), prescribing minimum conditions and terms to be fulfilled by countries in deep debt or acute foreign exchange crisis when they tried to access loans and assistance from these institutions (Ratnam,1996). These institutions had a full support from donor countries. Scholars referred the post-SAPs period as neo-liberal globalization (Shivji,

2009; Upchurc & Mathers, 2011). Specifically, the neoliberal globalisation constitutes the dominant trend in the world economy at the present juncture. The period is characterized by a worldwide spread of an economic models entrenched in neo-liberal economics based on free markets policies and minimalist states (Konings, 2002; Sniegocki, 2008).

Konings (2002) argues that following the deep and prolonged economic crisis virtually all African countries were compelled to adopt 'neo liberal' policies which on whole, their social consequences have been negative. The aim of the policies has to reduce the government's role in the economy, a secure environment for private capital and enhance country's competitiveness in the global economic order. Consequently, that a new policy direction changed the political economic contexts in which TUs operate. Workers were adversely affected by cuts in public expenditure, lay-offs, wage cuts, deregulation and dismantle of government control of price. As such, some scholars opined that SAP reforms in Africa resulted into states sacrificing the welfare of people and workers for promotion of business environment (Sniegocki, 2008; Niboye, 2013). Such state of affair manifests in government sluggish tendencies in improving the minimum wages and working conditions (Konings, 2002; Macquinn, 2011). Hence, TUs had to struggle to distance themselves from the control of the state so as to be able to counter the challenges of the burgeoning neo-liberal policies (Konings, 2002).

In Tanzania SAPs were forcefully imposed on Tanzania without much preparation or consultation of workers, or the people who were to be affected at large (Chambua, 2004; Niboye, 2013). The new policies freed civil societies from the control of the state and marked the beginning of a new era, neo-liberal globalisation in the country (Chambua, 2004; Shivji, 2014). In the auspices of SAP reforms in Tanzania, real wages fell drastically, workers' legible benefits such as treatment allowance, pension, transfer and annual leave allowances started to be accumulated as arrears. McQuinn (2011) believes that the adoption of the SAPs led the Government to abandon its traditional role towards empowerment of workers and it led to workers-government hostility.

Subsequently, workers started to struggle for autonomous TUs that would be independent of the state's direct control. This was believed to be the necessary step for TUs to deal with the impact of neo-liberal globalisation (Chambua, 2004). In the early 1980s, JUWATA congresses started to exert pressure for the creation of autonomous TUs (Mukandala, 1999). JUWATA adopted a resolution to distance itself from state control. The resolution requested the government's permission to elect its leaders, create its constitution, and end political affinity to "*Chama Cha Mapinduzi*" (CCM) (*ibid*). This led to the repealing of the JUWATA Act and the formation of OTTU under the OTTU Act No. 20 of 1991. Section 4(1) of the OTTU Act provides that "OTTU is the sole trade union body representative of all employees in the country". The Act infringed the principle of freedom of association and the right to organise as provided by Article 2 of the ILO Convention No. 87 on the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention of 1948 which states that "workers shall have the right to establish and join organisations of their choosing implies that organisation itself has the right to establish and join federations and confederations of its own choosing" (ILO, 1948).

In 1995, workers under the OTTU umbrella conducted a general congress extra-ordinary meeting in Dodoma and changed the name of the umbrella organization from OTTU to Tanzania Federation of Trade Unions (TFTU). Workers' and TUs' allegiance to TFTU indicates that they were tired of un-autonomous TUs and the lack of democracy within TUs' national federations. In the same regards, in 2001 workers registered the Trade Union Congress of Tanzania (TUCTA) under the then Trade Union Act of 1998 to be the official national umbrella of all trade unions. TUCTA is an independent trade union federation. With all the struggles, workers' perception was that autonomous TUs would be key to advancing their demands through collective actions (Babeiya, 2011). In 2003, the government adopted the Public Service Negotiation Machinery Act No. 19 of 2003 to provide for collective bargaining arrangements; and in 2004 the Employment and Labour Relations Act No. 6 was adopted. These laws have several concessions to workers' and TUs' rights; however, the fundamental freedoms regarding collective action remain largely ring-fenced while workers' problems continue to propagate

(Thabit, 2020). Workers working and living condition remains in despair without significant help from their TUs (Sumra, 2004).

Emergence of Tanzania Teachers' Union (TTU)

Teachers were among the earliest workers to form their TUs, however; the development of teachers' TUs was overshadowed by the general context of trade unionism in the country. Like other workers, the advent of SAPs in the 1980s spurred teachers' struggle for an autonomous and independent trade union. Such struggles emanated from deteriorating working and living condition claims linked to SAP (Michael, 2001). As such, teachers sought to have a representative body that would organise and give them one voice. In response to that quest, the government created the so-called *Chama cha Kitaalamu cha Walimu Tanzania*² (CHAKIWATA), to be the sole representative body for teachers. CHAKIWATA operated under the Ministry of Education, and its leaders were appointed by the government. CHAKIWATA's objectives included the promotion of and defence for teachers' interests (Mukandala, 1999). However, teachers objected to CHAKIWATA because they perceived it to be a professional organisation whose implicit mission was to serve the government's interest rather than those of teachers. Perceived this way, teachers also rejected to be affiliated with OTTU, hence they continued to push their demand for autonomous TUs in various ways possible.

Early in 1993, teachers in Dar es Salaam staged a strike led by Peter Mashanga, a teacher from Azania Secondary School who later became the first president of the TTU, demanding improved wages, better working conditions, and an independent trade union. Parallel to the strike, they formed an *ad hoc* bargaining arrangement famously called Mashanga's committee that negotiated their demands with the Government (Michael, 2001). The strike was successful and supported by other teachers all over the country. Such success demonstrated the organisational ability and acceptability of teachers' leaders and teachers' commitment to their cause. Following the strike, teachers were allowed to form their independent union, the Tanzania Teachers' Union (TTU) on 1st November 1993. The objectives of TTU

² In the English language it stands for Tanzania Teachers' Professional Association

include promoting and preserving teachers' interests, and the status of the teaching profession, as well as addressing teachers' problems. At the moment, TTU is the largest trade union in the country in terms of membership. Tanzania is estimated to have 400,000 members of unionised work force of whom 157,000 are TTU members (Mcquinn, 2011). It holds assets across the country, including real estate and shareholding in commercial banks.

The success of the first teachers' strike has not repeated itself (Chambua, 2004). Continuously, the overall performance of such TTU's actions has been less successful. In October 2008, the TTU declared an indefinite go-slow, claiming for such demands as salary arrears, in-service training, and annual leaves. However, the go-slow was unsuccessful due to poor response from the members in various regions, which made it easy for the government to intervene (Rugeiyamu, et al., 2018). Again, in July 2012 TTU declared a nation-wide teachers' strike demanding improved remunerations and working conditions; the strike lasted for only four days after being declared illegal by the court (Global Voices, 2012). Despite all these attempts, recent reports show that teachers' claim, to a large extent, remain unfulfilled by the government, who is the employer (Sumra, 2004; Kamugisha and Tefurukwa, 2015; HakiElimu, 2017; 2018; 2019). In this context, it is imperative to explore why there has been a decline in the strength of collective action among teachers in addressing the mentioned claims. Collective action, such as go-slow and other forms, is important because it demonstrates TUs organisation and mobilisation capacities. The success or failure of collective action indicates not just their mobilisation capacity but also acceptance of the union in front of its members (Chambua, 2002; Thabit, 2020). Kelly (1998), for example, shows that strikes is the most effective method through which workers can make their voice louder; thus, receive feedback timely from the employer.

Theoretical Framework Underpinning Trade Unions and Globalisation

It is generally acknowledged that globalisation is one of the concepts that have attracted the attention of different scholars leading to its divergent interpretations. Hyman (2007:3) argues that globalisation is a notion which is typically 'left vague and undefined, better to conjure up the large panoply of

forces that have seemingly imposed similar imperatives across advanced industrialised countries. Brown and Ainsley (2005) conceive globalisation as a globally integrated economy manifested mostly with growing salience of giant corporations operating as ‘multinationals and integrating production on a global scale, and the emergence of a 24-hours, integrated global capital market created by the fusion of national capital markets and international economic system.

Ohmae (1994) has equivocally taken a radical perspective and partly, an idealistic one, defining globalisation as an integrative force of nation-states that leads into a borderless world. Ohmae (1994:4) presumes that “the emergence of a new world order, a lighter one, where justice prevails, and voiceless people get voice, and obscurity is replaced with un-obscurity and people progressively attain a decent life.” Ohmae opines that these progressive changes are a product of an overseas flow of four “**Is**”: investment, industry, information technology and individual consumer. This overseas operation of global economy makes the state obsolete, undeniably a lesser truth of and hence a borderless world, this is partly an idealistic notion given the existence of stringent immigration arrangements in each country globally (*ibid*). Such economic transformative changes have largely emerged in the last quarter of the 20th century and resulted into internationalisation of national economies whose traditional role and capacity of TUs have highly been affected (McQuinn, 2011; Hyman, 2007). Besides, there have been various interpretations of the role of TUs under neo-liberal globalisation.

Framed within the context of globalisation, as hinted above, the role of TUs is contested in contrasting theories. Liberal perspectives, including its evolved form, neo-liberalism³ posit that TUs is an integral agent of economic life of a country (Tocqueville, 1982; Radcliffe-Brown, 1952; Uslaner & Brown, 2002). In this view, TUs constitute the associational life in which people decide their wants and needs, and ask for them through associations. These associations serve as learning grounds for norms of civic community

³ This is the philosophical view that a society’s political and economic institutions should be robustly liberal and capitalist, but supplemented by a constitutionally limited democracy and a modest welfare state.

which sustain democracy and social equality (Tocqueville, 1982; Putnam, 2001). In that regard, TUs are considered as the mechanisms through which workers can engage in public life and protect themselves from excessive use of power by the state (Upchurch & Mathers, 2011; Vachon, et al., 2016; Tuckness, 2020). The World Bank and the UNDP view civil society, as not only the key stakeholders, but also a powerful force in effecting participatory development through good governance approach (World Bank, 2003; UNDP, 2006).

However, such a position is contested especially in the African contexts. TUs are small, organising only a tiny minority of the working population in a predominantly agrarian societies, but are also subordinated to state control through national unity and development narratives (Konings, 2002; Upchurch & Mathers, 2011; Vachon, et al., 2016). In sum, critics charge liberal perspectives for masking certain realities as will be revealed in the subsequent paragraphs.

Firstly, employers' hegemony⁴ over poor workers cannot be clearly addressed including their implication on TUs collective actions. It should be noted that TUs' effectiveness in collective action depends on their autonomy and relevance before their members (consistent articulation of members' interests and commitment to their identity) (Kelly, 1998; Cohen, 2006). In contrast, liberal perspectives emphasise participation and partnership between the state, employers and TUs in tripartite bodies whose trade unions' identity is blurred (Shivji, 2014). Thus, they stop being a class with distinct interests from both the state and employers.

Specifically, liberal perspectives also emphasise more dialogue and cooperation than confrontation and antagonism. Cooperation and cooperation narratives kill labour movement and trade union militancy (Shivji, 2014). Salum (2015) reveals that following the implementation of neo-liberal policies in Tanzania, the Government has created tripartite collective

⁴ In this paper, Hegemony is operationalised dominance of a particular kind where the dominant party creates an order based ideologically on a broad measure of consent to maintain its supremacy and status quo but at the same time offer some prospects of satisfaction to the less powerful" (for details see. Cox, 1982).

bargaining bodies which have not only pacify TUs but also weaken their powers in articulation of workers' demands. This is because the established bodies their mandate is limited in wages issues and the government as employer retains the veto power. It is widely accepted among scholars that the core values of any form of vibrant civil society including TUs, range from resisting and exposing the ugly face of power, "a watchdog role" by engaging in progressive dialogues which intend to suggest alternative economic policies and plans for the benefit of its members and the community as whole (Cohen, 2006; Hyman, 2007; Shivji, 2014).

Secondly, neo-liberal economic set-ups operate akin to certain mechanisms, and counter mobilisation measures which ensure the maintenance of power, domination and perpetuation of the ruling class (Kelly, 1998). These mechanisms help in making sure that the employer's hegemony is maintained and unchallenged. The Italian communist Antonio Gramsci's Prison Notebooks offer valuable contribution to the understanding of hegemony (Gramsci 1971). To Gramsci, the capitalist state is made up of two overlapping spheres, a 'political society' (which rules through force) and a 'civil society' (which rules through consent). In that regard, civil society is viewed as a public sphere where TUs and political parties gain concessions from the bourgeois state, and the sphere in which ideas and beliefs are shaped, and in which the bourgeois 'hegemony' is reproduced in the cultural life through the media, universities and religious institutions and legitimacy (Heywood 1994: 100-101). He called these processes 'manufacture of consent'.

The implication of Gramsci's ideas is that in the capitalist state there are limited possibilities of direct revolutionary struggle for the control of the means of production due to the manufactured consent, unless the proletariat starts the 'war of position' - a form of struggle over ideas and beliefs, to create a new hegemony (Gramsci 1971). That is leading to a 'counter-hegemonic' struggle – advancing alternatives to dominant ideas of what is internalized as a norm or legitimate. Impliedly, TUs movement cannot be successful in their counter-hegemony struggle without maintaining their autonomy and clearly identifying their position through that war of position (Heywood 1994: 101).

In that case, Gramsci's perspective provides a relevant approach which could help explain the decline of collective actions in a particular country. Situating Gramsci's analysis within the Tanzania TUs context, since the mid-1980s when the country adopted the SAPs and marked the official beginning of neo-liberal globalisation in the country, this paper accounts for the decline of TUS collective action.

Methodology

The data for this study were solicited through key-informant interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted among teachers (members of TTU) from public primary and secondary schools in Nzega District, Tabora Region between July and September 2018. Additionally, the data were supplemented and complemented with recent information and events from secondary sources and author's observation for validation purposes. The study included teachers from both rural and urban schools in gathering data from members who have different experiences and exposures. The key informants were district leaders (chairman, secretary, and youth teachers' leader), experienced members (with more than 5 years of membership), and branch representatives, these were key actors and had long experience of the union's activities and practices. A total of 21 interviews and four FGDs were conducted. The selection of the sample was purposive, with a view to making sure that only members who had exposure to and experience with the roles in the union were included. In addition, primary data were supplemented with secondary data from various sources like published books, journal articles, and reports. The data were analysed and interpreted using thematic content analysis.

Nzega District was chosen as a case study because it was one of the places where members (teachers) of TTU had expressed their discontent and dissatisfaction against their union, the TTU. In 2013 TTU Nzega was reported to have an internal crisis caused by teachers' agitations which led to protests and attempts by those teachers to defect to TTU for alternative teachers' union (Salum 2015; *Mwanahalisi*, 2011; *Tanzania Today*, 2014). Such teachers' attempts were reported to have been grounded on the dissatisfaction with the TTU's representation of its objectives and meeting members' interests.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the research findings on factors contributing to the decline of TUs' collective actions in Tanzania, by focusing on the Tanzania Teachers Union (TTU). Based on field study and a review of secondary sources of data, this study finds that various forces are considered to be the contributing factors to the decline of trade union collective actions in the country. Such forces and factors were put forward by members of the TTU, and are based on their experiences, opinions, and perceptions regarding the administration, leadership and organisation of the trade union. The data were consolidated into main themes which are discussed in the following sub-sections.

Lack of autonomy in TTU lower-level organisations

The lower-level organisation unit of the TTU was found to be overtaken, or rather 'captured'⁵ by the employer's responsibilities, hence undermining the union's autonomy. TTU branch representatives and leaders were also serving other roles at different levels for their employers. These union officials were appointed by the employer to be heads of school (HOS), district education officers (DEO), and ward education officers (WEOs). Teachers refer to this dual role as "*kofia mbili*" (two hats), meaning that the post occupier serves two different functions, with somewhat differing interests, at the same time. The results of such practice are that trade union's lower-level organisations become captured and superseded by the employer. Further, it was found that some branch representatives tended to put unions' activities at stake for the sake of fulfilling employers' responsibilities. However, district leaders did not see the practice as a problem which would constrain their autonomy; this view is partly because they were also benefiting from the practice. Two of three teachers' union leaders at Nzega District were also employer representatives; the district chairman was also the WEO, and the treasurer was a HOS.

Some leaders were of the opinion that *kofia mbili* was not a problem since those who elected them into office knew that they could safeguard and

⁵ Field data reveal that TTU grassroots officials (branch representatives in particular) had found themselves more inclined towards employers' responsibility than to trade union roles (example. Thabiti, 2020, p.33 & p.53). What symptomizes that they have been captured by the employer is the sidelining of trade union roles at that level.

promote their interests despite being employer's representatives. Some even contended that representing the employer gave them greater leverage than when consulting the same employer as mere teachers' union leaders. This is what one leader said in this regard:

In my view, ones' effectiveness in any responsibility depends on his or her commitment and not the number of posts they hold (Interview with a TTU district leader, August 2018).

During FGD it was found that many of the teachers were not satisfied with the performance of their leaders; they regarded them selfish and opportunist, consequently, they abandoned them. These members believed that their leaders were no longer representing their collective interests as they previously did in the 1990s when the TTU was established. The following is a remark by one of the members:

In recent years the employer has totally abandoned our claims. It is almost four years now we have not been promoted or provided with annual salary increments. Neither the government nor our trade union care (FGD, Member, August 2018).

The narratives which have been cited here give credence to the concept of 'sold-out bureaucracy' as explained by Cohen (2006). She posits that bureaucratic TUs tend to produce elites at the top, which is structurally disassociated from the grassroots, resulting in divisions which constrain any attempts geared towards collective actions Olson (1965:14) argues that 'self-interested behaviours are often thought to be the rule when economic motives are at stake'. The documentary review in the current study found that union leaders were being paid various honoraria such as communication, transport, per diems, and responsibility allowances by the employers (TTU reports 2013-2015, 2015-2017). On the whole, such state of affairs reflects what VI Lenin (1955) termed as 'labour aristocracy', in which the top leaders enjoy the favours and privileges of being leaders at the expense of the downtrodden members at the grassroots. This has resulted into the fading of the organic

link and symbiotic relationship between members and their leaders – hence the natural decline of collective action.

However, it was found that the claims over the abandonment of workers' claims emanate from the fact that in 2016 the Government of Tanzania froze new employments, promotions, and transfers for it was undergoing workers' verification exercise, aimed at removing ghost workers in the payrolls. Such a decision is condemned by workers, including teachers for it slowed down their smooth vertical acceleration in terms of wages and the related employment and retirement benefits⁶. Similarly, in October 2017 Mr. George Mkuchika, the minister for Public Service Management and Good Governance declared that the Government would not increase civil servants' salary because it discovered that about 40,000 workers had faked their age. Broadly, President Magufuli's reign will be remembered by workers for his hands-on management and preference for work to remuneration. Teachers in the FGDs conducted in Bukene Ward, Nzega District, reckoned Magufuli's legacy to civil servants as one of the sourest due to his failure to increase and improve workers' salaries and other benefits during his reign 2015-2020⁷. Such respondents' claim reiterated the Government's stand shown by the President Magufuli in his May Day speech. In his speech on May Day, 2018 in Iringa, President Magufuli observed that:

To me, I believe that it is better that the Government constructs a railway to landlocked countries, sets aside big budgetary allocation for primary health care, and other development projects than using all those monies for increasing workers' salary (Azam Tv, YouTube Channel, 2018).

Given such government position over worker's welfare, the respondents and FGDs participants of this study had differing views. While the majority of them described such position as very bad and inhuman, some of them viewed it as good as they believed that the Government had good intention; and therefore, working and living conditions will be improved over time. Some

⁶ Interview with TTU youth district leader in September 2018, in Nzega Tabora

⁷ Kahura, D (2020). Magufuli's Legacy: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly.

respondents opined that it was too early to judge the Magufuli's administration. Furthermore, the reinstatement of President Samia Suluhu, following the demise of President Magufuli in March, workers hoped for a rapid shift to a new age of 'bread and butter'⁸. Workers, including teachers, expressed their wishes and support to President Samia through their 2021 May Day celebrations motto "*Maisha Bora, Mishahara Bora Kazi Iendelee*", literally translated as 'Good life, Better Salaries, Work Continues'. Workers in their speech delivered by the president of TUCTA, Mr. Tumain Nyamhokya on behalf of all other TUs in the country laid down several workers' claim relating to annual increment, protracted arrears, National Insurance Health Fund [NHIF] Policy on age limit of dependents, frozen government promotions and income tax rates (Pay as You Earn [PAYE]). In her response, President Samia presented the position of her government that her administration will restore and enshrine the good working relationship with workers. She went further by agreeing a number of claims laid down by TUCTA including *inter alia* the decrease of PAYE by 1 percent and extension of age limit of NHIF dependents from 18 to 21 years old. Besides, she declined workers claim over annual increment for what they referred to as a poorly performing economy due to COVID-19⁹.

Nevertheless, from them, it can simply be noted that President Samia's speech marked the end of Magufuli's reign, and the starting of new era which cannot be instantly judged. However, the challenge ahead for both the Government and workers is to maintain that promising starting point; such atmosphere shall be upheld by working in good faith, regular consultation, and reforms of the existing repressive labour laws.

Suppression and manipulation of trade unions' activism

The teachers who participated in this study were Government employees. As such, the interaction and attitude of the Government against the TTU has implications on the activities of the Union, including their ability to articulate and act collectively in the pursuit of their interests. The current study found

⁸ President Samia Suluhu Speech on May Day 2021 celebrations in Mwanza, accessed at <https://www.ikulu.go.tz/uploads/speeches/sw-1619896624-HOTUBA%20YA%20MEI%20MOSI%202021%20-%20FINAL%20.pdf>

⁹ *ibid*

that the employer would usually impose various measures to manipulate and suppress active mobilisation of teachers for collective action through their union. It is worth noting that in Tanzania there has been a tacit agreement that TUs and other civil society organisations should not engage in politics, and if they do so they will face heavy sanctions and punishments (Babeiya, 2011). Despite the importance of politics on the life and welfare of all citizens, it is a taboo for TUs to question or criticise Government policies or actions in public (Shivji, 1986; Chambua, 2002; Kamugisha & Tefurukwa, 2015). The playing field for TUs in the post-colonial period as in the colonial period remains to be economic welfare of the members, and not beyond that.

In the FGDs, teachers reported that the relationship between the TTU and the Government, as the employer, was very complex and dynamic. They said that there were critical times when the Government worked closely with teachers, especially near or during elections, but thereafter teachers are sidelined. During those moments of friendship, the Government consults teachers on a number of issues and occasions. Nevertheless, TTU leaders posited that they had very close relationship with the ruling party, *Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM)* and its government because this gave them leverage in articulating members' claims. However, this seemed to be more in the rhetoric than in reality. Rank and file teachers, who also participated in this study, contested the position of their leaders for they opined that the relationship between the TTU and CCM had been harmful and killed their activism. Further, in an interview with one of the experienced members, it was noted that CCM and its government has been using the TTU for political motives. One respondent had this to say in this regard:

Our union (TTU) has succumbed to the power of the ruling party, and we are no longer autonomous. Look! Can you tell me why we need our boss [referring to the President of the United Republic of Tanzania] to attend our general assembly? (Interview with an experienced member, August, 2018).

Impliedly, the above quotation suggests that some members are discontent with the presence of the President; whether directly or indirectly in TTU

general assemblies, for his presence is likely to inhibit the freedom of members to express their views. In the same vein, some members in FGDs also argued that the presence of the president or other top government officials in every TTU general assembly has been used to impose division or tensions in the TTU. During the TTU general Assembly of 2016 the President of the United Republic of Tanzania ordered the Controller and Auditor General (CAG) to conduct special auditing of the TTU accounts. The CAG report that followed revealed that between 2011 and 2016 TTU spent about Tshs. 3.5 billion without the authorisation by the General Secretary and Treasurer of the TTU. Though auditing had public interest but some members perceived the action as an ill-intention against TTU and its leaders because their union has its independent system of auditing¹⁰. Nevertheless, TTU uses its general assembly meetings as a platform to communicate its demands directly to the government while, the government uses the same to channel its message to all teachers. Yet, it is apparent that the government as the employer has an upper hand in penetrating its objectives through those platforms compared to TTU.

It was also found that, employer to enhance further control over workers also tries to monitor whom should teachers cooperate with. Respondents revealed that teachers in the districts found it difficult to cooperate with their ward councilor because he was a member of an opposition party. They noted that if they cooperated with him, they would face heavy sanctions from the Government as their employer, including being transferred to remote areas or being demoted. The leaders of the teachers' union at the district level testified that they worked closely with the Government and the ruling party because it was their boss and, as such, it was insubordination to refuse to do so. One of the interviewees who is a member remarked that:

In this ward we have a councillor who is from *Chama Cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo* (CHADEMA) for two consecutive terms, but we tacitly agreed not to work with him because of his party (FGD data, Ordinary Members, August 2018).

¹⁰Interview with experienced member of TTU, held at Bukene Secondary School on 22nd September 2018

In contrast to the matter reported above, heads of school who were visited by the researcher for this study responded that it was not true that teachers are not allowed to cooperate with opposition party councillors. There is no specific law that provides for the leaders whom they should or should not work with, but it is a good practice for teachers to not engage in political matters or involve in relationships that may tarnish their integrity as public servants.

It was further found that the majority of the respondents agreed that the Government neither wanted to be questioned nor willing to tolerate any movement to challenge its policies and decisions, and that this situation has intensified over the years. They attributed such behaviours with dismissal from civil service of some leaders on various grounds as one of the indicators of government harshness. TTU-Nzega's action plan reports (2015- 2017) for example, shows that in the district there were eight teachers who had been demoted due to the poor performance of their students in national examinations within that period. These teachers were holding the posts of the district education officer (DEO) and ward education officer (WEO). Such demotion was seen by teachers as intended to instill fear among them not to engage in activities other than teaching.

Furthermore, the respondents posited that the recent measure by the Government to amend Higher Education Students' Loans Board (HESLB) law in 2016 was among the indications that the Government no longer cared about workers' claims. With the amendment, HESLB deductions from beneficiary salaries increased from 8 percent to 15 percent. In addition, HESLB loan policy mandated it to deduct 6 percent of workers' basic salary as 'retention fee'¹¹. District leaders of the TTU, like their members, also blamed the Government that such deductions were forcefully imposed and unlawfully enforced since they affected even the loan beneficiaries who had a contract of 8 percent deduction with the HESLB prior to the amendment.

¹¹ Retention fee HESLB regulations require all beneficiaries of its loans to pay 6 percent of their basic salary for retention of values of money of they owe annually (Hon. Joyce Ndalichako, Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Vocational Training (Habari Leo newspaper, 23rd May 2020)

Nevertheless, according to the HESLB regulations, the Government has the power of amending HESLB deductions from time to time, but the problem was that the TUs were had never been consulted. Thus, they started to blame the Government for the amendment affected even those who had contracts prior to such amendments. In 2021, the Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC) denounced the application of the HESLB Amendment Act of 2016 Cap. 178 as violating the traditional law enforcement procedures for it was retrospectively implemented and did not involve stakeholders.

From the findings above, it can be noted that the Government employs carrot and stick to suppress labour movements in the country. Submissiveness and loyalty to the Ruling Party and the Government may earn appointment and promotion, while dissenting may result in demotion, transfer and even retrenchment. Government, may take hostile reaction against organised workers to protect its investment environment which is the key business of the neo-liberal states (Upchurch & Mathers, 2011; Vachon, et al., 2016). In Gramscian terms, such repressions exemplify the notions of coercion and consent as discussed earlier. Similarly, Kelly (1998) refers to such measures as hegemonic tendencies which maintain employers' dominance over workers; which explains why the employer will take repressive measures against social movements.

However, according to Shivji (2014), coercion is not necessary in constraining collective action because labour movements can be systemically captured through ideological hegemony, under which TUs are lured with the *rhetorics* of being partners or stakeholders to government while they are entities with very distinct interests. Maglaras (2013) cements that the system of hegemony does not solely rely on violence for its reproduction and dominance, but on the transmission and generalisation of its values and ideological content. Nonetheless, in her 2021 May Day speech to workers, President Samia Suluhu instructed the HESLB to stop deducting the 6 percent retention fee from workers' salaries. Though such act may be considered as a concession to the list of workers' claim, the lack of comprehensive law and policy reforms to crystalize the President's directives suggests that workers were still vulnerable.

Rigid and Repressive Labour Laws

An attempt was made to review the existing laws and regulations governing the operation of TUs in Tanzania. For effective conduction of TUs' activities, there must be conducive political, economic and legal environment. A review of documents on the existing legal frameworks of the country revealed that the existing labour laws constrain trade union advocacy and collective action. Currently, TUs operate under the Employment and Labour Relations [ELR] Act. No. 6 of 2004. This law is responsible for regulating the relationship between the employees and employers. The ELR Act provides for trade union registration and advocacy for employees' demands by TUs. Part four, Article 45 of the ELR provides for the obligation to register under the office of the registrar of trade unions within six months of the TU's establishment. Article 46 (1) requires trade union registering to be i) a bona fide trade union, ii) an association not for gain, iii) established at the meeting of at least 20 employees, and iv) have adopted a constitution and, v) a recognisable address in the country. However, these two articles can be charged for setting rigid registration procedures which in the end, allow the Government to remotely control labour movement in the country as their existence from inception must be known and monitored by the office of the Registrar of Trade Unions (ORTU).

Further, the ELR confers overwhelming powers on the ORTU. Articles 48 (3-4) provide for the registration while article 55 provides for the deregistration of TUs. Under these articles, the ORTU has the power to register and deregister TUs. Article 48(1) requires that an association that needs to register must submit to the office of the register the following documents: a) a prescribed form that has been properly completed and signed by the secretary of the organisation or federation; (b) a certified copy of the attendance register and minutes of its establishment meeting prescribed, and (c) a certified copy of its constitution and rules. Article 48(3-4) states categorically that if the Registrar is satisfied that the trade union has complied with the requirements of this law may register, or otherwise, refuse to register it. In the end, the registrar may allow the applicant to rectify the application within a stipulated period (not clearly stated by the Act), and according to Article 48(4b) may

refuse the application completely. Article 55 gives a mandate to the Registrar to deregister any trade union when it fails to comply with the requirements of the Act. At the same time, appeal application procedures against the Registrar's decision are not articulated in detail in the Act.

A review of the ELR reveals that, since the registration of a new trade union requires the signatures of at least 20 members who have agreed to form such an entity, the Registrar may use the provision to allow for the formation of weak and fragmented unions to demobilise big or umbrella unions, particularly those which are not in good terms with the authorities. During the fieldwork it was learned that the TTU district leader was concerned that the newly registered splinter teachers' unions were serving such a purpose.

Apart from the ELR, there is the Public Service Negotiation Machinery (PSNM) which provides for collective bargaining arrangements between the TUs and the employer (the Government). However, the implementation of the law abets Government's dominance or hegemony over the workers. Article 8 (2) of the PSNM gives only consultative powers to TUs and the final mandate rest on the government as the employer and a party to tripartite collective bargaining bodies. The article provides that the decision reached by the Service Joint Staff Council (SJSC) should be referred to the Public Service Joint Staff Council (PSJSC) for consideration. As such, the PSJSC may endorse and forward to the minister responsible or deter its endorsement until another time and may refer back to the SJSC for readjustments. Besides, Article 27 restricts the possibility of conducting secondary strikes and lock-outs by TUs in support of other workers who are on strike or protest. As such, there is no possibility for solidarity strikes, a thing which kept TUs vibrant in the 1950s and 1960s.

Furthermore, both ELR Article 86 (b) and PSNM Article 28 (1.a) provide for compensation of the costs incurred by the employer during strikes or lock-outs by the strikers and inciters themselves rather than their union. In sum, the findings above about labour laws and their implication on collective action affirm Mukandala's (1999) conclusion that labour laws are instrumentally used by governments to achieve a remote-control function

over labour movement activism and collective action in general. Similarly, Rugeiyamu et al. (2018) demonstrated that labour laws adopted by post-colonial governments, just like those adopted by colonial governments, perpetuate the status quo of the political ruling class. Therefore, it is obvious that post-colonial labour regimes are also maintaining the colonial logic of repression and control through legislation and coercion against labour movement and trade unionism. Consequently, such labour regimes have killed the active mobilisation of collective action in the country.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The current study has explored the factors that have contributed to the decline of trade unions' collective action in Tanzania. Being the largest trade union in the country in terms of the size of its membership and geographical spread, the TTU was used as a case in the present study. Accordingly, given such qualifications, one would expect well-mobilised collective actions in advocating for teachers' rights and demands. The current situation of trade union in the country is contrary to such expectation. Unlike during the colonial and early post-independence period when trade unions were more resilient to whatever repressive measures directed to them, currently, trade union currently can hardly take any collective action such as strike to pursue workers claims. With the advent of neo-liberal globalisation government as employer has abandoned its role of social empowerment and become more repressive towards labour movement leading to a decline of trade unions collective action in the country.

Government hegemony which is historical and has been by and large enhanced through the contraction of political space for free civil society which – including TUs. Over the years, trade unionists have been striving to establish strong and autonomous TUs, but the Government as the employer has not allowed these efforts to bear fruit. In that endeavor, various techniques have been deployed to ensure there is no space for actively mobilised labour movement in the country, some of such techniques include checking of trade union autonomy right from grassroots level and adoption of rigid laws. The existing labour regimes made it difficult for trade unions to conduct strike and other collective actions by imposing heavy sanctions to strikers.

To redress such situation, members of TUs should strive to secure full autonomy from the employer in all levels of the TTU organisation. TTUs should strive as much as possible to de-link its bureaucracy from the employer. That may be enhanced by having in place laws which require that any TTU leader (including branch representatives), who may be appointed by the employer to immediately resign from his/her union position. The TTU should find ways of motivating and compensating its branch representatives so that they have full commitment to the Union's responsibilities rather than the employer's appointment positions. Furthermore, the TTU and its members should devise modern organisation strategies so that they can continue mobilising their members without much restriction from the government. This may entail the adoption of modern technology skills that could strengthen the communication between leaders and members.

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