

# **Strategies and Revitalisation for survival of Trade Unions in Africa: The Role of Information Communication Technologies**

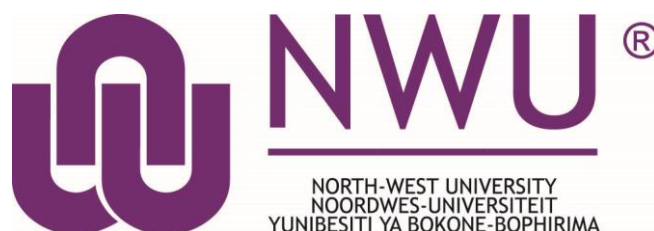
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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Master of Arts* in Labour Relations Management at the Vaal Triangle Campus of the North-West University

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## **DECLARATION**

I, Francina Girley Kwakwa, declare that the “STRATEGIES AND REVITALISATION FOR SURVIVAL OF TRADE UNIONS IN AFRICA: THE ROLE OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES” is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted in this dissertation and acknowledged by means of complete references.

## **LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE**

Ms Linda Scott did the language editing for this dissertation. See Annexure B

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“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11).

I am thankful to God for granting me the wisdom and the knowledge in completion of my Master’s degree.

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

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## COMMENTS

The readers are advised to take note of the following:

This dissertation uses the reference and editorial style as prescribed by the American Psychology Association (APA) (6<sup>th</sup> ed.) unless indicated otherwise.

The publication manual of APA is in line with the policy of the Programme in Labour Relations Management at the Vaal Triangle Campus of the North-West University to use APA style documents as from December 2011.

Chapters 1, 3 and 4 will use the American Psychological Association (APA) reference and editorial style. Chapter 2 prescribed editorial and reference style of the National and International Journal of Labour Relations and may be submitted for journal revision and publications if possible.

The dissertation will consist of two research articles.

## SUMMARY

African trade unions are faced with dramatic trade union membership decline and some of the trade unions have seen the need to use information and communication technology (ICT) as a strategy to reverse the membership decline. There has been a discussion based on the way trade unions use the new ICT, particularly the Internet. However, the discussion has been restricted to Anglophone countries. Countries such as Nigeria and South Africa have rendered few studies based on the ICT strategies for trade unions, despite the fact that they recognise the importance of communication and its impact.

ICT is an important contribution for union revitalisation. Different researchers state that the ICTs are less costly and faster than traditional ways. The Internet can be used as a means of internal communication within trade unions by offering membership services, e-learning and news. In addition, it can be used as external communication in national and international unions to promote better communication using blogs, chats and Skype or link to Twitter and Facebook (Greene, Hogan & Grieco, 2003).

This study aims to monitor unions' Internet use and analyses the website content of trade unions in the top five economies African countries, namely Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Angola. The Internet usage and the content of union websites were analysed by using the typology of Rego, Alves, Naumann and Silva (2014). Therefore, the content analysis was applied as Rego et al. (2014) suggested in their study.

There have been several studies on the impact of Internet and ICTs on private and public organisations, but fewer studies on the trade union strategies and revitalisation for survival in the new information era in the top five economies Africa countries.

The findings show that a statistically significant difference was found between the content, interactivity and form, for instance the probability value is  $p < 0.05$ . For this study, one-way ANOVA was used.

**Key words and terms:** trade unions, trade union membership, trade union density, information era, revitalisation, strategies, information communication technologies, the Internet, websites.

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# **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT**

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The dissertation focuses on developing an understanding of the way trade unions, in the top five economies in African countries such as Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Angola, renew themselves through the use of ICT to monitor their Internet and analyse their websites.

This chapter will discuss the problem statement, set the research objectives and explain the research methods; and provide the chapter division.

## **1.2 RATIONALE AND JUSTIFICATION**

Since the publication of Rovers works “Overseas labour relations” in 1957, the African trade unions had an intellectual interest (Allen, 1969). During 1990s, the new constitution was adopted by most of the African countries to protect the human rights, particularly the freedom of association rights in a working environment. Therefore, this allowed trade unions to grow and established *de jure* (Budeli, 2012).

Minter (2014) points out that African trade union movement are faced with massive challenges arising from the critical situation that threatens people and the African continent. The neoliberal globalisation has increased the level of poverty and unemployment and rising inequalities within the different regions around the world. Besides this background, there is a need for the renewal of trade unions in Africa. Therefore, the collective interests need to be secure by trade unions and they need to struggle for change in the currently dominant paradigm of development (Minter, 2014).

In developing economies, a decline of trade unions exists, except in South Africa, India, Turkey, Finland and Sweden (Wood, 2002; Blanchflower, 2006; ILO, 2014). Kuruvilla, Das, Kwon, and Kwon (2002) concluded that most countries are experiencing the decline in the union density internationally. Nigeria, the largest economy in Africa in 2016, experienced a medium degree of unionisation (5 to 15% of the workforce are trade union members) but enjoy a stronger societal influence (Larsen, 2016).

The world economy has become increasingly globalise since the mid-1980s and the Western industrialised countries economic structure has changed more often from high unionised industrial sector to a low and challenging to unionise service sector. There has been an overall of continuous

decline on the union membership (Galenson, 1994; Farber & Western, 2002; Martinez Lucio, Walker, & Trevorrow, 2009).

As stated by Martinez Lucio et al. (2009), the debate that took place in 1980s and 1990s focused more on the decline of union membership causes. However, recent debate on the topic focused on the trade unions' new strategies for revitalising. As mentioned by Oyelere and Owoyemi (2011), except in South Africa, most other developing economies in Africa have been through a period of decline.

Trade unions need to face this crisis by developing a strategy for reversing the decline in union membership and density. The ICT is a significant contribution to the revitalisation of trade unions (Mwamadzing, 2003). Union revitalisation does not only depend on the use of the Internet. As explained by Diamond and Freeman (2002), trade unions using websites need to consider the type of service they provide to members and non-members. They further warn that "if trade unions do not develop effective strategies for using the Internet and websites, non-union organisations may win the competition in cyberspace for providing services to workers" (Diamond & Freeman, 2002, p. 593).

In the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US), trade union leaders see the Internet as part of trade unions strategy for the future. Besides, ICT potentialities can be developed if the strategy of unions allows it (Rego et al. 2014). For the past 20 years, ICT has had a significant impact on trade unions (Krašenkienė, Kazokienė, & Susnienė, 2014) and worldwide, several trade unions have introduced the use of the Internet as a means for combating membership density decline (Wellman, 2001; Wright, 2011). This led to trade unions developing new strategies to increase membership and resulted in the deployment of ICTs by trade unions as one of its strategies to conduct more effective trade union functions to recruit members, campaigns, service provision, research, education and training (Lee, 1997; Shostak, 1999). Thus, trade unions have introduced the Internet as a means of strategy to prevent further challenges of trade union membership decline (Lowery & Beadles, 2006).

In the preceding two decades, Anglophone countries focused on the potential of ICT to improve trade union communications technology (Rego et al., 2014). Lee (1997) states that the development of the Internet highlighted positive views on how the potential of ICTs particularly the online communication become a tool that change trade unions. However, Chaison (2005) has criticised the use of the Internet as not beneficial and it might become lead to the destruction of some of the members.

ICT has opened new opportunities for trade unions (Panagiotopoulos & Barnett, 2015). Several trade unions have considered as a benefit in the field of ICT around the world (Rego, Alves, & Naumann, 2010). Different researchers in the area of labour relations explain that there is a lack of research, more especially on how trade unions are using the Internet and if it is relevant to them.

In 1997, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) listed 85 trade unions' websites. Half of the listed sites are in the United States (US), and apart from South Africa, no African or Latin sites are mentioned (McCluskey, 1997). In 2015, statistical information provided by Internet World Stats (2017) indicated people with access to the Internet during November 2015, in Africa, was 9.8 percent and the rest of the world 90.2 percent. South Africa is one of the top five economies Africa. In South Africa, almost half of the population (48.99 %) have access to the Internet. The largest economy countries in Africa are Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Angola. The statistics of the population and Internet users in these African countries are shown in Table 1:

Table 1  
*Top five Africa countries population and Internet users' statistics*

<b>AFRICA 2017 POPULATION AND INTERNET USERS STATISTICS FOR 2017</b>						
<b>African country</b>	<b>Population (2017 Estimates)</b>	<b>Internet users (31 December 2000)</b>	<b>Internet users (31 March 2017)</b>	<b>Penetration (% Population)</b>	<b>Africa Internet (% Users)</b>	<b>Facebook (30 June 2016)</b>
<b>Algeria</b>	41,063,753	50,000	<b>15,105,000</b>	36.8	4.4	15,000,000
<b>Angola</b>	26,655,513	30,000	<b>5,951,453</b>	22.3	1.7	3,500,000
<b>Egypt</b>	95,215,102	450,000	<b>34,800,000</b>	36.5	10.1	32,000,000
<b>Nigeria</b>	191,835,936	200,000	<b>93,591,174</b>	48.8	27.1	16,000,000
<b>South Africa</b>	55,436,360	2,400,000	<b>28,580,290</b>	51.6	8.3	14,000,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,246,504,865</b>	<b>4,514,400</b>	<b>345,676,501</b>	<b>27.7</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>146,637,000</b>
NOTES: (1) Africa Internet Statistics were updated for March 31, 2017. (2) Africa Facebook subscribers are for June 30, 2016 (3) Africa Population numbers are mid-year 2017 estimates, based on data mainly from the <a href="#">United Nations - Population Division</a> and local census offices. <a href="http://internetworldstats.com">internetworldstats.com</a>						

Adapted from Internet World Stats (2017).

Shostak (2002) points out that union are using the ICT to reverse their downward trends in organising; thus, unions believe that the use of ICT can help to mobilise workers (Bennett & Taras, 2002). Troy (2003) argues that the use of the ICT will not improve trade unions and will surely not reverse the membership density and influence trends. Newman (2005) said that unions are using ICT to organise their work and unions must maintain pace with the use of information technology.

Greene et al. (2003) emphasise that the Internet has an impact on the internal and external communication of the trade unions. The internal communications are e-learning, providing services to members and promoting access to more information. The external communication is to foster national as well as international solidarity and ensure that they can make contact with mass media (Greene, Hogan, & Grieco, 2003). This means merely that ICT may empower small trade unions.

The Internet offers trade unions an opportunity to connect with young people who are particularly averse to the labour movement (Tannock, 2001). Trade unions seem to have trouble in recruiting young people and women. Majority of young employees are not part of the trade union but they use the potential of ICT's as part of socialisation, mobilisation as well as job hunting (Saundry, Stuart, & Antcliff, 2007). Trade unions aim to communicate and attract new members, especially young people who are working in ICTs (EurWork, 2002).

There is a lack of tools that can be used to monitor the relationship between the trade unions and the use of ICTs appropriately. Therefore, it is important to develop a tool that will collect and analyse the information of the use of ICTs within trade unions. Labour experts explain that the Internet will alter employee representation fundamentally and the way unions operate (Freeman, 2005). According to Fiorito, Jarley, Delaney and Kolodinsky (2000), trade union organisations feel that an introduction and implementation of the new ICT is critical to the success of their organisation.

The question can arise on how the Internet can contribute to the revitalisation of the trade union. Some authors stress that the Internet can contribute to the revitalisation by providing a wide range of services to its members such as information on workplace and general issues, e-learning and other services (Darlington, 2000; Shostak, 1999).

Diamond and Freeman (2002) stress that the use of ICTs can contribute to the process of recruitment such as providing membership forms online and promoting campaigns as well as organising union members. Benson and Zhu (2008) explain that trade unions in the new information era still neglect to implement and use ICT. They further mention that it is crucial for trade unions to use ICT, as it will provide the database system of membership, online communication, e-learning, online surveys, union's campaigns and daily news.

There has been limited research outlines the trade unions impact of the Internet and ICTSs; however, many studies been conducted on the Internet and ICTs impact on society and organisations. Some studies have investigated the use of information technology by unions;

however, there is limited research that exists in Africa and South Africa on presenting a typology as well as its application to the analysis of Africa and South Africa trade union websites. Table 2 illustrate the focus of previous research.

Table 2

*Previous studies on trade unions and the Internet*

Author	Information provision	Participation and Interactivity	Networking	Service provision	Campaigning	Participation	Resource generation	Benefits	Transactions	Online processes consultation and Online forms available	Information on services and Forms Download	General information on activities	Content		Interactivity		Form	
													Union life	Beyond union life	One way	Two-way	Simple	Complex
Gibson and Ward (2000)	√		√		√	√	√					√	√		√			
Ward and Lusoli (2002)	√	√	√	√	√					√					√	√		
Freeman (2005)	√					√		√					√		√			
Santos, Amaral and Rodrigues (2005)									√	√	√	√	√					
Rego, Alves, Naumann and Silva (2014)	√	√	√	√	√	√		√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

Compiled by the researcher from the work of Gibson and Ward (2000); Ward and Lusoli (2002); Santos, Amaral and Rodrigues (2005); Rego et al., (2014).

There has been limited studies and research that focuses on the impact of the Internet, ICTs and the use of information technology in society and different organisations, particularly trade unions. There is still limited research in Africa and South Africa that focuses on the trade union websites, Internet and ICTs. Therefore, there is a need to conduct this study.

The study of Ward and Lusoli (2002) draws on analysing the website content of the trade unions. Ward and Lusoli (2002) have presented a typology to analyse websites of the British trade unions and it is composed of four aspects, namely information provision, participation and interactivity, networking and service provision. Ward and Lusoli (2002) were inspired by the previous study of Gibson and Ward (2000). The study of Gibson and Ward (2000) focuses on the five composite indices, namely campaigning, networking, participation, and resource generation and information provision of the New Zealand political party website.

By analysing the typology of Ward and Lusoli (2002), it been shown that there are some limitation of the typology for the content of the website of trade unions. First, the repetition of information and services was includes. Secondly, it seems to undermine the power and potential of Internet forums such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Skype.

Freeman (2005) adopted a proposal of comparing UK and the US trade unions. Freeman's typology focuses on three-category schemas such as information, participation and benefits to improve the content of their websites. Freeman used the methodology that developed by Ward and Lusoli (2002) to analyse British union websites and supplemented it with additional information. The study of Freeman is different from Ward and Lusoli because the networking dimension in the typology is removed. Freeman (2005) states that the UK and the US would continue to use ICT to improve their website content to communicate via emails and to create more options for members to join online. Freeman concludes by stating that these changes will profoundly affect union membership and density.

The study of Santos et al. (2005) focuses on the websites of municipalities. The researchers have looked at the accessibility, facilities for disabled people and if they have to access the service provided by the websites and other factors. The study focuses on four levels, namely transactions, online processes consultation or online forms available, information on services provided and forms download and on the general information on activities. Therefore, it is important to refer to their study because it considers the two dimensions of information and interactivity.

More recently, the study of Rego et al. (2014) has presented a typology of Portugal and Britain trade union websites that included three dimensions, namely content, interactivity and form, with two sub-categories each. Lowery and Beadles (2006) argue that it is not necessary to focus on trade union websites and their usability. Lowery and Beadles (2006) emphasise trade unions need to know the advantages of the Internet and websites. The website needs to include useful content such as information about contact details, campaign and membership and so forth.

There are limited studies on the content of union websites (Ward & Lusoli, 2002; Santos et al., 2005). Numerous limitations were noted in the study of Rego et al. (2010), and after a random survey, based on union sites, categories of typology have to be created. This study will adapt the typology of Rego et al. (2014) and use it to analyse the South Africa trade unions websites, as this typology is proven useful as an instrument to analyse trade union websites.

Pantland's (2010) study looked at the impact of ICT on union renewal and revitalisation, the practitioners using Web 2.0 and the digital divide. The study addresses the issue of the digital divide by simply comparing the use of ICTs in both UK to South Africa. However, Pantland (2010) did not focus on the content of trade unions websites. In the literature review, the researcher found limited studies that investigate trade union websites in South Africa. Therefore, the current study presents a typology and its application on analysing South African trade unions websites.

This study test a typology/tool, as well as its application to the analysis of South Africa and another four largest economies in African trade unions' websites as these countries, are active and economies African countries. Furthermore, the study intends to understand how the ICTs have influenced trade unions and to analyses the website content of the trade unions in the top five economies in Africa such as Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Angola.

Based on the problem statement above, the following questions arise:

- How are revitalisation of trade unions, trade unions strategies, new information era and Internet use of trade unions conceptualised from the literature;
- How do trade unions in the five largest economies in Africa attempting to renew themselves through the use of Internet technology, networking and ICT;
- Can the content analysis of the typology/tool of Rego et al. (2014) apply to monitor Internet use (websites) of trade unions in the top five economies in Africa?

### **1.3 PURPOSE STATEMENT**

The primary purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of the way trade unions in Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Angola structure themselves to renew themselves through the use of ICT. Furthermore, to present a typology/tool that can be used to monitor unions' Internet use in the top five economies in Africa as well as to test the typology of Rego et al. (2014) by analysing websites of trade unions of five largest economies in Africa. The study intends to understand how the ICT has an effect on trade unions membership and to analyses the website content of these trade unions.

#### **1.3.1 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

The specific objectives of this research are:

- To conceptualise revitalisation of trade unions, trade unions strategies, new information era and Internet use of trade unions (Article 1)
- To conceptualise from the literature how trade unions in the five largest economies in Africa attempt to renew themselves through the use of Internet technology, networking and ICT (Article 1)
- To test a typology/tool of Rego et al. (2014) to monitor Internet use in the top five economies in Africa (Article 2)
- To analyse the websites by using the typology/tool of Rego et al. (2014) to monitor Internet use in the top five economies in Africa (Article 2).

### **1.4 RESEARCH METHOD**

#### **1.4.1 Literature review**

For literature review, a systematic search process was conducted (Kastner et al., 2012) of different national and international sources, for example, journals, textbooks, newspaper reports, Internet-based search engines (Google Scholar, Google) and relevant dissertations on trade unions, decline in membership, labour movement, new information era, information technology.

#### **1.4.2 Research methodology**

Content analysis is according to Berelson's (1952, p. 18) define as "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication". Krippendorff (1980, p. 21) defines it as " technique for making replicable and valid inferences

from data to their context”. As mentioned by McMillan (2000) one of the distinct advantages of web content analysis is that large volumes of data can be analysed.

### **1.4.3 Research participants**

The sample will consist of trade unions from the top five economies in Africa. The trade unions use for this study was selected from Google search engine and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) list who have English as a language on their websites.

In this study, the unit analysis of the home page or the front page of the trade union website has been performed. A home page, according to Ha and James (1998, p. 468), means the first landing page of a website known as the “index.html,>” or a default page of the domain name for instance the “<http:www.epson.com”. Websites consist of several interlinked pages and by limiting; the scope of the research to the trade union home page will guarantee that no content will be missed due to the ambiguity of navigating the website internal pages. Only some trade unions have dedicated websites.

### **1.4.4 Content analysis of the data**

Riffe, Lacy and Fico (2005, p. 25) define quantitative content analysis as “a systematic and replicable examination of symbols of communication, which have been assigned numeric values according to valid measurement rules and the analysis of the relationship involving those values using statistical methods, to describe the communication, draw inferences about its meaning, or infer from the communication its context, both of production and consumption”. This method can be widely used to analyse the content of magazines, television and newspaper, as well as the content of the Internet (Varma, Hong, & Slater, 2006).

The researcher followed the steps suggested by Krippendorff (1980) and McMillan (2000) in conducting web analysis research. First, the researcher has formulated research questions or hypotheses. In this step, the definition of content was discussed than placed in the context of theory and hypotheses. Secondly, a sample was selected by getting the information from Internet search engines (Google). The population of the trade unions within Nigeria, Egypt, South Africa, Algeria and Angola was obtained from Google and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). In this research, analysing of registered trade unions websites in South Africa was performed and then a comparison was conducted on the other four top largest economies in Africa. Thirdly, the content analysis process was done by using two primary units of measurement, namely

coding units and context units. In this study, the researcher made use of Rego et al. (2014) proposed content analysis model that analyses trade union websites/pages.

The criteria for evaluating the trade union web page was assessed on the basis of the presence of the dimension set by Rego et al. (2014) by answering “yes” or “no”. The data obtained in the three dimensions, as seen in Table 3, shows the overall Internet usage by trade unions was analysed by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to explain the descriptive data.

This content analysis research was limited to the website of trade unions in Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Angola, whom all have English websites. This model is able to evaluate the relationship between trade unions and the Internet.

Table 3  
*Typology of content analysis of trade union use of the Internet*

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Sub-Categories</b>
Content	Union life
	Union life and beyond
Interactivity	One-way
	Two-way
Form	Simple
	Complex

Source: Adapted from Rego et al. (2014).

**1.4.4.1 Content dimension**

The first dimension is content and known as an information dimension. The content has two sub-categories, which are union life and beyond union life. Union life focuses on the website that provides more information about the trade unions. Websites contain more information related to union action or the service that unions provide such as meeting announcements, campaigns, strikes, collective bargaining, collective agreements, history of the trade union, membership forms, affiliation notifications, information about current officers and training for shop stewards. Other union websites do not contain information that focuses on union matters. Information beyond the union provides news based on general information, union renewal, social, economic, cultural, environmental and community issues. This website provides news and announcements; it, therefore, plays a sociability role (Rego et al., 2010; Rego et al., 2014).

#### **1.4.4.2 Interactivity dimension**

The second dimension focuses on the potential interactivity of the union website. The interactivity has a one-way and two-way website. An one-way website often provides vital information such as postal address and email address. Usually, this website includes forms online forms for some suggestions, questions, updating personal information and downloading union membership forms. The two-way website offers a possibility of social interactions. It provides online discussion forums. This includes blogs, chats, Skype and links to Twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn (Rego et al., 2014).

#### **1.4.4.3 Formal dimension**

The third dimension is the formal one. The website can be either simple or complex. The simple website does not include multimedia effects or special solutions for people who are disabled. Complex websites include sounds, videos, feeds or e-learning platforms (Rego et al., 2010).

Fourthly, coders were trained to code the content and reliability of coding is checked. To ensure inter-code reliability, two coders independently will code 20 percent of the sample from the five countries one after another. The entire coding was done online within a period of a typical week to avoid differences in content mentioned on the home pages. After this, the process was repeated and the entire sample was tested each month over a six-month period to see if any information changes on the websites of the trade unions. The reliability testing is an important additional step for content analysis and this can be done if the coders code the same set of material and then measure inter-rater reliability. One such measure is percentage agreement, which is given by the following formula:

$$PA = A/n \times 100$$

where PA = percentage agreement, A = number of agreements and n = a number of segments coded.

There is no clear agreement on what constitutes an acceptable level of reliability. Neuendorf (2002, p. 143) suggests that scores above 80 percent would be acceptable 'in most situations' but with more disagreement for lower values.

## **1.5 ONLINE ETHNOGRAPHY**

Bryman (2012) explains that the Internet goes against the grain of ethnography, as it seems a decidedly placeless space. As Hine (2000) explains, the Internet as a cyberspace and conder it as a strategy for an ethnographic study of the Internet that analyse communities in the form of online communities.

## **1.6 ETHICAL ASPECTS OF THE RESEARCH**

Basic Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC) approved this study, and the ethical number is NWU – HS – 2016 - 0087. See Annexure A.

As mentioned by Convery and Cox (2012), during the last 10 years an increase in Internet-based research (IBR) led increase the interest in IBR as well as research ethics. They further mention that the Internet is considered a public place and public behaviour does not require informed consent. The Internet-based research (IBR) method includes web page content analysis, online survey, email, chat rooms and analysis online conversations through social networking sites and discussion boards and/or blogs.

As explained by Hewson, Yule and Vogel (2003) information that has been deliberately and voluntary made available in the public domain can be analysed by researchers without the need for informed consent.

## **1.7 CHAPTER DIVISION**

- Chapter 1: Research proposal and problem statement
- Chapter 2: Research Article 1: The revitalisation of the labour movement in Nigeria, Egypt, South Africa, Algeria and Angola: The use of ICT
- Chapter 3: Research Article 2: A typology of trade union websites use with evidence from the top five economies in Africa
- Chapter 4: Conclusions regarding the entire study, as well as research limitations and recommendations.

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## **CHAPTER 2**

### **ARTICLE 1: THE REVITALISATION OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT IN NIGERIA, EGYPT, SOUTH AFRICA, ALGERIA AND ANGOLA: THE USE OF ICT**

#### **ABSTRACT**

The article aims to conceptualise revitalisation of trade unions, trade union strategies, new information era and Internet use of trade unions internationally and in the five largest economies in Africa and present the use of the Internet as a strategy to prevent further challenges of trade union such as union membership decline and density. The research focused on the ICT use and strategies of unions and more specifically unions in the five largest economies in Africa. The research also focusing on how unions are attempting to renew themselves through the use of Internet technology, networking and ICT. The literature clearly has shown that there is the slow progress of the ICTs by the unions of the top five economies in Africa due to the historical landscape they face. Trade unions are developing slowly and need to adapt to the use of the ICTs. There were limitations in this research as there was a lack of availability of primary documentation and secondary analysis to evaluate and access the accuracy of observations and conclusions. This study will add value to trade unions, particularly on the African continent to learn from and adapt to ICTs such as the website and Internet use and unions strategies to revitalisation.

**Keywords:** Trade unions, Cyber unions, Information Communication Technology, Strategies

## INTRODUCTION

Globalisation and new technologies have a significant impact on different organisations and trade unions are no exception. Trade unions in many countries are going through an institutional decline. This decline is due to the structural changes in labour force, economy and unemployment because of new technologies, labour market demographic changes and ageing population. Trade union reactions to the challenges of the existing situation are depicted through revitalisation (Krašenkienė, Kazokienė, & Susnienė, 2014). Trade union strategies for renewal and revitalisation are a key issue (Behrens, Hamann, & Hurd, 2004; Frege & Kelly, 2004; Hyman, 2013).

Globally, this has led trade unions to develop new strategies to increase membership and resulted in the deployment of information and communication technologies (ICTs). ICT, such as the Internet used by trade unions, is one of its strategies to conduct more effective trade union functions to recruit members, campaigns, service provision, research, education and training (Lee, 1997; Shostak, 1999; Wellman, 2001; Wright, 2011).

Social media played an important role in Arab Spring countries, not only social media but also all digital technology such as the Internet and mobile revolution. Furthermore, it plays a vital role in communication with people, and it was almost impossible to communicate without the use of modern technology (Eriksson, Franke, Granåsen, & Lindahl, 2013), but the question might arise whether African countries are using social media as well as the digital technology. The Internet used to gather information, social media to connect with people and global reporting such as news. Furthermore, ICT has played a significant role in Egypt and Tunisia but not a significant role in Syria and Libya (Eriksson, Franke, Granåsen, & Lindahl, 2013).

A discrepancy exists between researchers regarding strategy use of the Internet to prevent decline of membership. Lowery and Beadles (2006) mention that trade unions have introduced the Internet as a means of strategy to avoid further challenges of trade union membership decline. Troy (2003) argues that the use of the ICT will not improve trade unions and will surely not reverse the membership, density and influence trends. The use of ICT has problems and barriers for unions and their members. As Lewis (2005) mentions that “a lack of access to ICTs by both unions and their members is one of the key barriers inhibiting its widespread adoption and effective use, particularly in Africa” (Lewis, 2005, p. 201).

More recently, the researcher observed using social media has a strong potential as a driving force for revitalisation of trade unions; and the use of ICTs and the use of social media by trade unions

is increasingly studied (Rego, Sprenger, Kirov, Thomson, & Di Nunzio, 2016). However, it is important to note that differences do exist in the usage of the Internet; and the accessibility among different countries. Within developing countries, there is an apparent tendency toward increasing the concentration of the information flows in urban areas and in central areas, but there is limited research based on the diffusion in Asia and Africa (Furuholt & Kristiansen, 2007).

Global trade unions started emerging with the use of the Internet since the beginning of the twenty-first century (Lee, 2003). The global Internet origin was traced to the US-based ARPANET during the 1960s, and Sub-Saharan Africa had the first network in 1988. Although mobile and Internet penetration remains comparatively low in Africa, pioneering countries were Tunisia and South Africa in 1991, Egypt in 1993 and Algeria and Zambia in 1994. By the end of 1997, out of 53 African countries, only 47 countries had the internet access. It has never happened in the history of the African continent that the population has been connected as it is today (Yonazi, Kelly, Halewood, & Blackman, 2012). Nyirenda-Jere and Biru (2015) state that the Internet is showing growth on the African continent. The level of the internet penetration is above 20 percent and showing growth. The mobile subscription is 70 percent, and the internet subscription for mobile broadband access accounts is above 90 percent (Nyirenda-Jere & Biru, 2015).

As emphasised by Rego, Alves and Naumann (2010), ICTs are regarded as the most significant contribution for the revitalisation of trade unions. Moreover, ICTs are inexpensive, work quicker and far-reaching compared to traditional communication; unions can overcome the problems of time, space and distance (Rego, Alves, Naumann, & Silva, 2014). Furthermore, some trade unions have confidence on the benefits of online communicating (Stevens & Greer, 2005). Previous research on revitalisation and the use of ICT mainly focuses on countries such as America, Europe, Portugal and the Anglo-Saxon countries.

Union revitalisation is defined as gaining or re-gaining power along the different dimensions such as union membership, economic, political and institutional vitality (Behrens, Hamann, & Hurd, 2004). Therefore, this approach allows researchers to conduct studies on the union decline as well as revitalisation in a comprehensive way. This led researchers such as Rego, Alves, Naumann, and Silva (2014) to focus on the trade union websites for Portugal and Britain; and Rego et al. (2016) focused on the use of new ICTs in trade union protests for five European cases. However, this study will focus on analysing the website and monitoring the internet of the top five economies African countries. It is essential for these trade unions to use the union revitalisation.

The main objective of this article is to conceptualise how trade unions in the five largest economies in Africa are attempting to renew themselves by using Internet technology, networking and ICT. Furthermore, there are some advantages for conducting this research. First, it will help to fill in the gap concerning an investigation that is based on the Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Angola context. These countries were chosen because they are the most economically active countries in Africa and the communities in these countries have ICT available such as Twitter, Facebook, Skype, Internet and mobile phones and ICTs to communicate with people (Eriksson, Franke, Granåsen, & Lindahl, 2013). Even if people in these countries have more access to ICT, there is still a lack of civil rights in these countries. It, therefore, is important to look at the labour relations systems and the decline of memberships in these countries.

### **LABOUR RELATIONS SYSTEMS, DECLINE OF TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP AND TRADE UNIONS IN THE FIVE LARGEST ECONOMIES IN AFRICA**

According to Burns (2010), the decline in union membership started in 1945. Since the mid-1990s (Eurwork, 2010), there has been an ongoing discussion within trade movements on the appropriate strategies to reverse the decline of unions (Lynch, Pyman, Bailey, & Price, 2009). Wright (2011) states that the analysis of trade union membership has continued to be regarded as an important topic, particularly in the field of labour relations and the economy of labour. In Anglo-Saxon countries, the loss of membership is a strong indicator of union decline (Frege & Kelly, 2003).

Globally, trade union memberships are showing a massive decline (Maree, 2010) and Africa is not an exception. Nigeria was under the countries dictatorship, but its level of union membership remained stable during 1980's and 1990s (Tokunboh, 1985).

#### *The labour relations system of Nigeria*

Nigeria is a country that has undergone political, social and economic fundamental changes. In 1960, Nigeria was in the process of a revolution after the departure of the British and it became an independent state (Adeniji, 2015). The political and industrial relations structure that was left behind by the British and has changed dramatically within a period of six years. Moreover, the structure of trade unions remains unsatisfactory and most of them are ineffective (Adeniji, 2015). The Nigerian industrial relations have failed due to governmental interference in policies and unpopular anti-labour law (Adebisi, 2013).

Genty, Adekalu, Ajede, and Oludeyi (2013) state that the impact of globalisation, particularly the Internet, led to the decline in trade union membership density in Nigeria. The revitalisation

strategies of the Nigerian trade union are associated with the political parties. Nigerian trade unions have been working together with the political alliances to win the government power and labour legislation that favours them (Genty, Adekalu, Ajed, & Oludeyi, 2013).

There are two trade union federations in Nigeria, namely Trade Union Congress (TUC) and Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC). The TUC has seven affiliate unions while NLC has 40 affiliate unions with about four million memberships (Kalusopa, Otoo, & Shindondola-Mote, 2012).

In Nigeria, ICT is not used as part of trade union strategies due to the lack of the affiliate's database. ICT plays a major role in different organisations to increase the productivity when employees are part of trade union membership. Therefore, trade unions should adapt to the use of ICT for the facilitation of effective and efficient administration (Adeyinka, 2016).

#### *The labour relations system of Egypt*

In 1882, British occupied Egypt during the First World War. The national movement of Egypt rejected the British and attempted a revolution in 1919. Furthermore, Egypt gained its independence during 1992 (Al-Kassab, 1977). Budhwar and Mellahi (2006) that the high level of unemployment has a substantial impact on the countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria and Morocco have said it. These countries are experiencing a strong union membership decline, and the legislation has limited their power. The reason that led to decline was the political background and the disappearance of the government in Algeria (the 1990s) and Egypt (1980s).

The Egyptian government has eliminated the trade union organisations and undermined the right of trade unions that are in the Constitution Article. The decision that was taken prohibited independent trade unions and considered them illegal organisations. However, many members said that they would fight the government's decision, which will violate the country's constitution (Hassan, 2016). This clearly shows that the trade unions, as well as the country, need ICT strategies to revitalise their organisations.

#### *The labour relations system of South Africa*

The South African industrial relations experienced major changes within a democratic period that were influenced by different legislation. The post-apartheid government introduced the first act in order to address the workplace imbalances (Labour Relations Act of 1995). Additionally, the following acts that was introduced are the Basic Condition of Employment Act of 1997, Skills Development Act of 1998 as well as the Employment Equity of Act of 1998 (Sam Tambani Research Institute, 2014).

Between the periods of 1980 - 2000, the registered trade union membership increased sharply from 782 000 in 1989 to three million in 2000, which was nearly 6 percent of the annual increase in South Africa (Barker, 2007). Union membership increased after 1995, and it was much easier for the trade unions to register (Barker, 2007). Barker (2007) emphasises that union membership continued to grow up to 2002, but in that same year, there was a downward trend of union membership. Grobler, Wörnich, Carrell, Elbert, and Hatfield (2006) and Barker (2007) said that there is a decline in trade union membership. In 1999, the union membership was up to 55 percent (834,000 workers). However, it had increased to almost 70 percent (1.4 million workers) in 2014 (Bhorat, Naidoo, & Pillay, 2016).

South African trade unions and federations have gone through the strategic planning strategy regarding the trends of union membership years ago. Thus, some of the trade unions, as well as the federations, have failed to implement the new strategies to meet their challenges. This includes the NACTU affiliates who failed to maintain their bargaining council membership due to lack of representatives and being unable to implement decisions (NACTU, 2001). However, there are also affiliates in COSATU who failed to apply the decisions (COSATU, 2003). Other trade unions and federations have managed to develop the strategies of the revitalisation of trade unions (Webster & Buhlungu, 2004).

Union revitalisation has been a central focus for many organisations. Most research has concentrated on the new leadership and new strategic direction for unions (Turner, Katz & Hurd, 2001). Revitalisation strategies attempt to shift trade unions from the traditional movement unionism to social movement unionism (Webster & Buhlungu, 2004).

The powerful social movement unionism took place in South Africa whereby trade unions were part of the coalition that defeated apartheid over the years (Phelan, 2011). In this sense, the coalition is a possible key for trade union revitalisation. Furthermore, South African trade unions have lost 17 000 members in a year (Rand Daily Mail, 2015). Therefore, it is essential for trade unions in South Africa to revitalise their membership by using ICT, particularly the Internet.

South African trade unions used strategies of revitalisation suggested by Frege and Kelly (2003), namely gaining union membership, restructuring of the organisation, employers partnership, political action, international associations and building a coalition. However, Dörre, Holst, and Nachtwey (2009) argue that organising unions should be considered from the power resource perspective to gain access to power resources. Pantland (2010) states that South Africa is advanced with telecommunication infrastructure, which makes it possible for trade unions to use ICT.

However, the penetration of the Internet is too low, especially when trade unions are not making full use of the Internet possibilities. Furthermore, Pantland (2010) believes that there is a significant ICT potential to facilitate the union revitalisation. Thus far, trade unions have failed to make use of and keep up with the technological advances.

#### *The labour relations system of Algeria*

The establishment of independent unions was introduced by the Algerian Industrial Relations Law (90-14) of 1990, which requires trade unions to use the authority of declarations. The governor or the labour minister will issue the receipt or letter of acknowledgement to the trade union within 30 days. Therefore, if trade unions do not have the receipt, they cannot operate legally (Chelghoum, Takeda, Wilczek, & Homberg, 2016). Horwitz and Budhwar (2015) argue that the Algerian trade union had a strong union membership, but the legislation, as well as the market dynamics, have been severely reducing their power and political influence.

#### *The labour relations system of Angola*

The General Labour Act 2/2000 of February 11 governs the Angolan labour relations. The Act separates the legislation that deals with the aspects of labour relations. Some mechanisms limit the authority of parties to the employment relationship. However, the Angolan labour legislation includes aspects such as the working hours, type of contract, flexibility and so forth (Cuatrecasas, 2013).

Angola has improved dramatically with the use of ICTs. Despite the improvement, the political rights, as well as the liberties, are still controlled by the Movement for the Liberation of Angola–Labour Party (MPLA) (Freedom on the Net, 2013).

According to Wilson (2006), trade union membership in Angola is unknown. Angolan trade union membership is limited because when National Union of Angolan Workers (UNTA) and General Centre of Independent and Free Unions of Angola (CGSILA) are combined, they have less than one million members (Action for Southern Africa, 2010).

Trade unions and collective bargaining in countries like Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco have become undesirable (Horwitz & Budhwar, 2015). Algeria has to build the democracy on respect for their individual and collective rights, particularly on the rights of its workers and unions. Algerian unions that are not ruled by the government are faced with unfair dismissals, intimidation and even imprisonment (Equal Times, 2016).

## ICT and revitalisation: Old and new methods

The ICTs are a significant contribution of union revitalisation especially in the Anglo-Saxon countries because it has an impact on both internal and external communication (Greene & Kirton 2003). According to Fiorito, Jarley, and Delaney (2002) and Kombol, (2014), the use of online communication has been observed among the trade unions. For instance, Diamond and Freeman (2002) mention attraction of new members and improvement of services.

Frege and Kelly (2003) state that for the renewal and revitalisation of the labour movement, trade unions needs to improve their recruitment structure to attract new employees. Lowery, Beadles, and Faulk (2008) point out that for trade unions to attract new members as well as reversing the union membership decline; they must change their old methods and be willing to try new methods. Table 1 shows the methods that were used in the past and the current methods, which was introduced by the use of ICT.

Table 1

*ICT old and new methods used by trade unions*

<b>Old methods</b>	<b>New methods</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telephone, fax, snail-mail and travel;</li> <li>• Average 100 long-distance calls and 30 overseas calls per month;</li> <li>• Less communication quality;</li> <li>• Problem of difference;</li> <li>• Study by books/library;</li> <li>• Postage for mails;</li> <li>• Huge travel costs for meetings and education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computers and Internet;</li> <li>• Month fixed charge;</li> <li>• Hundreds of emails at no additional costs;</li> <li>• Fax via the Internet;</li> <li>• No worry about time;</li> <li>• Research, study and data collection via the Internet;</li> <li>• Online conference;</li> <li>• Distance education.</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from Ishibashi (2009).

Fuchs (2014) states that the implementations of the new ICTs are associated with risks, such as employer counter-mobilisation (Upchurch & Grassman, 2015). However, Greene, Hogan, and Grieco (2003) emphasise that the Internet has an impact on the internal and external communication of the trade unions. The internal communications are e-learning, providing services to members, promoting access to more information, while the external communication is to foster national as well as international solidarity and ensure that they can make contact with mass media (Greene, Hogan, & Grieco, 2003).

According to Fiorito, Jarley, Delaney, and Kolodinsky (2000), trade union organisations feel that the introduction and implementation of ICT is critical to the success of their organisation and that

the use of the website as well as an email will provide trade union members and the public a platform to raise their voices (Stevens & Greer, 2005). However, Pinnock (2005) emphasises that the use of the ICT be considered as being too slow and uneven.

The potential of ICTs used as internal communication to trade unions in empowering their structure (Diamond & Freeman, 2002). Martinez Lucio (2003) argues that the users' profile may be ineffective because they are computer illiterate and are resistant to adapt to the new forms of communication.

Research indicates that there has been a growth in the use of new ICTs within trade unions in unions' activities such as campaigns, bargaining, announcements based on training, collective agreements, developments, strikes and shop stewards (Greene & Kirton, 2003; Diamond & Freeman, 2002).

Diamond and Freeman (2002) argue that the ICTs offer new ways for trade unions to strengthen their union movement and engage with members. The question might arise on how ICT will help trade unions to reverse the decline of union membership. Furthermore, Freeman (2005) points out that ICT such as the use of the Internet and website can help trade unions to revitalise union membership.

Some researchers argue that the use of new online technology can be an important tool for unions (Masters, 2013) and are confident in online communication benefits (Stevens & Greer, 2005). While some have regarded the possibilities of digital media as a weapon that changes the conditions of the trade unions; for example, information on the Internet and social media is limited (Lee, 1997). Masters (2013) states that there had been a disagreement between the researchers and observers on the benefits of ITC to organise unions.

Fiorito and Gallagher (2013) state that some researchers failed to use the potential of the Internet tool for organising unions. It has been shown that the development of information technology among unions is prolonged and their interest in membership is limited (Ward & Lusoli, 2002; Gibney, Zagenczyk, & Masters, 2013).

The internal communications (email, intranet) and external communication (websites and emails) allow unions to exchange information efficiently and timeously, unlike the traditional way of communication that focuses more on the chat rooms and discussion boards (Greene & Kirton, 2003).

Trade unions in the United States of America and the United Kingdom started to use the Internet for union activities (Freeman, 2005). The number of union websites in Europe includes the United Kingdom with 373, France with 181 and Germany with 59.

The use of union website has risen rapidly, particularly in developing countries as unions have gone online. Global Union Federations, as well as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, consider the Internet an essential weapon for their union activities (Freeman, 2005).

Previous studies have examined the ICTs impact on trade union communication particularly websites and emails; and the transformation of trade union took place. Fiorito and Bass (2002) have explored the performance outcome of a trade union by using of ICT as the tool. Their findings were found positive for trade union organising measures (change in trade union membership), while the characteristics of trade union and environmental differences were considered strongly related to the use of ICT. According to Bryson, Gomez and Willman (2010), the online networks such as Facebook managed to attract more members in a short period. Many employees often use social media and their networking features for the purpose of voicing concerns about work-related issues and connecting with their colleagues. In fact, Masters, Gibney, Zagencyk, and Shevchuk (2010) found that United States union members are strong users of ICT.

White (2010; 2012) states that union campaigns as well as social engagement serve as guidelines for union awareness, informed channel selection, consistency and monitoring. However, it is not yet known which of the trade unions are more likely to prioritise social media (Panagiotopoulos & Barnett, 2015). The question can arise, will unions move towards professional networks such as LinkedIn and Twitter, upload photo and video sites to retain communication among themselves?

The potential of ICT to improve trade union communications has been of global interest for the past years. Lee (1997) states that the development of the Internet highlights positive views on how online communications can become a force of change for trade unions; however, Chaison (2005) has criticised the use of the Internet as not beneficial and it might become a destruction to some of the members. ICT has opened new opportunities for trade unions, but on the other hand, it is seen as threats to its members (Panagiotopoulos & Barnett, 2015).

Trade union membership ascended in the 1940s and 1950s and benefited from having contemporaneous forms of common experience (Bryston, Gomez, & Willman, 2010). Gerbaudo (2012) said that some tools are associated with the protest action in Egyptian revolution of 2011 such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Thus, what is preventing modern trade unions from attracting millions of members with Facebook?

Oruh (2014) suggests that the use of social media such as Twitter, Facebook and Blogs by Nigerian trade unions could be effective in increasing the employees' voice. The findings have shown that Nigerian trade unions prefer the short message system (SMS). The usage of mobile phones in Nigerian trade unions has shown growth. The use of mobile phone increases the ability for an adult to send and receive text messages for participation in union activities. Additionally, the trade union leaders and members believe that the SMS usage is effective and empowering (Christian, 2015). Nwagbara, Pidomson, and Nwagbara (2013) state that Nigerian trade unions are shaped by the use of social media.

Egyptian trade unions gain information, updates on the latest news and interact with others by using Facebook and Twitter (Abdulla, 2014). Baglione (2016) said that Egypt played a significant role in influencing Algerian unions to use Facebook, but many unions did not use it. The International Telecommunications Union state that the Algerians had Internet access of 12.5 percent in 2010.

People in Angola can access Facebook, YouTube, Blogs and Twitter freely. The Internet penetration of Angola in 2014 was 21 percent. The access to a mobile phone in Angola has increased from 62 percent in 2013 to 63 percent in 2014 (International Telecommunication Union (ITU), 2000-2014).

African News Agency (2015) states that Cosatu, the South African trade union federation, had shown an interest in Twitter and Facebook. However, some of its trade unions still lag behind and do not use Twitter and Facebook effectively.

The new ICT became an important source for communication that can transfer information (email and website) and allow the users to interact using Web 2.0 (social media, forums and interactive sites). Web 2.0 can be defined as a stage whereby the user can interact using social media, interactive website and teleconferencing (Rego, Sprenger, Kirov, Thomson, & Di Nunzio, 2016).

Vielhaber and Waltman (2008) state that even though many trade unions worldwide have adopted the new ICT, there is still a need for personal face-to-face communication that builds a strong relationship between the unions and motivates people to use emails and update their websites.

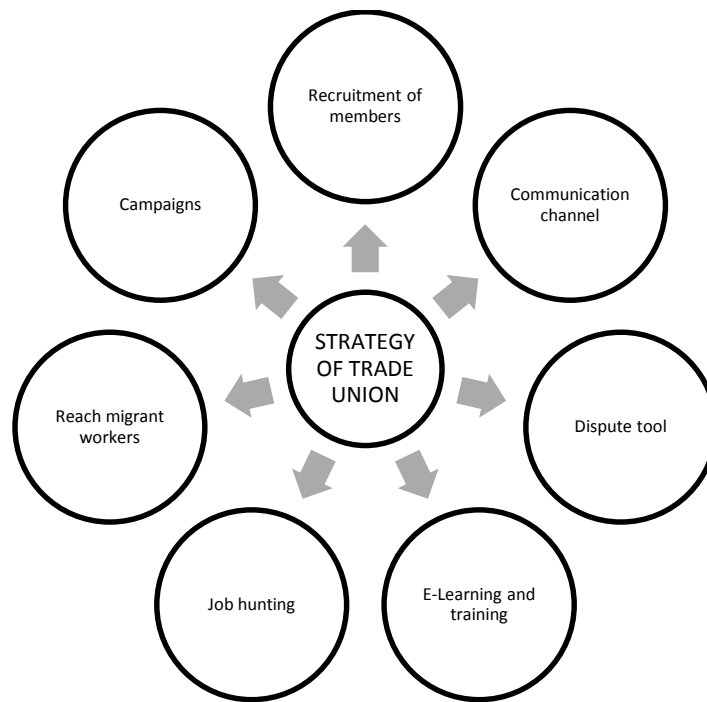
According to Rego, Sprenger, Kirov, Thomson, and Di Nunzio (2016), there are limited studies based on the potential of new ICT and Web 2.0. However, almost all unions have a website, and only few trade unions allow the two-way communication opportunity such as online interaction (Rego, Alves, Naumann, & Silva, 2014).

Masters, Gibney, Zagenczyk, and Shevchuk (2010) emphasise that trade unions should strategically invest in education and train members to benefit in IT. Secondly, unions should be able to identify their members who are high-intensity users of IT. Thirdly, unions must be aware that their membership falls into two broad categories: networked and non-networked. Lastly, union members must ensure that there is strong communication among them.

Therefore, the ICTs are a significant contribution of union revitalisation especially in the Anglo-Saxon countries because it has an impact on both internal and external communication (Green & Kirton, 2003). Trade unions see the use of the IT as one of their strategies (Cockfield, 2005) and it provides information via emails and websites for its members and the public (Stevens & Greer, 2005). Trade union revitalisation is very difficult, it is a slow process for the union and it involves internal change (Pinnock, 2005). The roles of unions should be re-negotiated. Cockfield (2005) points out that the potential use of ICTs are shaped by how unions deal with the internal political processes; however, it does not mean ICTs will not have a positive impact on union revitalisation. The ICTs contribution to trade union revitalisation should not be dismissed. Hogan and Greene (2002) and Diamond and Freeman (2002) explain that ICTs should be part of union renewal strategies.

## **STRATEGIES FOR REVITALISATION**

Based on the strategic choice perspective (Kochan, Katz, & McKersie, 1986), trade unions need to implement a particular strategy for the purpose of its revitalisation (Frege & Kelly, 2003). Concerning the challenges that trade unions are facing, they may adopt some combination of strategies. Frege and Kelly (2003) describe the six broad strategies used by trade unions to revitalise themselves, namely organising, labour-management partnership, political action, restructuring, social movement unionism and international unionism (Frege & Kelly, 2003). When implementing these strategies, trade unions are trying to shift their focus from the traditional way to the new way of using IT (Bibby, 2004; Heery & Adler, 2004; Heery, Kelly, & Waddington, 2003; Sarkar & Charlwood, 2014). The following strategies for the use of websites by unions are identified in the work of Bibby (2004) in Figure 1:



*Figure 1. Strategies used by trade unions (Compiled by researcher).*

- Website to recruit new members: Bibby (2004) explains that potential members can be reached through trade union websites. On the website are forms the members can complete and are able to pay their first membership subscription via the mechanism of the website (Bibby, 2004). As White (2013) states, union membership among young people is low and young individuals use media through multiple channels. He further mentions that unions that want to recruit young people to the unions need to invest in relevant and modern creative graphic design and adapt to it (White, 2013).
- Website as a communication channel: Communication is one of the central roles for trade union websites to communicate with their union members. Lawrence-Jones (2003) emphasise that the interaction of trade union members either on websites or between themselves is essential for the union website. The more trade unions members interact with each other, the better the sense of togetherness. Moreover, for the trade unions to login to the website, their name and password registration will be required to enter and enjoy the services offered such as online training, discussion forums, internal union information and so forth (Lawrence-Jones, 2003).
- Website as an industrial dispute tool: The potential of electronic communications is an important tool during the industrial disputes and it was highlighted at an early stage of the development of the Internet (Bibby, 2004). Diamond and Freeman (2002) stated that the Internet had been used by unions to conduct their labour dispute. This is done by emailing their

members or presenting the union case to the public over the Internet. The website allows unions to access it at low cost as well as informing members or public about the bargaining issues (Diamond & Freeman, 2002).

- Website as part of e-learning: According to Bibby (2004), trade unions were offering traditional training as well as learning opportunities for their members. However, trade unions are exploring the potential of using the website content for online learning that includes the training material found over the Internet.
- Website to assist members to find work: In the past, many trade unions played an important role to ensure that their union members found work. The craft-based union used the traditional method and discovered the potential of the Internet use. Vacancies are advertised online, and members have to complete the registration form and upload their Curriculum Vitae (CV) online. It is encouraged that union members who are leaving their employment should maintain loyalty to their unions (Bibby, 2004).

International unionism and liberalisation have led to the increased mobility of capital. The introduction of IT and knowledge process outsourcing (KPO) has resulted in leveraging low cost of labour particularly on emerging economies and developing countries (Balasubramanian & Sarkar, 2015). Waterman (1992: 2006) link the new labour internationalism to ICT and he asks the question if the labour communication using computer will bring on a fifth international. Leischa (2010) mentions cyber union website as the potential of the ICTs to revitalise trade unions and to allow unions to communicate with each other directly.

The ICTs or cyber unions are seen as the use of new spaces instead been seen as putting it in space as a tool for revitalisation. Pantland (2010) and Leischa (2010) identify two strategies for union revitalisation using ICT, namely top-down strategies and bottom-up strategies.

### **Top-down strategies**

Trade unions have a history towards technological change as change damaging them. Technology played a major role in causing trade union crisis and complicated the attitude of unions in using technologies as part of organising. Lommerud and Straume (2007) said that they do not blame trade unions and they are correct by concluding that the technological changes have an impact on them. Trade unions have a history of technological development (Mokyr, 1992), with regard to the need to improve productivity, cutting costs and increasing profits; however, unions have long recognised the potential of offering work to its members (Marx, 1970). Since industrial revolution began, people have lost their jobs; deskilling and flexibility increased due to new technology.

Pantland (2010) emphasises that the most common response of trade unions to the use of ICT is the Web 2.0, e.g. interactive such as social networks, during the first stage of the development. Furthermore, trade unions who embraced these technologies appeared to use them without any clear understanding or strategy.

Bélanger (2001) used ICT to educate unions in developing countries. Darlington (2000) said that trade unions have to adapt to the new technology for their survival and ignoring the potential of ICT is not an option. Union leaders are aware that the potential of ICT will provide the renewal with the movement and attract new members; however, they are worried that this new technology will undermine their powers (Greene, Hogan, & Grieco, 2003).

According to Pantland (2010), the top-down strategies have created the online joining facilities that will allow people to join online rather than downloading the forms. These facilities will advertise online, post news online and search engines will be available to type the keyword of what they would like to see on the website. However, these strategies bring problems, for instance, isolation of members and lack of representative structure in the workplace.

Hogan and Greene (2002) feel that the use of ICTs are educational and becoming more accessible to master, particularly the Web 2.0 and Web 3.0. Many trade unions are using the lifelong strategies that provide free courses in ICTs to trade unions and are delivered by the union tutor in the working environment (Leischa, 2010). Thus, these learning programmes tend to increase the union membership and branches grow in confidence.

### **Bottom-up strategies**

The potential democratising activity of ICT is important. As mentioned by Schradie (2015), the bottom-up strategy is a participatory democratic approach where members participate on issues. Hogan and Greene (2002) mention that bottom-up strategy views are because individual members' abilities are enhanced when trade unions establish websites. Members can then have more frequent and direct access to union elites. Members can communicate their opinions on organisational structures and policy matters. Members can also have input into electronic meetings and virtual discussions (Ward & Lusoli, 2002). The problems experienced with bottom-up strategies are that members can publish their opinions and their views and opinions might differ from the official union line.

ICTs is a solution to solve union's problems such as union membership (Lowery & Beadles, 2006). Diamond and Freeman (2002) state that it had been argued that ICTs offer to trade unions a new

way to communicate with members and strengthen the union movement on both a national and international scale. The e-unions and cyber unions are the terms that describe the new form of trade unions that arose because of this technological revolution (Shostak, 1999; Darlington, 2000).

Greene, Hogan, and Grieco (2003) state that the new technologies are educational provide skills and are easier to use. Barbrook's (2000) finding shows that people use the potential of ICTs to communicate in different projects of unions and communities. ICTs facilitate decentralised networks and trade unions need to adapt to the use of these to survive (Bélanger, 2001).

The use of ICTs offers many opportunities to trade unions. Unfortunately, two-way interactivities such as Twitter are used to publish press releases and not to communicate with their members and non-members. Therefore, they are missing the fact that the purpose of using Twitter was to revitalise unions by sending union messages to activists (Leischa, 2010).

In order to face this crisis, trade unions must begin to develop a strategy for reversing the decline in union membership and density. The implementation of new agendas, the revitalisation of the leaders and the use of the ICTs are considered as other strategies for trade unions (Heery, Simms, Delbridge, Salmon, & Simpson, 2000). The trade unions have to revitalise strategies to reverse the decline of membership.

### **Union strategic model**

The researcher of this study has developed the model based on the strategies of the trade union to renew and revitalise their organisation with the potential of ICTs, particularly on the website of the trade unions. This model consists of three steps, namely e-policy and strategies, e-learning and e-service. These steps will assist trade unions to use websites and adapt to the potential of ICTs.

#### **Step 1: e-policy and strategy**

In this step, e-policies must be developed strategically and must be clear and understandable by the trade unions. An e-policy must have information that will give a brief about the ICTs, the importance of ICTs as well as the benefits of ICTs. Unions should know what is expected of them when they read the policy. This step will limit union leaders from using the money to print policies. Thus their members could view policies online.

#### **Step 2: e-learning**

E-Learning is one of the essential steps to take into consideration and plays a huge part in our daily lives. This will be a platform for trade unions to learn for themselves and learn from others. For the trade unions to learn their union website, they should attend workshops, training, conferences and meetings online by logging in with their registered details; this will save time looking for a venue or travelling far to a meeting.

**Step 3: e-service**

The services of the members are to provide online such as updating personal information, asking questions and providing suggestions. Furthermore, trade union members will have access to the union websites, emails and using communication networks such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Skype. The use of the Internet is faster and cheaper. Therefore, e-service will meet the union’s demands. In Figure 2 below, the union strategic model is presented.

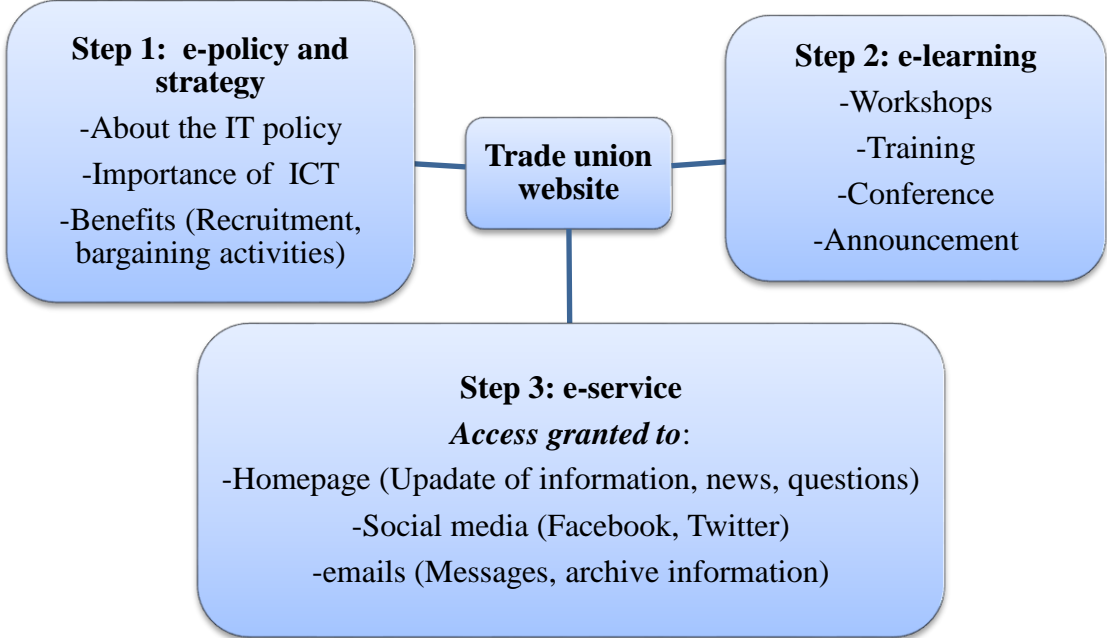


Figure 2. Union strategic model (Compiled by researcher).

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The literature review was conducted based on a systematic search process by using the national and international sources, namely journals, textbooks, newspaper reports, Internet-based search engines (Google Scholar, Google), as well as the relevant dissertations.

## **Research participants**

The sample consists of trade unions from the top five economies in Africa. The trade unions used for this study were selected from Google search engine and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) list.

Numerous Internet searches were performed using Google to search for trade unions within the five most significant economies in Africa by analysing the website, the front page or the home page of the trade union. English keywords such as the name of each country, decline of union membership, revitalisation, strategies and unions or federations were used. The researcher identified 90 trade unions for the five largest economies in Africa with their own websites; thus, 308 trade unions do not have websites; the total number of trade unions in Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Angola is 398.

## **Findings**

Only certain trade unions have dedicated websites within these five countries. These selected countries have different languages used on their websites, but the Google translator was used as a tool to overcome the language barrier. It is important to use the selected countries, as they are the top five economies in Africa. The aim is to explore if those countries are advanced in economic status only or also in the use of ICT.

The typology of Rego, Alves, Naumann, and Silva (2014) was used to monitor the relationship between trade unions and the Internet. Furthermore, the typology of Schradie (2015) explained the top-down strategies and bottom-up strategies. Top-down strategies emphasise unions had much more of an active Internet presence, but technology played a vital role in complicating unions organising. Furthermore, bottom-up strategies had low levels of digital engagement. The unions see the Internet as one of many tools that organise the powerless rather than a way of reaching the powerful.

The numbers in Table 2 represent the percentage of trade unions that use the stated strategies. The number of trade unions per country that were found are as follows: Nigeria (43), South Africa (194), Egypt (79), Algeria (35) and Angola (47). The below Table shows a comparison of different strategies based on the use of ICT per country.

Table 2  
*Strategy on website of trade unions*

<b>STRATEGY</b>	<b>Nigeria</b>	<b>Egypt</b>	<b>South Africa</b>	<b>Algeria</b>	<b>Angola</b>
<b>1. Organising strategy on website of trade union</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
a. Joining benefits	18.2	1.3	23.2	0	6.4
b. Online sign-up for new members	9.1	1.3	14.4	0	2.1
c. Online help desk for labour disputes, etc.	2.3	0	7.7	0	0
d. Online legal/technical assistance	4.5	0	6.2	0	0
e. Sharing information	2.3	0	15.5	0	0
f. Union e-mail address	38.6	1.3	38.1	2.9	4.3
<b>2. Knowledge/Info base</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
a. Membership database	6.8	0	8.8	0	0
b. Database for collective bargaining	2.3	0	5.2	0	0
c. Database of wage and working conditions	2.3	0	6.7	0	0
d. Database for labour legislation	2.3	0	9.8	0	0
e. Resource / Reference material	6.8	0	12.9	0	0
f. Link to ILO	4.5	0	9.3	0	0
g. Online database only for access by members	2.3	0	5.7	0	0
<b>3. Campaigning</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
a. New campaign-style	6.8	0	5.2	0	0
b. Organise online campaign	2.3	0	4.1	0	0
c. Online media & publicity globally	11.4	0	11.9	0	0
<b>4. Research and study</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
a. Research questionnaire for members and non-members	0	0	5.7	0	0
b. Research findings	0	0	5.7	0	0
<b>5. Training and education</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
a. Learnership/apprenticeships available	2.3	0	4.6	0	0
b. Bursaries available	2.3	0	5.2	0	0
c. Online courses for members	2.3	0	4.1	0	0
d. Online courses available to general public	0	0	3.6	0	0
e. Online courses for learners	0	0	3.6	0	0
f. Online, interactive resources	2.3	0	4.1	0	0
g. CD-ROMs	0	0	1.5	0	0
h. Website for self-study	0	0	5.7	0	0
i. Online guidance for learners	2.3	0	5.2	0	0
<b>6. Union communication</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
a. Internal & external communication	4.5	0	9.3	0	0
b. Interactive website	4.5	0	6.2	5.7	4.3
(1) Blog					
(2) SMS	0	1.3	10.8	2.9	2.1
(3) Twitter	9.1	1.3	14.4	0	2.1
(4) Wiki	4.5	0	10.3	0	0
c. Mailing list (e-mail newsletter)	2.3	0	13.9	2.9	0
d. E-magazine	6.8	0	7.2	0	0

e. News-letters & leaflets	27.3	0	12.4	0	2.1
f. Online BBS	2.3	0	5.2	0	0
g. e-Conference	0	0	3.1	0	0
h. e-community for an interactive discussion	2.3	0	7.7	0	0
i. visual communication via the internet (Skype, etc)	9.1	3.8	8.2	68.6	19.1
j. Online broadcasting	0	0	4.1	2.9	2.1
(1) Net-radio					
(2) Net-TV	0	0	4.1	0	2.1
(3) Youtube	2.3	1.3	6.7	0	2.1
(4) Podcasting	0	0	3.6	0	0
(5) Video-casting	4.5	0	2.6	11.4	4.3
<b>7. Job-hunting</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
a. Vacancies advertise	4.5	0	5.7	0	0
b. Registration form and upload of CV online	0	0	4.6	0	0
c. Other	0	0	0.5	0	0

It is clear that a gap exists between the websites and the manner in which trade unions connect with their members and non-members. Nigerian and South African trade unions make more use of those ICTs strategies, while Egypt, Algeria and Angola still use traditional methods.

In organising strategy, trade unions in Nigeria (38.6%), South Africa (38.1%) and Algeria seem to be using union email addresses, and Angolan trade unions include the benefits of joining (6.4%) on their website for members and non-members. Egyptian trade unions are using the union email address (1.3%), online sign-up for new members (1.3%) and include the benefits of joining online (1.3%). This indicates that majority of trade unions still prefer to use the email addresses.

The trade unions in Nigeria and South Africa use the knowledge or information based strategies. Nigeria uses membership base (6.8%) and resource or reference material (6.8%), whereas the South African trade unions use a resource or reference material (12.9%). Most of the trade unions do not include their membership database on their website.

Trade unions use online media and publicity globally, such as Nigeria (11.4%) and South Africa (11.9%). Campaigns are very important in attracting new members to unions in Nigeria (2.3%) as well as in South Africa (4.1%). Online campaigns are the least they can use; however, Egypt, Algeria and Angola trade unions do not consider using the campaign strategy.

The research findings of South African unions shows that there is (5.7%) for a research study and (5.7%) research questionnaires, but the unions in Nigeria, Egypt, Algeria and Angola does not show any interest in the research and study strategy.

Nigerian trade unions seem to be using most of the training and education strategies. The website content of Nigerian trade unions is 2.3% of the learnership or apprenticeships available, bursaries available, online courses for members, online interactive resources and online guidance for learners. Trade unions in South Africa have used the self-study (5.2%). Furthermore, Egypt, Algeria and Angola did not invest in the training and education strategies.

Communication is one of the important union strategies. Nigeria trade unions use newsletters and leaflets (27.3%) as part of their communication. Egyptian (3.8%) and South African (14.4%) trade unions have used Twitter, while trade unions in Algeria (68.6) and Angola (19.1%) are using visual communication via the Internet such as Skype, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

South African (5.7%) and Nigerian (4.5%) unions to advertise vacancies on their website for the benefits of its members and non-member have used job-hunting strategy.

The web presence of trade unions varies according to the countries. It seems that in all five countries, the minority of trade unions have the website but do not use it for union activities such as communicating, campaigns, general union movements and so forth.

The findings indicate that the trade unions of five largest economics African countries still lack communication strategies because unions do not have the skills to use the ICT and Internet in order to deal with the new and old challenges. It has been shown that many trade unions have not used the strategies of organising, knowledge/info base, campaigning, research and study, training and education, union communication and job-hunting; the statistics show that few Nigerian and South African unions are using those strategies; however, most unions in Egypt, Angola and Algeria consider others as their strategies.

The way trade unions have used the Internet, particularly the website content does not contribute to the revitalisation of trade unions. It can be said that trade unions in Egypt, Algeria and Angola benefit less than trade unions in Nigeria and South Africa from the potential offered by ICTs, due to web presence.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study outlines the historical and the current landscape of the trade unions particularly on the potential of the ICTs. According to Nepgen (2008), it is important for the trade unions to restructure the way they view their union members, officials' roles and organisational functions.

Trade unions must observe how other organisations are using the ICTs and how they are applying ICT techniques as part of their benefits.

It is clear from the above, that trade union organisations are faced with a dramatic decline in union membership and trade unions need to find a solution to reverse this decline; however, trade unions argued to organise their unions by using the potential of the ICTs (Dahlberg-Grundberg, Lundström & Lindgren, 2016).

The Nigerian and South African unions take more advantage of the Internet than unions in Egypt, Algeria and Angola. Nigerian and South African trade unions are using the website as a union life and social network.

The primary findings indicate that Nigeria is on 38.6 percent organising strategy by creating a union e-mail address. South Africa has 12.9 percent of knowledge information based on resource or reference materials and leads with 12.9 percent campaigning online media and publicity. South Africa is at 5.7 percent for the research questionnaire, job hunting as well as training and education. The union communication in Nigeria is 27.3 percent based on the newsletter and leaflets.

Nigeria has been working with the political alliance to get favourable legislation and government power, which led trade unions not to use ICT strategies due to the lack of affiliation databases (Genty, Adekalu, Ajede, & Oludeyi, 2013). South Africa had strategic plans to combat the decline of union membership, but their strategies have failed (Webster & Buhlungu, 2004).

In Egypt, the right of the trade union in the constitution has been undermined, and the government has eliminated the trade unions (Budhwar & Mellahi, 2006). On the other hand, trade unions in Algeria are faced with the political government and the disappearance of the government during the 1990s led unions to experience a decline in membership (Hassan, 2016). Furthermore, the Liberation of Angola Labour Party (MPLA) controls the political rights and the liberties of the unions. However, Angola has improved on the potential of ICTs (Freedom on the net, 2013).

The use of the ICTs has the potential to transform the trade unions and contribute to union revitalisation. Trade unions have not met the potential of ICTs to facilitate renewal and revitalisation within their organisations because the government rules some unions.

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## CHAPTER 3

## **ARTICLE 2: A TYPOLOGY OF TRADE UNION WEBSITE USE WITH EVIDENCE FROM THE TOP FIVE ECONOMIES IN AFRICA**

### **ABSTRACT**

**Orientation:** Information and communication technology (ICT) are significant tools for the development of organisations such as trade unions. Although, the use of the information technology (IT) has an impact on trade unions and the potential to affect the unions' activities further, the use of the Internet in Africa remains the lowest Internet connectivity in the world.

**Research Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to present the preliminary data of a study on how the use of ICT contributes to trade union revitalisation in Africa.

**The motivation for the study:** This study intends to understand how the ICTs have an impact on trade unions and to analyse the website content of the trade unions of the top five African economies, namely Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Angola. There are very few studies on trade unions in Africa, particularly on the usage of ICTs and their strategies.

**Research design, approach and method:** The study will use content analysis. This study will analyse to what extent and in what ways trade unions of Africa utilise the Internet and websites.

**Main findings:** African trade unions still lag behind with the use of ICTs. Top five African economies still have limited access of the Internet and the websites. There is a gap of the Internet usage in developing and developed African countries that continues to leave Africa behind other regions.

**Practical/managerial implications:** It can be studied why trade unions in Africa are limited to access of the Internet and websites and how they use the potential of ICTs.

**Contribution/value-add:** This study will add value to trade unions particularly on the African continent to learn and adapt from the ICTs such as the websites and Internet use.

**Keywords:** trade unions, information and communication technology

## INTRODUCTION

For the past decade, governments and organisations in both developed and developing economies and organisations have been undergoing dramatic transformations arising from globalisation, competition and technological changes (Panagiotopoulos & Barnett, 2015; Zoogah, 2011). For the labour-/industrial-relations field, it is vital to develop internet in order to change the boundaries of work and academics (Martinez Lucio, 2003).

Krašėnkienė, Kazokienė, and Susnienė (2014) stated that the use of ICT has an impact on the trade unions organisations. Trade unions as a metaphorical public space or an agora where the exchange/discussion of ideas and dialogue can take place can use ICT and social media.

Nyirenda-Jere and Biru (2015) state that the use of the Internet and ICT shows a massive growth globally. Despite the growth of the Internet, Africa still has limited access to the Internet (Odedra, Lawrie, Bennett, & Goodman, 1993; Foster & Briceño-Garmendia, 2010). A gap exists regarding Internet usage between Africa, developing and developed countries, that continues to leave Africa behind other regions (Alexandra, 2012).

Africa is the second largest continent, but it is least computerised (Van Niekerk, 2013). It has been viewed as a lost continent, particularly in the use of information technology (Brennan, 2014). Africa still lags behind the rest of the world with regards to the use of ICT and the Internet (Alexandra, 2012). Most of the countries in Africa are seen as ‘technological deserts’ (Odedra, Lawrie, Bennett, & Goodman, 1993; Mbarika, Jensen, & Meso, 2002) and South Africa is no exception.

In Arab Springs, specifically the revolution of Egypt in 2011, some of the tools such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have been associated with the trade union protest action as they update the world with important information (Gerbaudo, 2012).

The below Figure shows the statistics of the use of the internet around the world. African continent has 9.3% of the internet usage. This indicate that Africa will have adapt to the use of the internet.

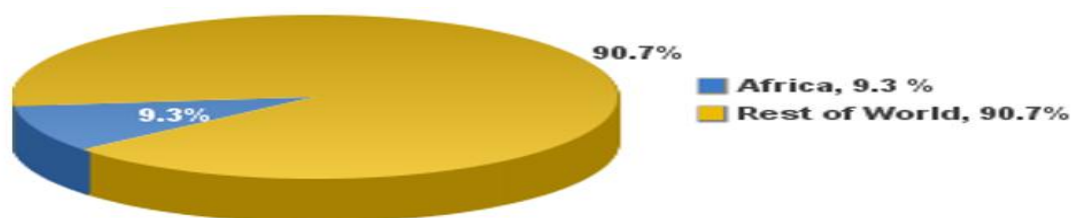


Figure 1. Internet users in the Rest of the World – March 2017 (Internet World Stats, 2017).

The use of the Internet has considerably grown since the beginning of 1969. Brown (2000) predicted that in 2001, there would be above 700 million users and in another five years, 900 million electronic devices could be connected to the Internet. Tubbs (2014) further predicted how 50 countries have progressed in digital readiness such as Egypt (48/50), Kenya (49/50) and Nigeria (50/50) can be categorised as the fastest growth digital evolution in the next five years and can be in the top ten of the evolving countries in the world. However, South Africa is ranked (33/50) in the fourth fastest growing digital economy (Tubbs, 2014). Table 1 shows the prediction of Tubbs (2014) on the fast growing use of the Internet.

Table 1

*The growth of Internet from 1969*

<b>Countries</b>	<b>Total number (out of 50) of digital readiness</b>
Egypt	48
Kenya	49
Nigeria	50
South Africa	33

Adapted from Tubbs (2014).

ICT is a significant tool for the development of organisations such as trade unions (Ajuwon & Rhine, 2008). However, the ICT growth has led to a constant debate on the traditional role of the trade unions (Ward & Lusoli, 2002). An example is Egypt and as mentioned by Lee and Weitnhal (2011, p. 1) “While the media has reported on social networks such as Twitter and Facebook as revolutionary methods of mobilisation, it was the old-fashioned working class that enabled the pro-democracy movement to flourish in Egypt”. They further mention that when the regime of the Mubarak wanted to cut off the Internet use of trade unions in Egypt, the Centre of Trade and Workers Services (CTWUS) were able to phone in their daily comments to the AFL-CIOs Solidarity Centre in Washington. Therefore, the comments were translated from Arabic and have used websites such as LabourStart to pass on to the wider trade union world.

Different research has been conducted on the status as well as on the impact of Internet diffusion in other regions of the world. However, little is found on the dissemination of the Internet in African trade unions (Mbarika, Jensen, & Meso, 2002; Pantland, 2010).

The study will use content analysis because there are very few studies on the trade unions in Africa particularly on their usage of ICTs. The purpose of this study is to analyse to what extent and in what ways the trade unions of the top five African economies, namely Nigeria, South Africa,

Egypt, Algeria and Angola use the Internet and to propose a preliminary typology of trade unions website contents. The below Figure indicate the top five African economies according to the African ranking economies.



Figure 2. The largest economies countries in Africa (Jones, 2017).

**BACKGROUND OF TRADE UNIONS ON THE USE OF INTERNET TECHNOLOGY, NETWORKING AND ICT**

The landscape of online communication has fundamentally developed and changed in the last few years (Panagiotopoulos & Barnett, 2015). As mentioned by Martinez Lucio (2003), observers in the field of labour/industrial relations have taken long to notice the potential of such development and that the Internet allows trade union movements to renew and fill gaps in the international and national system of communication and campaigns.

Pinnock (2005) emphasises that despite the growth in awareness of the potential of ICTs, it seems as if there is no strategic direction on how trade unions will use the ICTs. During 1997, research was done on the union members and computers used and it was found that 74 percent of the members had access in computers in 2000. Shostak (1999) focuses on how trade unions should take advantage of the potential of ICTs. In 1998, trade union webmasters began to focus on an IT discussion paper called “Why Internet Matters to Organised Labor”. The paper mentioned that the “uses of the website match its potential as a strategic organising tool” (Pinnock, 2005, p. 8).

The literature on unions and technology suggests that a significant challenge facing trade unions regarding cyberspace (Pinnock, 2005). White (2010; 2012) is that unions need to rethink their web

presence, networks applications (LinkedIn, Twitter, use photos and video sharing), retain communication in a more closed environment (websites, intranets), how they use social media and union campaigning.

According to Panagiotopoulos and Barnett (2015), different usage of online communication among trade unions such as cyber union, e-unions, e-collectivism, union 2.0, e-communication and e-voice were identified. Nowadays, social networks for unionists are available such as LabourStart and the UNI Global Communicators Forum.

The driving forces for trade unions to use the ICTs are for attracting of new members, young employees and improving their services (Diamond & Freeman, 2002; Lee, 1997). Some researchers argue that the use of ICTs can be an important tool for unions (Masters, 2013), particularly online communication (Stevens & Greer, 2005), while some regard the possibilities of digital media as a weapon that changes the conditions of the trade unions (Abuiyada, Rauff, and Eteiwi, 2016).

Furthermore, Abuiyada, Rauff, and Eteiwi (2016) state that Internet is a powerful weapon that could shape the various fields of organisations, while other researchers have questioned the impact Internet usage has on organising unions (Troy, 2003). Gundogan (2008) stresses that the use of the Internet and the World Wide Web (www) became an important tool in improving trade union communications and many unions have developed websites, which vary based on the unions.

Ward and Lusoli (2002) argue that the growth of Internet usage will undermine the role of traditional unions. Hence, Darlington (2000) states that trade union members will see the use of ICTs as an opportunity to empower unions, while others will struggle to understand IT and feel challenged.

Some of the researchers have failed to show the positive impact of the potential of the ICTs as a trade union (Fiorito & Gallagher, 2013). The development of trade unions is very slow and their interest in union membership is limited (Ward & Lusoli, 2002; Gibney, Zagenczyk, & Masters, 2013). Furthermore, trade unions must be effective if they decide to use the Internet and they must develop a website that will be usable and useful to the members and non-members (Lowery, Beadles & Faulk, 2008).

According to Alneyadi (2005), IT influences trade unions in a way that changes their functions to become effective and efficient. Trade unions can use the Internet to find more information based on different topics (Mohammed, 2003) as well as improve their trade union democracy and to

organise workers who are online (Gundogan, 2008). In addition, that information can provide online courses and distance learning for trade union members.

The new ICT helps trade union organisations to shape their communication strategy (Ward & Lusoli, 2002). Trade unions create their website to attract more members, communicate with members and to share information between different trade unions. More importantly, to retrieve information about campaigns, bargaining activity, announcements and training for shop stewards (Rego, Alves, Naumann, & Silva, 2014). Young people use of the Internet and want to learn new things; they use the Internet for different reasons such as playing games, chatting and much more. By having trade union websites, young people will learn more about the labour movement and this could help trade unions to organise campaigns amongst young people (Waddington & Kerr, 2002).

International Telecommunication Union (ITU) World Communication Statistics/Information Communication Technology (ICT) Indicators database (2014) reports that Africa has the lowest rate of telephone lines and reflects a weakness of ICTs infrastructures compared to other areas in the world. The survey covered 35 African countries and shows that 93 percent of respondents are using mobile phones (Mitullah, Samson, Wambua, & Balongo, 2016).

Gicheru (2014) emphasises that the African continent is regarded as a fast growing market with 84 percent of mobile telephones. The growth of ICT on the African continent started in the twenty-first century, more especially with mobile cellular communications (Mohammed, 2003). Nowadays, mobile telephones are available and affordable to most people on the African continent (Touré, 2014).

Africa has experienced a massive growth of IT, especially on mobile phones (Magezi, 2015) with 67 percent in 2015 (Adepetun, 2015). Thus, South Africa has increased its adult mobile phone penetration rate by 86 percent (Tubbs, 2014). The Internet penetration in Africa is growing faster compared to the global Internet penetration (Van Zyl, 2015). Furthermore, Van Zyl (2015) continues to emphasise that the Internet capacity globally shows a slow pace from 41 percent in 2011 to 31 percent in 2015, Whereas Africa grew from 41 percent between 2014 and 2015 and in 2015 was 51 percent. In 2014, mobile phone subscribers were 650 million; therefore, it is expected that by 2019 mobile phone subscribers will increase to at least 930 million (Gicheru, 2014).

ICT is cheaper, works faster and is further reaching than the traditional ways of communication (Greene & Kirton, 2003; Rego, Alves, Naumann, & Silva, 2014). Although, Touré (2014) states that in Sub-Saharan Africa, the cost of Internet usage is too expensive, even for people who have

access to the Internet, and the mobile broadband cost proportion is 40 to 60 percent of average income.

A preliminary analysis of the African trade union websites has to be made in order to establish the framework for the model. Rego, Alves, Naumann, and Silva (2014) have proposed a typology model that analyses trade union websites and this model will be applied in Nigeria, Egypt, South Africa, Algeria and Angola. This empirical research will be limited to trade union websites of top five economies in Africa. This model will be able to evaluate the relationship between trade unions and the Internet.

## **TRADE UNIONS AND THE INTERNET IN AFRICA**

The government and political parties controlled trade unions of other countries (Moodley, 2002). During the democratisation wave in the 1990s, trade unions had to strengthen their capacity from scratch (Mbarika, Jensen, & Meso, 2002; Moodley, 2002).

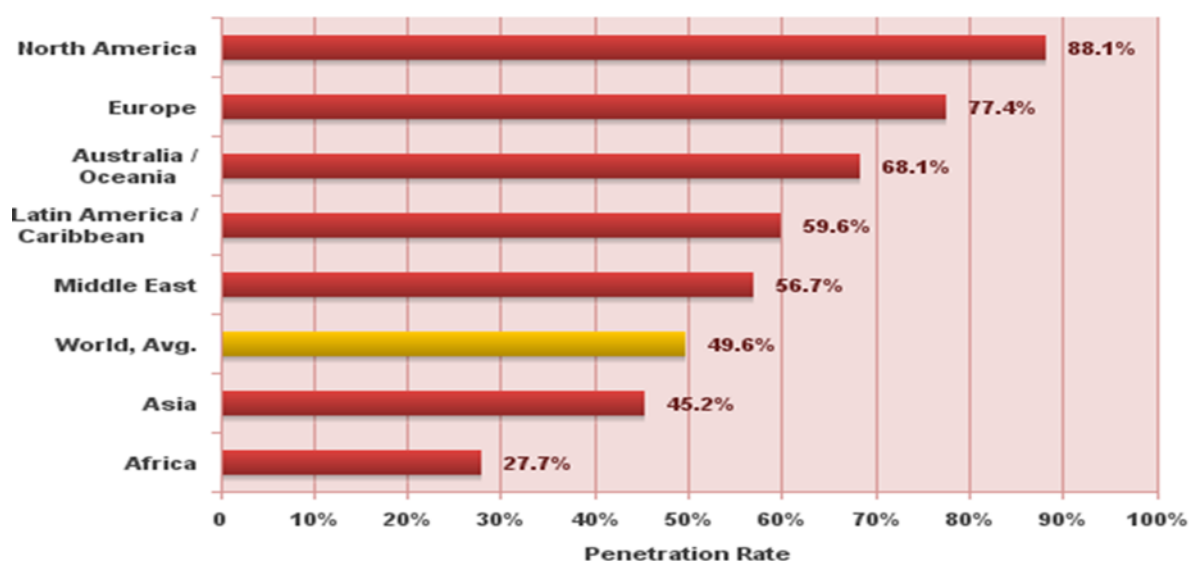
Trade unions develop their website page because it works faster and is not expensive to strengthen their activities via posting information related to economic, social, political and environmental matters (Fiorito, Jarley, and Delaney, 2000). Chaison (2002) highlights that if trade unions distance themselves from their members by simply relying on the website, members will start to ask themselves whether they could do better without trade unions or should join other trade unions.

It is necessary for trade unions and their members to use the Internet and develop their website. However, it is not sufficient that the Internet will provide opportunities for trade unions particularly to attract new members and improve their services. Besides, unions develop a website to offer valuable information and service to its members (Diamond & Freeman, 2002). Even though trade unions adapt to the Internet slowly, more trade unions around the world have gone online.

According to International Telecommunications Union (ITU) (2000-2014), the use of ICT in Angola has rapidly improved since 2002. There was 17 percent in 2012, 19 percent in 2013 and 21 percent in 2014 of internet penetration in Angola (ITU, 2000-2014).

Figure 3 shows the highest rate and the lowest rate of Internet penetration according to the geographic regions. North America leads with 88.1 percent and Africa still lags behind with 27.7 percent in the Internet penetration. Thus, this Figure indicates that there is a gap between Northern America and Africa on the Internet penetration.

## Internet World Penetration Rates by Geographic Regions - March 25, 2017



Source: Internet World Stats - [www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm](http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm)  
 Penetration Rates are based on a world population of 7,519,028,970  
 and 3,731,973,423 estimated Internet users on March 31, 2017.  
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*Figure 3.* The Internet World Penetration Rate by Geographic Regions for March 2017 (Internet World Stats, 2017).

The world's Internet penetration has been discussed in the above graph. Thus, the below table will show the statistics of the top five economies in Africa, namely Nigeria, Egypt, South Africa, Algeria and Angola. Nigeria shows the highest rate of Internet users and Angola shows the lowest.

According to the Internet World Stats (2017), Nigeria is the leading country with Internet access, Egypt is third and South Africa is fourth. Algeria is sixth and Angola is twelfth on the list. The Table below present the comparison of the internet usage in the top five economies countries in Africa.

Table 2

*The comparison of the Internet usage between 2000 and 2016 in the top five economies in Africa*

<b>Countries</b>	<b>Internet users (2000)</b>	<b>Internet users (2017)</b>	<b>Difference between 2000 and 2017</b>
Nigeria	78 740	93 591 174	93 512 434
South Africa	2 401 335	28 580 290	26 178 955
Egypt	438 200	34 800 000	34 361 800
Algeria	153 332	15 105 000	14 951 668
Angola	15 818	5 951 453	5 935 635

*Note.* The Internet users and internet usage updated as of March 2017 (Internet Live Stats, 2017).

### **SOCIAL NETWORKING AND COMMUNICATION AMONG TRADE UNIONS**

According to Serrano (2014), union renewal or revitalisation is the process that develops and organises the sources of the union power. Its purpose is to organise the role of ICTs regarding engaging with union members (Martinez Lucio, Walker, & Trevorrow, 2009; Kerr & Waddington, 2013). Panagiotopoulos and Barnett (2015) state that the social networking and sharing of information on websites is referred to as social media and trade unions usually adopt them.

Kerr and Waddington (2013) note that there had been a debate concerning online communication for union structure and democratic process renewal. It has been the main issue for trade unions to develop their strategies for the revitalisation of trade union organisations (Frege & Kelly, 2004; Hyman, 2013). Panagiotopoulos and Barnett (2015) state that the recent global interest for the trade unions is to improve their communications by harnessing the potential of ICT. The purposes of using online communications are to engage in membership, recruiting new members, organising collective action and reducing certain costs (Pulignano, 2009).

Social media communication could have a strong potential as the driving force for trade union renewal (van Stekelenburg, 2012). However, by using digital communication, revitalisation strategies can also change the way trade unions conduct their activities; for instance, it may challenge union leadership (Panagiotopoulos & Barnett, 2015).

It is evident that the use of social media within trade union organisations has played a major role in communicating and engaging with the members while questions are arising about the social media (Panagiotopoulos, 2012; Bryson, Gomez, & Willman, 2010). White (2010) states that the use of the social network is useful to the trade unions in organising particular Facebook and Twitter.

Marwick and Boyd (2011), and Boyd, Golder, and Lotan (2010) point out that the use of Twitter helps trade unions to distribute their information to existing outside relationships (followers) rather than inside relationship such as union members. However, two questions can arise: How do digital communications contribute to aspects of union renewal or revitalisation? Which of the social networks do trade union in Africa use the most?

It has been proposed that unions should plan social media activities two weeks before a strike. Trade unions are required to use Twitter, Facebook, Blogs and websites to notify the police about the strike (James, 2015).

### **THE INTERNET USERS AMONG FIVE LARGEST AFRICAN ECONOMIES FOR 2015**

The use of the Internet in Africa is still showing a slow pace of growth in countries like South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Angola. However, the use of the Internet in Nigeria is showing a massive growth with 27.1 percent.

Table 3 clearly shows the top five African economies. Years ago, South Africa was the leading African country in the economy, thus things have changed. In 2014, Nigeria rebased its GDP data and became the biggest economy whereas South Africa was the second largest economy in Africa. In 2016, Egypt expanded its GDP and took the second place, South Africa was in the third place and Algeria and Angola remain in the fourth and the fifth place. However, there have been some changes again with Egypt and South Africa. During the first quarter of 2017, South Africa was in second place and Egypt in third place.

Table 3

*Five African countries and Internet users for 2017*

<b>Ranked</b>	<b>Largest African Economies in Africa</b>	<b>Internet Users (2017)</b>	<b>Percentages of internet use (%)</b>
1st	Nigeria	93 591 174	52.6
2 <sup>nd</sup>	South Africa	28 580 290	16.1
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Egypt	34 800 000	19.5
4 <sup>th</sup>	Algeria	15 105 000	8.5
5 <sup>th</sup>	Angola	5 951 453	3.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>178 027 917</b>	<b>100</b>

Adapted from Internet World Stats (2017).

Authors such as Ajuwon and Rhine (2008) and Shostak (1999) emphasise the Internet as a powerful weapon or a developmental tool for an organisation such as trade unions. Do the trade unions of Nigeria, Egypt, South Africa, Algeria and Angola have access to the Internet and use the website?

The website's content of Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Angola will be analysed according to the three dimensions of Rego, Alves, and Naumann (2010). The Typology of Rego, Alves, and Naumann (2010) will be tested on a different website of five African countries.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Content analysis of the data**

Website content analysis was performed on 398 trade unions websites in the five economies countries within Africa. The coding system of Rego, Alves, Naumann, and Silva (2014) focuses on three dimensions:

- Content dimension - also known as an information dimension. The content has two sub-categories, which are union life and beyond union life. Union life focuses on the website that provides more information about the trade unions. Web sites contain more information that is related to union action or the service that unions provide such as meeting announcements, campaigns, strikes, collective bargaining, collective agreements, history of the trade union, membership forms, affiliation notifications, information about current officers and training for shop stewards. Other union's websites do not contain information that focuses on union matters. Information beyond the union provides news based on the general information, union renewal, social, economic, cultural environmental and community issues. This website provides news and announcements; it, therefore, plays a sociability role (Rego, Alves, & Naumann, 2010; Rego, Alves, Naumann, & Silva, 2014).
- Interactivity dimension - focuses on the potential interactivity of the union website. The interactivity has a one-way and two-way website. The one-way website often provides vital information such as postal address and email address. Usually, this website includes forms that can be completed online for some suggestions, questions, updating personal information and downloading union membership forms. The two-way website offers a possibility of social interactions. It provides online discussion forums. This includes blogs, chats, Skype and links to Twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn.
- The third dimension is the formal one. The website can be either simple or complex. The simple website does not include multimedia effects or special solutions for people who are

disabled. Complex websites include sounds, videos, feeds or e-learning platforms (Rego, Alves, & Naumann, 2010).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The typology to analyse trade union websites will be applied and compared in five economies countries in Africa. All trade unions from economies African countries will be used to make an exploratory test of typology. Content analysis is regarded as the method that evaluates as well as analyses the website content (Yeung & Law, 2006).

### **Research participants**

The sample consists of trade unions from the top five economies in Africa. The trade unions used for this study were selected from Google search engine and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) list.

### **Research methodology**

In this article, a quantitative content analysis is performed and Berelson (1952, p. 18) defines it as “a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication”. Numerous Internet searches were performed when using Google Chrome to search for trade unions within the five largest economies in Africa. Word search was performed on Google Chrome by entering the name of each country and the word trade unions or federations. Only 90 of the 309 trade unions in the five largest economies in Africa have websites.

### **Research participants**

The sample consists of trade unions from the top five economies in Africa. The trade unions used for this study will be selected from Google Chrome search engine and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) list.

### **Demographical web presence of the five economies African countries**

Web presence: At the time of the survey in March 2017, 398 trade unions were found to be active or registered in these five countries. Only 90 trade unions had a web presence, 308 had no presence.

According to the strategies on Chapter 2, it has been found that some trade unions used different strategies to the other unions. For instance, Nigerian and South African unions used Web 1.0 (Static website - emails) regularly, while Egypt, Algeria and Angola prefer Web 2.0 (Interactive - Facebook, Twitter and Skype). It seems as if these unions have not adapted yet to Web 3.0 (Web

service - Flickr). Thus, this does not mean that Nigeria and South Africa do not use Web 2.0, but they use Web 1.0 more than Web 2.0. The Table below presented the demographical web presence of the five economies African countries.

Table 4

*Compilation of demographical web presence of the five economies African countries*

<b>Country</b>	<b>Website available (1)</b>	<b>Website not available (2)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Nigeria (1)	22	21	43	10.8
South Africa (2)	58	136	194	48.7
Egypt (3)	3	76	79	19.9
Algeria (4)	4	31	35	8.8
Angola (5)	3	44	47	11.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>100</b>

In this study, 398 trade unions were used from five African Countries. That number includes unions that have their own website, those whose sites were not working, those who do not have websites at all and those who use social networks such as Facebook as their communication channel.

According to Table 4, Nigeria represent about 51.2 percent penetration rate of the Internet usage, South Africa is 29.9 percent, Egypt is 3.8 percent, Algeria is 11.4 percent and Angola is still with 6.4 percent. However, most unions use social networks rather than having their own websites.

The findings show that South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Angola unions do not seem to invest more in the usage of ICTs compared to Nigeria. It seems as if South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Angola do not benefit more on the potential of ICTs since they use social media only; however, it can be said that Nigeria still benefits in the potential of ICTs.

### **Content analysis - coding**

The strategies, as suggested by Bibby (2004), were used to set a content analysis. Three subject experts were asked to work through the union website.

In this study, the unit analysis of the website home page or the front page was performed. A home page, according to Ha and James (1998, p. 468), means the first landing page of a website that is

usually named as “index.html,>” or as a default page of the domain name such as “<http:www.epson.com”. Websites consist of several interlinked pages and by limiting the scope of the research to the home page of the trade unions will provide the assurance that no content will be missed because of ambiguity of navigating internal pages of the websites. Only some trade unions have dedicated websites.

### **Statistical analysis**

The overall Internet usage by trade unions will be analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to explain the descriptive data. The criteria for evaluating the trade union web page was assessed on the basis of the presence of the dimension set by Rego et al. (2014) by answering “yes” or “no”. Analysis was performed on the data to obtain the three dimensions (content analysis, interactivity and form) of the five countries.

This content analysis research was limited to the website of a trade union in Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Angola. To determine the difference between the different countries, use of the Internet by the trade union analysis and one-way analysis of variance was performed.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) is a statistical tool that is used when more than two groups are to be compared. ANOVA that involves one grouping usually is referred to one-way ANOVA because it involves independent variables. In addition, one-way ANOVA has an independent sample called t-test (Zikmund, Barry, Garr, & Griffin, 2013). It has been stated that the results for an independent sample t-test as well as for ANOVA will be similar, only if they are two groups in the independent variables in ANOVA. The independent sample t-test is used to determine whether there are statistically significant differences between the two groups (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) believe that it is important to use different tests in understanding the data. The chi-square test ( $\chi^2$ ) is a statistical test used in this study to investigate the different variations (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). By using the chi-square test, it will be easier to determine whether five economies African countries and websites are characterised in terms of the content, interactivity and form dimensions.

### **RESULTS**

The finding of Rego et al. (2014) indicates that the websites of Portuguese and British unions differ in terms of the content dimension. For Portuguese union websites, the content of life of the union is 72 percent, whereas the content of union life for British union website is 59 percent. The

difference is statistically significant [ $\chi^2 (1) = 15.55, p = 0.001$ ]. In this study, it was found that Portuguese union websites focus on the news of union action and social, economic and cultural issues.

The differences were found based on the Portuguese and British union websites on the interactivity dimension. The union website of Portugal is primarily unidirectional with 62 percent, while the British trade unions website is lower with 47 percent. Portuguese unions give information to members and other users; while the websites of British unions allow users to give their feedback. Therefore, it's not statistically significant [ $\chi^2(1) = 3.31, p = 0.076$ ]. In the study, it was found that Portuguese union websites have information such as postal and email addresses, suggestions and social media such as Facebook, Blogs and Twitter.

The Portuguese and British websites differ in terms of the form dimension. Portuguese union websites has majority of a complex form of 56 percent, but British union websites have 42 percent. Regardless of the difference in these two countries, there is no statistically significant association. The websites are not simpler or more complex and depend on the country [ $\chi^2 (1) = 3.04, p = 0.106$ ]. In the study it was found that Portuguese union websites prefers complex form, which includes sound, videos, feeds and e-learning platforms.

As indicated in Table 5, a significant difference between trade unions content of website exists, but concerning one-way interactivity there is a difference between Nigeria (11.36) and Egypt (13.80). Egypt's one-way interactivity is higher than Nigeria. Concerning two-way interactive, there is no difference between South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Angola as the mean differs between 13.56 and 13.87.

According to Table 5, when the ANOVA statistic was calculated on the dimensions, a statistically significant difference was found between the content (union life and union life and beyond), interactivity (one-way and two-way) and form (simple and complex), for instance, probability values is  $p < 0.05$ . For this study, the t-test would not be appropriate, but the one-way ANOVA will be used in this study. Therefore, the findings show that many unions in Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Angola do not seem to be investing in the potential of the ICTs.

Table 5

*ANOVA - Differences in frequency of trade union dimension of the five economies African countries*

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Nigeria</b>	<b>South Africa</b>	<b>Egypt</b>	<b>Algeria</b>	<b>Angola</b>	<b><math>\rho</math></b>
<b>Content</b>						
Union life	13.36	13.64	13.94	13.75	13.81	0.01
Union life and beyond	13.40	13.75	13.94	13.72	13.79	0.01
<b>Interactivity</b>						
One-way	11.36	12.74	13.80	13.47	13.74	0.00
Two-way	12.60	13.56	13.87	13.06	13.64	0.00
<b>Form</b>						
Simple	3.83	3.97	3.96	3.94	3.94	0.01
Complex	7.86	7.86	7.99	7.78	7.89	0.05

\*Statistically significant difference:  $\rho < 0.05$

The African and European countries have been involved in an active debate on the use of trade unions ICT's particularly the internet. However, the debate was geographically limited in those countries and also lacks the empirical analysis. Therefore, the use of internet and website of trade unions has not been monitored adequately.

According to this study, the trade unions in the top five largest economies in Africa were using the social networks and ICTs for different reasons such as campaign organise, bargaining activities and so forth; namely, Nigeria (Blog, Twitter, Facebook, Skype, Youtube), South Africa (Blog, Twitter, Facebook, Skype, Youtube), Egypt (Twitter, Skype, Facebook, Youtube), Algeria (Blog, Skype, Facebook) and Angola (Blog, Twitter, Skype, Facebook). When compared to the study of Rego et al. (2016) based on the five European countries were using social networks and ICTs as union protest such as Bulgaria (Facebook, Mobile phones, Website); Italy (Facebook, Youtube, Website); Netherlands (Blog, Facebook, Twitter, Website); Portugal (Facebook, Twitter, Website); and the United Kingdom (Blog, Facebook, Twitter, Website).

The difference between these two studies is that trade unions in the top five largest economies in Africa are not using social media to protests, instead are using the database for collective

bargaining activities unlike the trade unions in the five European countries in the study of Rego et al. (2016). As a result, both trade unions in five European countries and 5 largest economies in Africa uses the website and internet for their union activities. The findings of this study can be used as a guideline for future research that will contribute on understanding how the use of ICT's can be effective for trade union activities. Therefore, more research is needed in order to identify the effectiveness of the union website as well as to understand why unions does not invest in internet.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Future research needs to identify the effectiveness of the usage of the Internet and websites. It must be researched why trade unions do not invest in the potential offers by the ICTs. Most importantly, countries leading with ICT usage for unions should be identified.

Furthermore, future research could pursue an understanding of unions users profiles, places where they access the Internet and websites as well as how unions perceive the potential of the Internet. It is important to take the unions perceptions into consideration in order to evaluate the ICT strategies and trade unions in order to make them more effective and efficient.

Another important aspect is that focus should be placed on how trade unions use social networks to mobilise their members, for example campaigns. Researchers should also examine the impact of using the Internet as a tool to change the interactions of its members from traditional communication (mails, notice boards) to new ICTs (e-mails, social networks). As Panagiotopoulos (2012) states, social media has an important implication in the workplace, more particularly in the union activities and beyond context.

It is recommended that the list of registered trade unions for each country should be available on the Internet for future researchers. The future researchers should use other methods of communication rather than e-mail to avoid delay when they communicate with different unions in different countries. Trade union leaders should educate its members on the basics of Internet usage.

Trade unions should create the website depending on the location and the local language, for instance, if you live in Harrismith, Free State province the dominant local language is Southern Sotho, which is understood by many people; however, it is preferable to use English, if possible, for the others to understand the website content of specific unions.

Lastly, it is recommended for trade unions to update their website content regularly and provide timely information. This will assist external people to access information they need from the website.

## **LIMITATION**

The five economies African countries belong to different labour relations patterns. The content analysis was only performed on trade unions in Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Angola; but websites of trade unions change more often. Websites of countries are different regards to content dimensions.

In the process of conducting this study, there were some limitations such as:

- The researcher struggled to find information of trade unions in Egypt, Algeria and Angola on the search engine, but found it in online books such as James (2011), Naylor (2015) and Gedeon (2007). Furthermore, other information for four countries was found on other search engines. However, for South Africa the information was found on the registered list from the Department of Labour.
- The researcher was limited with monitoring the websites of other countries due to language differences and may have omitted some union websites, especially those who do not use English language as an official language. In order to overcome the language barrier, Google Translate is recommended for use by the future researchers.
- It was difficult to monitor the websites of trade unions that were updated over five years ago and the ones that were under construction. The information on the website was old and not suitable for research purposes.
- The websites of the trade unions in the five economies African countries that were used in the study changed regularly and the researcher had to evaluate the website more often to ensure correct statistics.
- It was time-consuming to find the trade unions for each country on the website.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The preliminary data of this study shows that less trade unions in Africa have websites. Besides, other trade unions websites are under construction for a certain period. What are the reasons that prevent unions to have their own website? Do union members have sufficient skills and knowledge to create or use the website? Trade union does not seem to invest in the potential of the ICTs.

This study used the typology of Rego et al. (2014) based on three dimensions, namely content, interactivity and form. The purpose of this study was to test the typology on the trade unions websites and to monitor the Internet usage in Africa.

For about 51.2 percent of trade unions in Nigeria have access to the Internet and website, however, they use their website for different things. It has been found that the Nigeria unions use emails and newsletters & leaflets more than any others do. The penetration of Internet and website for trade unions in South Africa is 29.9 percent, but they use emails and online campaigns more often compared to other strategies. Egypt has 3.8 percent of trade union who have access in Internet and website; however, they prefer the visual communication as well as union organising. Lastly, Angola and Algeria seem to be on the same page. Algeria has 11.4 percent and Angola has 6.4 percent, but they both prefer visual communications as one of their strategies. Thus, the question might be asked when trade unions will adapt fully to all the ICTs strategies.

By using the typology of Rego, Alves, and Naumann (2010), it has been found that many trade unions that have websites does not fully use the Internet possibilities such as content dimension (beyond union life) and formal dimension (simple and complex level); however, they use the interactivity dimension. For this study, there is no difference between South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Angola as the mean differs between 13.56 - 13.87 for the two-way interactive.

## **CONCLUSION**

Over the last decades, there has been a growing rate of Internet and ICTs usage within trade unions and some unions have their own reasons to adapt from it (Rego, Sprenger, Kirov, Thomson, & Di Nunzio, 2016). Green and Kirton (2003) and Wood (2015) emphasise that trade unions adopted the optimistic approach that contributed to the new ICTs for revitalisation of trade unions. However, there is little empirical evidence provided on how the trade unions organise new ICTs in union protests and how it changed union protests (Rego et al., 2016).

The development of ICT strategies has been on the agenda for some time in the South African trade unions; however, unions have been slow to recognise the potential of ICT for recruitment and union activities (EurWork, 2002). Trade unions of five largest economies in Africa are in a crisis and need to develop renewal and revitalisation strategies (Lee, 2008). The three-dimension typology has been presented in this study. The criteria for the typology are content, interactivity and formal with two sub-categories each (Rego et al., 2014).

Trade unions have to consider ICT as one of its strategies; however, it has its positive and negative effects. If trade unions adapt the use of ICT, they will also have to use their traditional communication ways. The recruitment of new members must be considered and the union structure must be revitalised. ICTs offer the unions the potential to facilitate all their roles; in this sense, this must be explored further.

There is still a gap concerning the usage of the Internet between developing, developed and African countries (Alexandra, 2012). Furthermore, African continent is least computerised (Van Niekerk, 2013) and has been seen as a lost continent by Brennan (2014). African trade unions need to develop renewal and revitalisation strategies for their survival in future (Lee, 2008).

The use of the new ICT should continue by the trade unions (Cockfield, 2005) and be part of the union renewal or revitalisation strategy (Diamond & Freeman, 2002). Cockfield (2005) argues that the renewal of the trade unions could be a difficult and slow process for them. Trade unions must first support their organisational culture as well as their values before moving to the ICT strategies. In this study, preliminary typology of Rego, Alves, and Naumann (2010) has been proposed to test the website content of Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Angola by using the three dimensions, namely content, interactivity and form.

The activities of the Internet-based labour movement organisations may replace traditional trade unions (Diamond & Freeman, 2002); and therefore the online networks may help members and non-members to connect outside the structure of the traditional union (Panagiotopoulos & Barnett, 2014). There is a need for on-going studies due to the limited knowledge of the trade unions on planning the use the social media, deciding on the communication channel to use and know impact for their decisions (Dahlberg-Grundberg, Lundström, & Lindgren, 2016).

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## **CHAPTER 4**

### **CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE ENTIRE STUDY AS WELL AS RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The primary purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of the way trade unions in Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Angola structure themselves to renew themselves through the use of ICT. Furthermore, to present a typology/tool that can be used to monitor unions' Internet use in the top five economies in Africa as well as to test the typology of Rego et al. (2014) by analysing websites of trade unions of five largest economies in Africa. The study intends to understand how the ICT has an impact on trade unions membership and to analyses the website content of these trade unions.

The typology of Rego, Alves, Naumann, and Silva (2014) was used in this study to analyse the website content of the African trade unions. It was stated in the problem statement that trade unions are faced with a decline of union membership and loss of influence. Trade unions have developed strategies to halt the decline of union members and loss of influence; using the Internet is one of their strategies.

This research is part of an on-going that aims to understand the contribution of ICT in African trade unions especially internet, ICT and the union's revival. Researchers still lack the tool to monitor the relationship between the trade unions and ICTs.

In this chapter, the concluding remarks of this research will be given, the limitations and recommendations of the research will be discussed and lastly, future research will be recommended by the researcher.

#### **4.2 METHODOLOGY AND APPLICATION**

Content analysis was used to analyse the use of the Internet and websites content of the trade union of the top five African economies, namely Nigeria, Egypt, South Africa, Algeria and Angola. The typology of Rego et al. (2014) was utilised to explore the website content of the trade unions by putting focus on the three dimensions, namely content, interactivity and form. This typology will be tested on different websites of five African countries.

Very little research has been conducted on African trade unions on the usage of ICTs and their strategy implementation. The purpose of this study will be to analyse to what extent and in what way trade unions of top five economically developed African countries use the Internet and to propose a preliminary typology of trade unions' website content.

### **4.3. RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **4.1.4 Primary objective**

The primary objective was to provide a tool that allowed the researcher to monitor the usage of the Internet by the trade unions. This research intends to know which of the trade unions have adapted to the new information era by using the Internet for many purposes.

#### **4.1.2 Secondary objective**

The secondary objective was to test the typology of Rego, Alves, Naumann, and Silva (2014) to analyse the website content of the trade unions. This research intends to know the profile of the trade unions that have websites. After analysing trade union profiles, the researcher will be able to know which trade union still lags behind.

#### **4.1.3 Research question findings**

*Question 1: How are revitalisation of trade unions, trade unions strategies, new information era and Internet use of trade unions conceptualised from the literature? (Chapter 2: Article 1).*

The strategies for revitalisation of the trade unions, Frege and Kelly (2003) have identified the six broad strategies used by trade unions to revitalise themselves, namely organising, labour-management partnership, political action, restructuring, social movement unionism and international unionism (Frege & Kelly, 2003). Pantland (2010) and Leischa (2010) identified two strategies for union revitalisation using ICT, namely top-down strategies and bottom-up strategies. Furthermore, the researcher developed the union strategic model that consists of three steps, namely e-policy and strategies, e-learning and e-service. The model was developed to assist trade unions to use websites and adapt to the potential of ICTs.

*Question 2: How are trade unions in the five largest economies in Africa attempting to renew themselves using Internet technology, networking and ICT? (Chapter 2: Article 1)*

It is clear from literature that trade unions using online communication such as social media as potential driving force for trade unions' renewal. In European countries the use of the ICTs and

social media is increasingly being studied, Yet, it is important to note that major differences exist in the usage of the Internet accessibility among countries and regions. The unions of the top five African economies use the potential ICTs to improve their recruitment structure by attracting new members to the union and communicate with members. However, it was also clear that in Africa countries use other social media to communicate with their members. Some of them do not have an internet website but only social media such as WhatsApp, Twitter, |Blog, Chats and Facebook.

*Question 3: Can the content analysis of the typology/tool of Rego et al. (2014) apply to monitor Internet use (websites) of trade unions in the top five economies in Africa? (Chapter 3: Article 2)*

The typology/tool of Rego et al. (2014) can be used when monitor internet use of trade unions in the top five economies in Africa as they also have English websites and make use of ICT to communicate with member. It is clear from the findings in Chapter 3 (Article 2) that these unions mainly make use social networks rather than having their own websites. A reason for this might be that members have more mobile phones where they make use of social media such as WhatsApp, Twitter, |Blog, Chats and Facebook.

#### **4.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

This study intends to monitor the Internet and analyse the website content of the trade unions in top five economies in Africa. Based on the typology of Rego et al. (2014), it can be said that trade unions use the interactivity dimension more often and the content dimension as well as formal dimension are under-utilised. Trade unions are aware of the advantages of the websites but they not use them to their benefit.

The findings indicate that the websites of the top five African economies are different in terms of the dimensions. There is a significant difference between trade unions content of websites. Regarding to one-way interactive there is a difference between Nigeria (11.36) and Egypt (13.80). Egypt one-way interactivity is higher than Nigeria. With regards to two-way interactivity, there is no difference between South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Angola as the means differ between 13.56-13.87.

When ANOVA statistic were calculated on the dimensions, a statistically significant difference was found between the content (union life and union life and beyond), interactivity (one-way and two-way) and form (simple and complex), for instance, probability values is  $p < 0.05$ . For this study, the t-test would not be appropriate, but the one-way ANOVA will be used in this study. Therefore,

the findings have shown that many unions in Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Angola do not seem to be investing in the potential of the ICTs.

#### **4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

There has been a debate particularly on the developments of ICT strategies for some time in the African trade unions; though, the pace of trade unions to recognise the potential of ICT to organise union activities such as recruiting members has been very slow. African unions are faced with crisis of union decline and union influence. Additionally, unions need to ensure that they develop renewal and revitalisation strategies immediately. Furthermore, ICTs is one of the strategy to halt this crisis of union membership.

Some authors have been positive about the use of the Internet and ICTs for it contributes to the democratisation of the unions as well as reversing the decline of union membership in top five largest economies in Africa. Many trade unions around the world have considered investing in the use of ICTs; however, some trade unions still lack the knowledge and skills to use Internet and the ICTs.

As a result, trade union usage of the Internet has not been monitored. The primary objective of this study was to monitor the usage of the Internet and the secondary objective was to analyse the website content of the trade unions.

The findings indicate that many trade unions in top five largest African economies, namely Nigeria, Egypt, South Africa, Algeria and Algeria, do not seem to be investing in the potential of ICTs. However, Nigerian trade unions seem to be benefiting from the potential offered by the ICTs. Therefore, it can be said that more studies are needed to be conducted based on identifying the effectiveness of the use of the website and to understand reasons that lead unions not to invest in the Internet.

It has be found that many trade unions that have websites do not fully use the Internet possibilities such as interaction app (two-way level), multimedia effects (simple level) and the e-learning platforms (complex level). Bennett and Taras (2002) state that whether trade unions adapt to the new ICTs or not, it does not mean that they will gain much; however, if they do not adapt they have much to lose.

It is recommended that the list of registered trade unions for each country should be available on the Internet for future researchers. The future researchers should use other methods of

communication rather than e-mail to avoid delay when they communicate with different unions in different countries. Trade union leaders should educate its members on the basics of Internet usage.

Trade unions should create the website depending on the location and the local language, for instance, if you live in Harrismith, Free State province the dominant local language is Southern Sotho, which is understood by many people; however, it is preferable to use English, if possible, for the others to understand the website content of specific unions. Lastly, it is recommended for trade unions to update their website content regularly and provide timely information.

#### **4.6 LIMITATION**

The five economies African countries belong to different labour relations patterns. The content analysis was only performed on trade unions in Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Algeria and Angola; but websites of trade unions change more often. Websites of countries are different regards to content dimensions.

In the process of conducting this study, there were some limitations such as:

- The researcher struggled to find information of trade unions in Egypt, Algeria and Angola on the search engine, but found it in online books such as James (2011), Naylor (2015) and Gedeon (2007). Furthermore, other information for four countries was found on other search engines. However, for South Africa the information was found on the registered list from the Department of Labour.
- The research was limited regards to the monitoring the websites of other countries due to language differences and may have omitted some union websites, especially those who do not use English language as an official language. In order to overcome the language barrier, Google Translate is recommended for use by the future researchers.
- It was difficult to monitor the websites of trade unions that were updated over five years ago and the ones that were under construction. The information on the website was old and not suitable for research purposes.
- The websites of the trade unions in the five economies African countries that were used in the study changed regularly and the researcher had to evaluate the website more often to ensure correct statistics.
- It was time-consuming to find the trade unions for each country on the website.

#### **4.7 FUTURE RESEARCH**

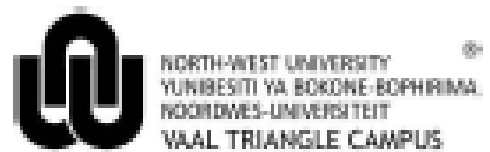
Future research needs to identify the effectiveness of the usage of the social media, the internet and websites. Furthermore, future research could pursue an understanding of unions users profiles, places where they access the Internet and websites as well as how unions perceive the potential of the Internet. It is important to consider unions perceptions in order to evaluate the ICT strategies and trade unions in order to make them more effective and efficient.

Another important aspect is that focus should be placed on how trade unions use social networks to mobilise their members, for example campaigns and strikes. Researchers should also examine the impact of using the Internet as a tool to change the interactions of its members from traditional communication (mails, notice boards) to new ICTs (e-mails, social networks). As Panagiotopoulos (2012) states, social media has an important implication in the workplace, more particularly in the union activities and beyond context.

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## ANNEXURE A: ETHICAL APPROVAL



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18 August 2016

Dear Ms Kwakwa and Dr Keyser

ETHICS APPLICATION: NWU-HS-2016-0087

**"Strategies and Revitalisation for survival of Trade Unions in Africa: The role of Information Communication Technologies"**

Thank you for a well-presented application and the requested additional material!

At the meeting of the Basic Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC) on 11 August 2016, the committee ratified the approval of above ethics application in view of the additional information submitted. There is no risk and the protocol is acceptable.

A certificate will be issued for the duration of the applicant's period of study and communication will be kept for progress tracking purposes.

Congratulations and best of wishes with the completion of your study.

Yours sincerely,



Prof Jaco Hoffman  
BaSSREC – Chairperson

## ANNEXURE B: LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

Ms Linda Scott  
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25 October 2017

To whom it may concern

This is to confirm that I, the undersigned, have language edited the **dissertation of**

**Francina Girley Kwakwa**

for the degree thesis for

**Masters of Arts: Labour Relations Management**

entitled:

*Strategies and revitalisation for survival of trade unions in Africa: The role of information communication technologies*

The responsibility of implementing the recommended language changes rests with the author of the dissertation.

Yours truly,



Linda Scott