Article

Reconsidering Digital Strategies for Recruiting and Organising Young Emerging Teachers in Chosen Teachers' Unions in South Africa

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Abstract: The International Labour Organisation (ILO) reports that, in most of its member countries, the percentage of employed individuals who are members of trade unions has decreased significantly over the past few decades, with less than 20 percent. Some of the studies done on this subject unequivocally acknowledge that low membership turnover and dwindling trade union densities are caused by the incapacity to mobilize, organize, and serve members. In order to determine the most effective and efficient way to use these integrated digital strategies, this research investigates types of digital modes for organising, mobilising, and retaining new coming educators. Data were gathered through interviews with ten SADTU organisers and ten students from particular South. African universities, using the qualitative method. The data was analysed using a grounded (thematic) approach. The study's overall findings shows that digital technologies play a significant role in luring newer generations of trade union members. The findings of this study directly influenced the creation of more precise and efficient digital strategies for recruiting and organizing young emerging teachers, leading to an overall enhancement in the recruitment and retention of talent within the education sector.

Keywords: ILO; South Africa; organising; recruiting; Fourth Industrial Revolution

Introduction
Without a doubt, there has been little research on integrated digital strategies for recruitment and organising within the union fraternity. This may even be the study's contention. This is mostly due to the general undervaluing of the potential impact that emerging technologies, even in the field of education, can have. In addition, there are two primary body of literature that pertain to this issue and discuss recruiting and organising memberships as well as the opportunities presented by and exploited by technology. Heery, Simms, Simpson, Delbridge, and Salmon 2000a; Dundon, Gngulis and Wilkinson, 1999; Oxenbridge, 1997; Fiorito, 2004; de Turberville, 2004; McCammon, 2001; Colling, 2006; Voos, 1984; Snape, 1995; Bronfenbrenner and Hickey, 2004; Carter and Cooper, 2002) are some examples of the first, which prioritise doctrine and practice.

According to several studies (Dunn and Walker, 2016; Cadres, 2015; Degryse, 2016; Bijker, Hughes and Pinch, 2001; Hyman, 2016; Mückenberger, 2016; Lévesque and Murray, 2010), the second approach gives preference to digital perspective for recruiting and organising. Indeed, financially unions survive through membership subscriptions. One of the most important resources for trade union work is membership. This calls for the investigation and creative reinforcement of membership recruitment and servicing strategies. Trade unions vary in how closely they tie representation to their membership based on their respective

traditions and organisational structures. Nevertheless, a union's membership base continues to be a vital indicator of its organisational strength as well as its legitimacy and recognition. According to the research, there appears to be a decrease in the number of members of the education trade union that is organising, and given the current state of affairs, a downward trend is unavoidable.

This decline could be attributed to a wide range of factors, including members quitting the system well in advance of their retirement age, members switching jobs, and members resigning to join other unions. Given that only 10.8% of the membership is young, what we like to refer to as novice teachers, the age factor is thought to be one of the causes. The study also reveals that the unions have failed to establish their organisations' popularity and credibility with young, aspiring educators, and that their organisational structure and instructional strategies have not been persuasive or successful with experienced educators. Furthermore, when the current generation of members retires, these organisations will soon find themselves without new members. Unions won't be able to regenerate themselves in the same way that living things do. To support union work in recruitment and service, serious and coordinated training and conscientisation of union members must be prioritised over simply utilising the advancement of technology.

The 4IR has forced unions to reconsider their organising and retention of the members. Data is gathered through interviews with SADTU members using purposeful sampling and qualitative interview techniques. One way to look at the interviews is as a means of gathering narrative data for the specific goal of reconsidering new ways of modern modes for organising and retention of members. However, this research strives to relook on modern possible modes of recruiting and retention to shape and influence peoples' perceptions for change. The study considers integrated digital strategies, which tend to overlook organising and recruiting as a crucial component, in addition to modern one-on-one organising and recruitment approaches.

As previously mentioned, one of the major problems facing the union community is their incapacity to organise and attract new and young teachers. Therefore, organising, recruiting, and training young, aspiring teachers in the field continues to be a major challenge, but one that can be solved with the help of contemporary digital technologies. This shows that the existing literature on mobilising and retention in the domain of trade union has neglected the magnitude and the complexity of the problem that serves to exacerbate the situation. This is not to suggest that researchers haven't explored organising and recruitment-related topics, such as young, aspiring teachers, as central themes in the conversation about membership recruitment and retention. On the other hand, more knowledge is required in the area of integrated digital recruiting and organising strategies.

There are several causes for the global phenomenon of declining union density. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) reports that, in most of its member countries, the membership size has decreased dramatically, with less than 20% of employed people. The ILO attributes this decline to changes in the global economic landscape that have occurred since the 1970s. Reluctant to mobilize or serve members causes low membership turnover, which in turn causes trade union densities to decline, according to other researchers. According to a UK study of the industry, trade union density has decreased by about 8% between 2006 and 2018 (Visser, 2019). Other studies also unequivocally show that trade union density has been steadily declining even within the education sector. The ILO goes on to say that although union membership is declining, in certain countries the unions have managed to stay relevant and in other cases even grow their influence in policy formulation. This decline can be partly attributed to lower employment in the public sector, increased economic competition, and an increase in informal working arrangements, also known as precarious labour. Unions and other organised labour organisations are finding that, in order to stay relevant, they must adapt quickly to a new environment that is emerging. This new environment is defined by new production and communication techniques as well as the dynamics of capital mobility of global capital accumulation (ILO, 2019).

It's clear that some of the new education workers may not feel pressured to join organised labour formations, and they are primarily technologically inclined. High entrance requirements for recognised unions, a practice colloquially referred to as 'union gatekeeping', are another contributing factor. Certain unions are seen as irrelevant by new teachers because of the negative perceptions they carry these days and the lack of hope they represent. In order to honour their aging membership and to encourage younger members to participate in their programmes, other unions, such as the SADTU, have made constitutional amendments.

That being said, these interventions have not always resulted in an increase in membership or a shift in the age distribution of the membership. Therefore, the primary aims of this research is twofold. Firstly, it aims to examine the various integrated digital approaches that can be employed for the purpose of organising, recruiting, and training young emerging educators. Secondly, it seeks to ascertain the potential for enhanced efficiency and effectiveness in the utilisation of these strategies, taking into consideration the advent of contemporary 4IR.

Literature Review

This section mapped out what previous scholars have said about role of 4IR in the organising and recruitment of the young new teachers into the union. Some of the aspects discussed in this section include: the organising model-theory and practice; and the integrated digital communication platforms as a recruitment tool.

1. The Organising Model: Theory and Practice

Heery et al., (2000a) explain that organising strategy refers to the collaboration of individuals with shared interests in order to promote their own interests through collective bargaining. Research on the domain of organising and recruitment reveals that there is no universally accepted definition for organising strategy, as it varies among scholars (Heery, et al, 2000a). Some scholars define it as a mechanism for resolving disputes within bargaining chambers (Dundon et al., 1999; Oxenbridge, 1997; Fiorito, 2004). Conversely, de Turberville (2004) views it as a means of providing services to members through dialogue between employers and unions, such as the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU).

Several scholars, such as Fletcher and Hurd (1998) and Carter and Cooper (2002), link the concept of organizing strategy to an employee's right to strike. However, Crosby (2002) argues that organising and recruitment strategies should instead focus on the actual working conditions of the employees. This viewpoint is supported by McCammon (2001) and Colling (2006), who suggest that negotiations in the boardroom may not accurately reflect the realities faced by workers on the ground, sometimes leading to misinformation. In light of this, Fiorito (2004) proposes that organising and recruitment strategies should directly address the material conditions experienced by workers.

The current organising and recruitment strategies are not ineffective, but there is a need for a better understanding of integrated digital strategies as a new and innovative approach to maximize membership in the union fraternity. This understanding should be developed in the context of fostering a common understanding to ensure the stability and sustainability of membership in the short, medium, and long term (Oxenbridge, 1997). It is also important to consider best practices from other countries, such as the United States, which has a successful organizing model (cf. Hurd, 1993; Waldinger et al., 1998). Bronfenbrenner and Hickey (2004:17) suggest that comparative studies should focus on both the decline and growth possibilities when looking beyond borders. This aligns with the experiences of unions in the USA, which have seen both successes and failures. Similar observations have been made in Britain, where some unions have experienced a decline in membership using traditional organizing and recruitment strategies (Fiorito, 2004). These findings support the argument made by Heery et al (2000b) that existing models need to be strengthened to promote membership growth and sustainability. In light of these considerations, Beaumont and Harris (1990) propose integrated digital strategies as an innovative alternative to maximize membership in the union sector.

Various explanations have been presented for the shortcomings of the current contemporary organizing and recruitment methods. Initially, a significant shift to digital strategies is deemed essential for the expansion and sustainability of membership, especially in light of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic (Voos, 1984; Snape, 1995; Bronfenbrenner and Hickey, 2004; Carter and Cooper, 2002). Similarly, Heery et al. (2003b); Fiorito (2004); Carter and Cooper (2002) emphasize the need for increased investment in modern organising and recruitment strategies to foster growth and sustainability within unions. Secondly, the willingness of leadership within unions to embrace a radical transition to integrated digital strategies as an innovative strategic option is crucial for maximizing membership within the union community (Fiorito, 2004; Oxenbridge, 1997; Voss and Sherman, 2000; Kelly, 1998; Carter and Cooper, 2002; Griffin and Moors, 2004).

This shift should involve allocating adequate resources towards contemporary organising and recruitment strategies to promote membership growth and stability (Carter and Cooper, 2002; de Turberville, 2004).

Union leadership should consider transitioning from servicing to organising in order to better understand the material conditions on the ground for effective dispute resolution. Scholars such as Colling, Heery, Higgins, and Snape have emphasized the importance of embracing integrated digital strategies as a means of ensuring future success and growth within the organisation. Carter and Cooper further support this notion, highlighting the need for union officials to commit to this radical shift for the benefit of membership growth and sustainability.

2. Integrated Digital Communication Platforms as A Recruitment Tool

Digital technologies play a crucial role in attracting younger generations to join trade unions. By drawing on the existing literature on the social construction of technology and democracy in the workplace, we introduce the concept of technology-supported construction of the social sphere. Through an examination of digital technologies, we can identify the potential of trade unions and work councils to act as innovators in utilising digital platforms for employee participation. In light of the decline in trade union membership, many non-governmental organisations have already demonstrated how digital technologies can be used to mobilize movements and maintain communication with members and the wider public through proactive digital strategies (Dunn and Walker, 2016). Some trade unions have embraced new technologies such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, among others (Cadres, 2015). The strategic selection and adoption of specific applications and software that align with the goals of trade unions become crucial. These digital technologies offer new avenues for organising protests, enhancing decision-making processes, and fostering connections with a more diverse membership. The use of digital technologies also enables shorter response times and more inclusive decision-making, which are advantageous for both trade unions and labour movements (Degryse, 2016).

Digital technologies serve as a facilitator rather than an end goal, as highlighted by Bijker, Hughes, and Pinch (2001). The aim of enhancing democracy in the workplace (Hyman, 2016) or ensuring citizenship at work (Mückenberger, 2016) are notable objectives. The new digital technologies discussed in this paper have already shown their potential to support these ambitious goals in a specific manner. It is crucial for these technologies to contribute in a clearly defined and potentially measurable way to the overarching objective of aiding organisations and union members. Despite the possibility of undermining collective action and industrial relations, there are several reasons to embrace digital technologies, such as enabling more autonomous work, fostering new forms of collaboration, and promoting "agile" organizations. Both union representatives and politicians engaging in direct political participation can leverage advancements in new digital technologies (Lévesque and Murray, 2010).

In summary, based on the comprehensive discussions above, the literature review primarily emphasizes on establishing the context. Within this segment, the researcher aims to comprehend the viewpoints of other scholars regarding organising and recruitment. The topics covered in this section encompass the current organising and recruitment strategies, along with a significant transition towards integrated digital strategies. By outlining the scope of organising and recruitment within the union sector, the contention presented is the necessity for a radical shift towards integrated digital strategies as a creative strategic option for enhancing membership growth and sustainability within the union community.

3. Conceptual Framework

The literature review has offered valuable insights into the recruitment and retention of young emerging teachers in selected South African universities. This section synthesizes these ideas into a framework that steers the study, encompassing traditional and technological methods (using social media platforms). Sharma and Nagendra (2017) highlight that in the past, traditional recruitment methods like face-to-face interactions were common, but the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) has brought about changes in this approach (Rahman, Arora, and Kularatne, 2014). The emergence of 4IR has notably increased the utilisation of social networking sites (Lewis et al., 2015), which have become essential in the everyday lives of youth and

university students (Bicky & Kwok, 2011). Rana & Singh (2016) noted that a majority of individuals now interact with social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Biographical characteristics like age, gender, and length of study have an impact on how young, aspiring teachers and teachers' unions use social media. Time, money, quality, diversity, accessibility, and other effectiveness factors affect the recruitment process, whether it is traditional or electronic. Effective recruitment traits, according to Masa'd (2015), include member diversity, target group orientation, costs, time, and member quality. The five dimensions of effective recruitment and social networking sites have a strong correlation, according to Masa'd's (2015). This research is informed by this frame of concepts:
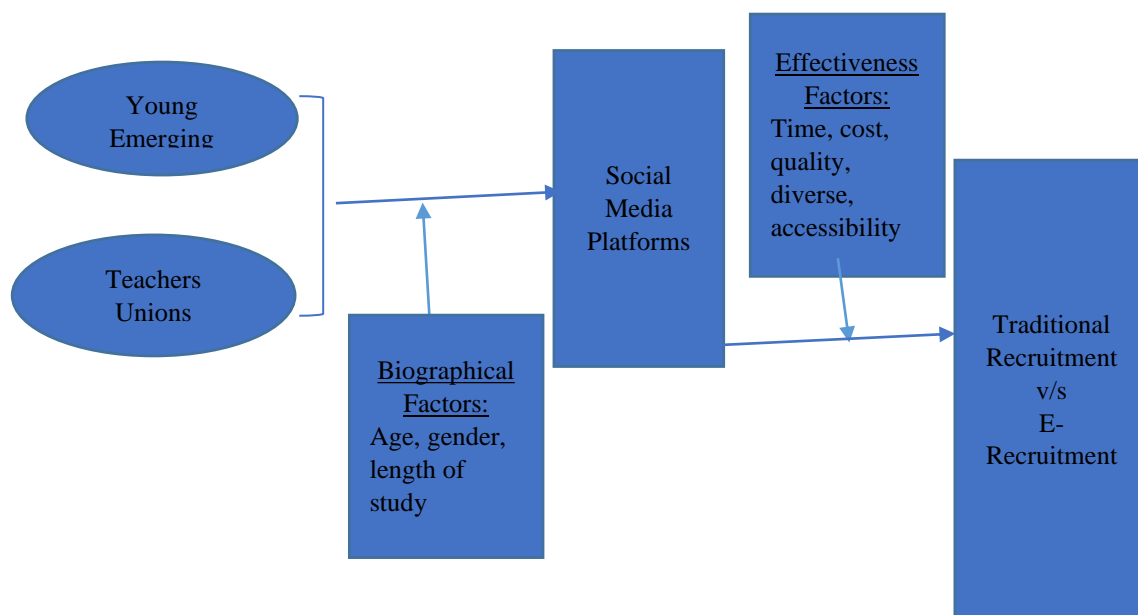

Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Methodology
This section outlined methodology guiding the research. Data collection methods involve conducting one-on-one interviews. For the purpose of exploring participants' lived experiences, qualitative deemed appropriate as alluded by Strauss and Corbin (1990). According to Leedy (1993), the design is a practical frame of reference that articulate occurrences. The design ensures that the relevant data is systematically and consistently collected. For the purpose of exploring participants' perspectives, this research applied phenomenological design as highlighted by Myres (1997).

According to Killam (2013), the investigation needs to be informed by different belief systems known as paradigms, such as positivism, interpretivism, and constructionism. These paradigms are rooted in various philosophical traditions. Guba and Lincoln (1989) define a paradigm as a fundamental belief system that is shaped by assumptions about what is real (ontology), how knowledge is obtained (epistemology), and the methods used for discovery (methodology). Ontology deals with what is considered true or real, while epistemology focuses on how knowledge is gained through systematic procedures (Killam, 2013). This implies that a qualitative-interpretive methodology places importance on individuals' personal interpretation of reality, acknowledging their experiences as legitimate and shaped by society. It enables researchers to understand others' experiences by interacting with or hearing from them. The research is based on the interpretive framework to investigate the possible application of combined digital tactics for mobilising and attracting young, emerging educators and how these tactics can be utilised more productively and systematically.

When assessing the trustworthiness of the study, it's crucial to have a representative sample. According to Merriam (1998), sampling in field research involves choosing a research location, time, individuals, and occurrences. The size of the sample, as noted by Merriam (1998), depends on various factors such as the research questions, data collection, ongoing analysis, and available resources to support the study. In this

study, purposive sampling is employed to gather detailed information from respondents, including students and union organizers (Patton, 1990). Specifically, ten organizers from SADTU and ten students from chosen South African institutions of higher learning.

Glaser & Strauss (1967) and Strauss & Corbin (1998) collected various types of real-world information with the aim of generating dependable findings. The research involved conducting interviews to gather detailed insights from participants such as students and union organizers, as mentioned by Bogdan & Biklen (2007). Bogdan & Biklen (2007) explain that data analysis involves handling data, arranging it, breaking it into smaller parts, merging it, searching for patterns, recognizing important aspects, and deciding what to communicate. The study used grounded thematic data analysis to collect insights and perspectives from students and union organizers, as recommended by Strauss & Corbin (1998). Each study participant provided informed consent to ensure understanding and willingness to participate. Participants were informed of their rights, including consent, information protection, and privacy respect. Participation was voluntary, with no coercion. Researchers guaranteed no risk, embarrassment, and harm against them. The name of informants won't be disclosed to uphold anonymity.

According to Kvale (2007), interviews are fraught with ethical concerns as they delve into personal aspects of individuals' lives that are subsequently made public. Hence, it is imperative to address ethical considerations in a case study investigation, as emphasized by Yin (1994). In alignment with the ethical considerations of this study, informed consent was obtained from each participant to ensure their understanding of the study's objectives and to confirm their willingness to participate. The participants were assured of their rights, including the right to consent, protection from the disclosure of information, and respect for their privacy. Effective communication was established with the participants to ascertain their willingness to partake in the study. It is important to note that all participants willingly volunteered and were not coerced into participating. The researcher took great care to ensure that the participants were not exposed to any risks, embarrassment, undue stress, or demeaning treatment. Anonymity and confidentiality were promised and diligently maintained throughout the study. Additionally, the researcher made certain that the participants' identities remained anonymous.

Discussion

This section discusses the results of the study. Consolidated the results into the following two themes emerged out of the participants' perceptions and experiences, namely (1) Effects of social media as a tool for organising and recruitment; and (2) Traditional methods vs Non-traditional methods (E-Recruitment).

1. Effects of social media as a tool for organising and recruitment
According to this sub-theme, some participants emphasized how mobilization effects from the internet could result in union renewal (Upchurch and Grassman, 2015). Unions' ability to successfully mobilize their membership is largely dependent on how they convey their message (Botan and Frey, 1983). For this reason, we looked at whether the messages distributed via social media adhered to the main principles of mobilization theory (Kelly, 1998). As Hyman (2007) noted, language is crucial when conveying a union's message. Our research indicates that while unions are utilizing contemporary platforms for communication, most of these platforms still feature traditional union content. Moreover, it can be contended that most social media platforms during strike periods serve as proof of mobilization, since unions are using other people's posts to emphasize a stronger sense of action. The union's use of social media platforms thus validates that messages are appropriate for the communication platform needed for worker mobilization (Hyman, 2007).

2. Traditional methods vs Non-traditional methods (E-Recruitment)
First, regarding this sub-theme, our data's responses match the types of communication typologies that unions use to provide information, launch campaigns, establish connections with other unions, and encourage involvement (Foot and Schneider, 2006; Stein, 2009). There were some unexpected outcomes in spite of this. A few of the tweets, for instance, fell into the recruitment category. This surprised me because research suggested that unions could use social media to attract new members and revitalize existing ones (Panagiotopoulos and Barnett, 2014). But this finding aligns with concerns about hiring through social media

platforms and the finding of (Aalto-Matturi, 2005) that people should actively look for information online, so social media platforms might not be the best tool for hiring.

The majority of participants' involvement in campaigning, strike building, and strike action was not surprising, as social media can function as an effective tool for organizing and coordinating protests if it is well-managed, has a high level of interest, and has ample resources (Fuchs, 2014). Unions have obviously seized the chance to use social media platforms to promote evidence of their actions, particularly with regard to strikes, given the unfavorable portrayal of trade union action in traditional media (Manning, 1998). Unions use social media more frequently during strike times in an effort to show that they are in control of member interactions (Fowler and Hagar, 2013). In light of the fact that the union uses social media as an online noticeboard to share information during non-strike periods, much like it did when it first started using websites (Freeman, 2005). This is hardly shocking, given that Fuchs (2014) discovered that information was the primary focus of most social media communications and that the majority of comments on social media are one-way.

Conclusion

We have concluded by presenting one of the first in-depth analyses of union use of social media and discovering that, despite being social media platforms, unions are not achieving maximum turnover. Still, more study is required to pursue this avenue of inquiry. Because the official union account was the only one analysed by our data, we are unable to comment on the function of distributed discourse in the social media age. Examining messages to and from a union's account will undoubtedly require more research in this area. Analysing all posts with particular hashtags posted from any account would be helpful in determining the degree to which hashtags encourage greater levels of engagement with unions. While we examined how losely the union's messages aligned with mobilization theory, further research might examine the possibility of employer counter-mobilizations utilizing the same tech platforms (Upchurch and Grassman, 2015).

Additionally, since we cannot assume that union usage is representative, this research must be expanded to include other unions. For instance, how much do teachers' unions use social media platforms? How much do they use them to interact with young workers? How do teachers' unions use social media platforms differently from how they use other technological platforms (i.e. Facebook, YouTube)? A more thorough investigation into the degree of audience engagement with union posts on social media would be beneficial. As such, we introduce these problems as the starting point for a research program to expand on the conclusions we make in this work. Despite these reservations, we add significantly to our understanding of the social media usage of trade unions and support the work of Panagiotopoulos (2012) and Panagiotopoulos and Barnett (2014).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

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