

Asuu Industrial Actions: Between Asuu and Government Is It an Issue of Rightness?

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Abstract

This study examines the history of prolonged industrial conflicts between the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN). This study provides a historical and sociological account of the origins, development, primary causes and effects of industrial conflict in Nigerian universities. Data was sourced from both primary and secondary (documentary) sources. The study concludes that the ongoing ASUU strike is as a result of FGN's indecision on the issues at stake. There are several domestic issues at stake – low wages and conditions of services, poor funding, poor and dilapidating facilities. These issues should not be glossed at. The study further revealed that macroeconomic policies further contributed to the intensity of these disputes. The findings reveal that poor emoluments of academic staff coupled with deterioration in teaching and learning facilities contributed to the brain drain from Nigerian universities. The paper reveals that disputes between ASUU and FGN has been propelled by several factors – historical, economic and political as such may continue to be difficult to resolve.

Keywords: Industrial action, strike, collective bargaining, brain drain, dispute.

INTRODUCTION

The standard of education in Nigeria in the last two decades is not only retrogressive but is decaying very fast. "Knowledge is power". This is the motto of my secondary school. Education is indeed the key investment of liberating the masses from servitude and enabling them to ascend from "less human to more human conditions". We are born with lots of confusions, which is the reason why we wonder and engage in unending questions of why and how? The answers that we get help us to clear our confusions and "lighten" us and as such we become enlightened. This is what education does to us. According to the Roman Catholic Church, "... the school has a special importance. It is designed not only to develop with special care the intellectual faculties but also to form the ability to judge rightly, to hand on the cultural legacy of previous generations to foster a sense of values, to prepare for professional life"; (Gravissimum Education No. 5). Musa Yar' Adua former President no doubt aware of this fact called on ASUU to a negotiating table to end their strike in 2009. According to the former president, 'since Nigeria youths were idle at home incessant violence were on the increase among the youths'. We can summarize by saying education is imperative for the actualization of man and his being. No nation can progress without education. Nelson Mandela former President of South Africa says, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world".

This is why Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) emerged in 1978 after the collapse of the then National Association of University Teachers (NAUT), to salvage and redress the ever diminishing quality of Nigerian University education. According to Bala Muhammed Makosa (2007) in his article "The History and Struggles of ASUU was at the beginning of the decline in the oil boom, when the country faced the consequences of the failure of its rulers to use the oil wealth to generate production and a social welfare system. Military dictatorship had deeply eroded the basic freedoms in the society. Academic freedom and university autonomy were casualties of this military dictatorship. The funding of education, and so of universities grew poorer".

This situation amongst others had led ASUU to use the weapon they know best to fight the federal government: industrial strike. The questions are, is ASUU succeeding with its strikes with the Federal Government? Is there no alternative means of settling these disagreements with government without resort to strikes? This is very necessary to avoid further rot in the university system and keeping of the Nigeria university students idle for too long. It is a known fact that the beauty of a king is in his regalia. In that sense, the strength of this nation and any other nation for that matter is in its educational standard. No one knows governments justification for refusing to implement an agreement validly entered into by the FGN and ASUU on such flimsy excuse that it was not this government that entered into the agreement. When, in fact, the external debts the previous governments entered into are now been defrayed by this government. This may be was why Plato said in his Republic, "Only philosopher kings should rule"; (Plato, The Republic, 473d). These are going to be men and women with sufficient knowledge and reasoning, who will commit more than 26 percent of Nigeria budget to education as proposed by United Nations and UNESCO, simply because they know its value. The question is how can this philosopher king be made when the institutions that are supposed to groom them are always on strike? The future of every nation depends on the youth of that nation – the leaders of tomorrow.

EVOLUTION OF STRIKES

The earliest accounts of strike actions are in the Bible. The Old Testament to be precise. Of course dates are uncertain as are the results. In Gen. 11:9 workers who were engaged in the construction of the Tower of Babel quit their project after God (Yahweh) decreed that people will have many languages rather than one. The second account of strike is recorded in Exodus 5:7. This was when Pharaoh tells Hebrew brick makers they will not receive more straw from him and must keep producing the same quantity of bricks with straw, they gathered themselves. The Genesis story is of unknown date. The Exodus story is of uncertain date (perhaps around 2040BC at the earliest). The Exodus story was dated by Sydney Webb and Beatrice Webb in *The History of Trade Unionism* (1890).

The first historically account of certain strike actions was towards the end of the 20th dynasty, under Pharaoh Ramses III in ancient Egypt on 14 November 1152BC. The artisans of the Royal Necropolis at Deir el – Medina walked off their jobs because they had not been paid. The event was reported in detail on a *papyrus* at that time, which has been preserved, and is currently located in Turin. The strike is narrated by John Romer in *Ancient Lives: The Study of the Pharaoh's Tombmakers*. The strike so terrified the Egyptian authorities, as such rebellion was virtually unheard of, that they gave in, paid them immediately and raised their wages.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL ACCOUNT OF ASUU STRIKES

ASUU was formed in 1978, a successor to the Nigerian Association of University Teachers formed in 1965 and covering academic staff in the University of Ibadan, University of Nigeria, Nsukka; Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; University of Ife and University of Lagos. ASUU was formed at the beginning of decline in the oil boom, when the country faced the consequences of failure of its rulers to use the oil wealth to generate production and a welfare system. Military dictatorship had deeply eroded the basic freedoms in the society, academic freedom and university autonomy were casualties of this military dictatorship. The funding of education, and so of universities grew poorer. As a result, ASUU's orientation became radical, more concerned with broad national issues, and stood firmly against the oppressive, undemocratic policies of the governments of the country.

The assault on academic freedom was the subject of resistance by ASUU. In 1980, ASUU declared a trade dispute and made autonomy an issue. In 1980 – 1981, ASUU had a struggle with the Shagari government. Its concern were funding, salaries, autonomy and academic freedom, the brain drain, as well as the survival of the university system. See table II on page 12 showing annual budgetary allocation to education for some African countries.

During the military period, ASUU had problems with the government over; the survival of the university system – This composed of the conditions of service (salary and non salary), funding and university autonomy/academic freedom; the defense of the right to education; broad national issues such as anti-military struggles, the struggle against military rule, the struggle against privatization, against the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and the World Bank's attempt to take over universities. For example, the World Bank's 120 million loan under Babangida's military government and the Nigerian Universities Innovation Project (NUSIP). During Obasanjo's regime, the struggle was against the re-colonization of Nigeria and debt peonage. On the basis of the above, ASUU organized a national conference in 1984. The conference was on the state of the Economy. ASUU diagnosed the ills of the Nigerian economy and proffered solutions. What emerged out of the conference was "How to Save Nigeria". ASUU rejected privatization and offered solutions on economic development and planning, industrialization, agriculture, debt servicing, taxation, labour and so on. ASUU had problems in 1985 with the Buhari – Idiagbon regime when the regime clamp-down on the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) and the National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD) because of ASUU's support, the government then sacked doctors, arrested and detained NMA and NARD leaders as well as ASUU leaders.

Still in 1985, ASUU had problems with Buhari – Idiagbon regime over a number of issues: termination of the cafeteria system and the withdrawal of subsidies on accommodation in universities; the regime's authoritarian Decree 16 of 1985, which transferred to the National Universities Commission the power of the University Senate to determine, regulate and monitor academic programs. It took accreditation of academic programs away from the professionals and transferred it to the NUC. It therefore established what is called uniform standard and called them "minimum" standards.

In 1986, following the opposition of the Babangida regime by the NLC and NANS for imposing Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and the harsh conditionalities of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan in which during the protest some ABU students were murdered by Mobile Police code named "Kill and go", ASUU could not but join in the opposition. This was especially so because of the introduction of harsh measures which caused crises in the economy, education, health and all aspects of life. ASUU opposition to SAP made it a target for destruction by the Babangida regime. However, the union took a principled position. The Abisoye Panel set up by the regime to look into the issues recommended the "flushing out" of some lecturers in ABU who were "teaching what they were not supposed to teach". Mustapha Akanbi Panel was set up to among other things, to determine the role of teachers in promoting the crisis. The Akanbi Panel's report never saw the light of day.

Obviously, the military government did not get what it wanted. Therefore in 1988, the Babangida government disaffiliated ASUU from the NLC and, to weaken ASUU, and made check off voluntary.

The Obasanjo government of (1999 – 2007) had a different plan which was to many people very subtle. It had a plan, with the World Bank, to cancel central bargaining in the universities. The aim was to repudiate the June 30, 2001 Agreement. Cancelling of collective bargaining, the introduction of fees, the \$68 million loan, retrenchment, and others which were aimed at by a World Bank project called NUSIP. NUSIP was a re-introduction of the old \$120 million loan from World Bank for which Babandiga’s government seriously fought ASUU by terminating the appointment of the President of ASUU illegally.

In 2007, ASUU went on strike for three months. In May 2008, ASUU held two one-week warning strikes to press for a range of demands including improved salary scheme and reinstatement of the 49 lecturers who were dismissed in University of Ilorin. In June 2009, ASUU ordered its members in federal and state universities nationwide to proceed on an indefinite strike over agreements it reached with the union about two and a half years earlier. After about three months of strike, ASUU and other staff unions signed a memorandum with the government in October 2009. ASUU is again on strike right now because the Federal Government breached that 2009 agreements. This strike began on 1st of July, 2013.

ASUU strikes would be misunderstood if seen, only, from the point of view of salary increase by university lecturers. No, this current strike is far from this. It is about the restoration of proper universities in Nigeria. ASUU believes that the Nigerian government should undertake to provide effective and efficient governance that is synonymous to measurable improvement in the quality of life of the people; increased life expectancy. The FGN should undertake to run proper universities and create enforceable code of conducts for university teachers. Of course, ASUU has the welfare of the generality of Nigerian’s in all of her negotiations with government.

Causes of ASUU Strikes

Strikes are usually undertaken by labour unions when talks have broken down during collective bargaining. The object of collective bargaining is to secure an agreement between the union and the government or company management as the case may be. Clauses which may include a non-strike clause which prevents strikes, or penalize the union or the workers if they walk out while the agreement is in force may be inserted in the agreement. Characteristically, strike is reserved as a threat of last resort during negotiations between the government and ASUU which may occur just before, or immediately after the agreement/contract expires.

Generally strikes are rare but ASUU strikes in Nigeria cannot be said to be rare as no year has passed by since 1999 when there was no day of strike as shown below. Infact to have a normal academic calendar in Nigeria Public University is abnormal.

Table 1:

YEAR	PERIOD OF STRIKE
1999	5 months strike
2001	3 months strike
2002	2 weeks strike
2003/2004	6 months strike
2005	3 days strike
2006	3 days strike
2007	3 months strike
2008	1 week strike
2009	4 months strike
2010	Over 5 months strike
2011/2012	3 months strike
2013	Already more than 4 months strike

Source: www.statisense.infoASUUStrike

From the above analysis between 1999 and 2013 ASUU strike cumulatively in the university system is over 2 years. As mentioned earlier, there are multiple causes of ASUU industrial actions in Nigeria ranging from breakdown in collective bargaining, or failure to implement agreements or refusal to recognize the union among other factors.

ASUU in December 1980 protested over the non-reinstatement of the six senior academic staff of the University of Lagos sacked by President Shehu Shagari’s Justice Belonmu’s Visitation Panel Report. ASUU also opposed the SAP and its harsh conditionalities of the IMF loan introduced by Babangida’s regime. ASUU is currently on strike because of failed implementation of agreements between the Federal Government and ASUU. The situation however, seems to have degenerated from bad to worse since the inception of civilian administration starting with Chief Olusegun Obasanjo till date.

WHY IS ASUU ON STRIKE IN 2013?

ASUU President in a chat with Channels Television Sunrise Daily said the union embarked on this current strike

because the federal government has only implemented two of the nine issues agreed on in 2009. According to him, government did nothing about the agreement until the union went on strike in 2012. The nine issues agreed for implementation are:

1. Funding required for revitalization of the Nigerian university.
2. Federal government assistance to state universities
3. Establishment of NUPEMCO
4. Programme increase in Annual Budgetary Allocation to Education to 20% between 2000 and 2020.
5. Earned Allowances
6. Amendment to the Pension/Age of Academics on the Professorial cadre from 65 to 70 years.
7. Reinstatement of prematurely dissolved councils.
8. Transfer of federal government landed property to universities.
9. Setting up of Research Development Council and Provision of Research Equipment to laboratories and classrooms in our universities.

According to ASUU, of all the points, only two have been implemented so far. These are:

1. Amendment to the Pension/Age of Academics on the Professorial cadre from 65 to 70 years.
2. Reinstatement of prematurely dissolved councils.

The issue that mostly has to do with adequate funding for the system for revitalizing of Nigerian Universities have not been met by government. While government is aware of the enormity of the problems in our citadel of learning, it is very unprepared to take bold steps at rectifying the suffocating challenges. So, largely, the crisis affecting the Nigerian education sector is the systemic failure of government over the years to redress the problems which have stymied the development of the education sector.

In 2009, ASUU reached an agreement with the government about how to rehabilitate and revitalize universities. That agreement was a product of three years negotiation between ASUU and government from 2006 to 2009. Government agreed that it would fund universities and bring them to a level that our universities can begin to produce graduates that will be recognized worldwide and can also be classified and rated among the best in the world. Right now no Nigeria University rates among the first 1,000 in the world because of the issue of lack of facilities. Between 2009 and 2012, ASUU waited for the Federal Government to implement the agreement. Rather government started to blackmail ASUU that they were looking for money and so government implemented part of the salary component, government did not implement the agreement on funding. So, in 2011, precisely in December, ASUU went on strike to force government to implement the funding part of the agreement. The government immediately apprehended the strike in January 2012 and invited ASUU leadership for a meeting. On 24th January, 2012 a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed with the government under the title "*Meeting of the Secretary of the Government of the Federation with the Academic Staff Union of Universities*". The most important of the items that is, "funding requirements for Universities" is not touched. This is what the Federal Government said it would do: Government reaffirms its commitment to the revitalization of Nigerian Universities through budgetary and non-budgetary sources of funds; government will immediately stimulate the process with the sum of N100 billion and will beef it up to a yearly sum of N400 billion in the next three years. It is a fact that up to this moment no kobo, not even an iota of intervention has taken place in Universities. Yet government itself conducted studies that showed the precarious and pitiable situation of the universities in the country.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND NIGERIA EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

No nation can progress without education. Education according to Nelson Mandela, is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.

In the Guardian Newspaper of Saturday, August 29, 2009, Levi Obijiofor in his article "ASUU: Same Old Story", "The Guardian pointed out meticulously how federal funding for university education has plummeted from 11.12 percent in 1999 to abysmal figure of 4.54 percent in 2004, in 2000. According to the Guardian, budgetary allocation to university education was at 8.76 percent down from 11.12 percent in just one year. 7.0 percent in 2001; 6.1 percent in 2002, 4.75 percent in 2003; 4.54 percent in 2004; 10.6 percent in 2009; 6.4 percent in 2010; 6.2 percent in 2011, 8.43 percent in 2012 and 8.7 percent in 2013.

This low level of funding needs to be significantly increased; at least, beginning with the 2014 budget; a model target of 16.0 percent, that is, double the average for 2009 – 2013, but still far below the prescribed UNESCO's 26% will be a departure from the norm. It is saddening that on the average, Nigeria spends less than 9.0 percent of its annual budget on education. When compared with other African countries we cease to be the giant of Africa as the "gi" is removed from giant and this country becomes an "ant" educationally.

A report by the World Bank (2012) on the annual budgetary allocation for twenty countries worldwide shows that Nigeria is at the last position with percentage allocation to the education sector at 8.4%. Whereas a country like Ghana occupied first position with allocation to the education sector of 31.0% and South Africa and Kenya 5th and 8th position with percentage allocation to education sector at 25.8% and 23.0% respectively.

Table II: Budgetary Allocation of Some Selected Countries

S/No	Country	% Budget Allocation to Education	Position
1	Ghana	31.0	1st
2	Cote d' Ivore	30.0	2nd
3	Uganda	27.0	3rd
4	Morocco	26.4	4th
5	South Africa	25.8	5th
6	Swaziland	24.6	6th
7	Mexico	24.3	7th
8	Kenya	23.0	8th
9	United Arab Emirate	22.5	9th
10	Botswana	19.0	10th
11	Iran	17.7	11th
12	USA	17.1	12th
13	Tunisia	17.0	13th
14	Lesotho	17.0	14th
15	Burkina Faso	16.8	15th
16	Norway	16.2	16th
17	Colombia	15.6	17th
18	Nicaragua	15.0	18th
19	India	12.7	19th
20	Nigeria	8.4	20th(Last)

Source: World Bank (2012)

A critical look at the education sector shows that the total federal allocation to education has been on the decline from 11.12 percent in 1999 to 7.0 percent in 2001. This means that the share of both the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and total government spending have fallen over time. The allocation of a declining fraction of the GDP to education invariably poses a serious danger to the country's long-term growth and developing prospects.

Since the late 1970s when the tuition and feeding fees were introduced and government got enmeshed in crippling effects of International Monetary Fund/World Bank loans; the lots of education have actually gone from bad to worse.

In response to the problem of this chronic underfunding in Nigeria public universities, the public universities had adopted an array of cost-sharing measures to survive. In some universities, the take off grants were never paid talk less of subventions, and allocations. Multiple fees such as tuition fees, acceptance fees, registration and certification, caution, sports, identity cards, late registrations, examination, laboratory, transcript and medical examination centre registration fees, had to be imposed on students. These fees vary in amount from one institution to the other. The reason for these charges is a clear demonstration of government's inability to adequately fund all tiers of education. This is making education the exclusive preserve of the children of the rich and the privileged. No wonder the children of these rich people school outside the shores of Nigeria draining the limited foreign reserve.

The condition for teaching and learning in many schools is horrible, grossly unacceptable. This is the reason why Nigeria universities has never attained any remarkable position in world global ranking. Although there are contributions from the private sector to education in Nigeria, these are limited to endowment of prizes and professorial chairs and donations during graduation ceremonies, many of which are never redeemed. For some universities to make ends meet, they result to awarding degrees to questionable people.

The ratio of teaching staff to students in many universities if 1:100. National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) teaching staff to students is 1:363, University of Abuja (UNIABUJA) teaching staff to students is 1:122; Lagos State University (LASU) teaching staff to students is 1:144. In contrast, in Harvard University, teaching staff ratio to students is 1:4; Massachusetts Institute of Technology is 1:9; and Cambridge University is 1:3.

In Nigeria, some engineering workshops operate under zinc sheds and trees. Many science-based faculties are running what is referred to as "Dry Labs", due to lack of reagents and tools to conduct real experiments.

According to ASUU Strike Presentation Transcript there are a total of 1,252,913 students in the public universities. Of these 5% are running sub-degree programmes, 85 percent undergraduates, 3.0 percent postgraduate; 5.0 percent Masters and 2.0 percent Ph.D. As against the National Policy on Education that stipulates 60:40 enrolment in favour of science based programmes, of this, 66.1 percent of them are studying Arts, Social Sciences and Management and Education courses. Only 16 percent of students are studying science and science-education course; 6.3 percent Engineering; 5 percent Medicine, while 6.6 percent are studying agriculture, Pharmacy and Law.

THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

In a bold attempt to square up the rots in our university system, the government set up what is called the NEEDS ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE. This Committee went round all the universities and what it found was shocking. It found that the students-teachers ration was 1-400 on the average instead of being 1 – 40. It found out that the classrooms were grossly inadequate and could accommodate only about 30 percent of the number of students that needed to enter those classrooms; they went round and found students standing in their lecture theatres with other students writing on their backs; they found lectures going on under trees in some of the universities; they went to laboratories where they found people using kerosene stoves instead of bushing burners to conduct experiments; they found specimens being kept in pure water bottles instead of the appropriate places where such specimen should be kept. They found chemistry laboratories without water, they found people doing examinations called theory of practical and not the practical and you will imagine what the practical ought to be. Facts emanating from President Jonathan's Committee on Needs Assessment of Nigerian Public Universities also show that there are 37,504 academic in the country's public universities. Out of these, 23,030 or 61 per cent are in federal universities while, 14,474 or 38.6 percent teach in state owned universities. Total male academic are 31,128 or 83 percent. Only about 16,127 (43%) of Nigerian universities teaching staffs have doctorate degree, instead of 75 percent. Only about 16,502 or 44.0 percent are within the bracket of senior lecturer and professors. Only 7 universities that is, IMSU, UNICAL, OSUST, NOUN, UNIPOINT, UNILORIN and UNIUYO have up to 60% of their teaching staffs with Ph.D qualification. Kano State University which is 11 years old, has one professor and 250 lecturers with Ph.D, Kebbi State University has two professors and five lecturers with Ph.D. 74 percent of lecturers in the Plateau State University (BOKKO) are visiting.

When this report was eventually presented to President Goodluck Jonathan at the Federal Executive Council, we understand the President said that he was embarrassed and did not know that things were all that bad.

As at now no intervention has taken place and the academics are tired. Government keeps promising on weekly, monthly basis what they want to do. Nothing has happened or do we say nothing is happening apart from empty promises.

Students who apply for Post Graduate Programmes – Master's Degrees, Ph.Ds or other Post Graduate programmes outside this country are turned down because they say their degrees are suspect. Multinational company's like Shell spend millions of dollars in the retraining of graduates who made first class before they join them as staff.

The facilities in our Universities are bad and outdated. We still use chalk boards even now that people are using multi-mediate facilities, mark boards where you can download information. No country develops without a sound educational system and the foundation is not the primary school. The foundation is at the university level, because it is the university that trains other levels.

SOME UNDERPINNING PROBLEMS IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

Ladipo Ademolekun in his Distinguished Lecture 2012/2013 (2nd in the series) of Joseph Ayo Babalola University (JABU) spoke extensively on the problems in the education sector in Nigeria. In his lecture, he said one major crisis in the education sector is the over-centralization. According to him, its origin is unarguably the intervention of the military in the governance of the country. That the military almost ruled for three decades in this country which was extended by a former military ruler and strong believer in centralization; who as the first civilian president from 1999 to 2007, has resulted in the entrenchment of over-centralization in a constitutional federal system.

In defiance of the provision in the 1999 Constitution that assigns responsibilities for primary education to state and local government, the federal government under president Obasanjo who served between 1999 and 2007 invented a role for the federal government in primary education. He called it the University Basic Education (UBE). The role of the federal government in primary education is limited to prescribing minimum standards as provided for in the constitution Second Schedule, Exclusive Legislative List, 60(e). Sadly this is still the position.

At the secondary school level, the military established unitary secondary schools which is the role of the sub-national level government. This again is contrary to the provision in the 1963 constitution the military suspended. Only higher education was on the Concurrent Legislative List.

The military over centralization was extended to tertiary education level through the regulatory agency for the universities, that is, the National Universities Commission (NUC). From the initial role of a buffer between the universities and government, the NUC under military role was transformed into an over powerful and control – oriented government parastatals with very extensive powers that were more consistent with the centralism and uniformity of military culture than with the autonomous mind-set of academic culture.

The operation of centralized labour unions for teachers at all levels that made sense under centralized unitary military rule has been maintained under civilian rule when in fact the hierarchical federal – state relationship no

longer exists, at least, according to the 1999 constitution. Thus, both the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) negotiate salaries and other conditions of service at the federal level and the agreement become binding on state government that did not participate in the negotiations. Persistent strikes that are linked to the challenge of implementing agreements reached at such negotiations continue to undermine teaching and learning in educational institutions, especially the universities.

Below is a catalogue of selected “facts” and “information” on the decline and decay in the country’s education sector as itemized by Ladipo Adamolekun during the JABU lecture.

A. Basic Education: Low enrolment and low quality teachers

10.5 million Nigerian children of school-going age are not attending school – highest in the world. Source: Education For All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report 2012 (Introduction of EFA goal of one-year Early Childhood Care and Education – three years in Sweden – is unlikely to happen soon).

According to the World Economic Forum’s Global Competitiveness Report Index, 2011 – 2012 Nigeria was ranked 140th out of 144 countries in primary education enrolment.

“National Planning Minister, Shamsuden Usman, said two years ago ... that Northern Nigeria harboured the highest number of school-age children in the world that were out of school”. Source: Punch, October 16, 2012.

Enrolment of children into schools is as low as 12.0% in some states. Source: Leadership (Abuja), 11/09/2012.

6 million of 36 million girls out of school world-wide are Nigerians.

Nigeria is one of the few countries in the world that has had to launch a boy-child education campaign – launched by the Federal government in the South-east in June 2012.

In 2008, Kwara State tested 19,125 teachers in Primary Four Mathematics... Only seven teachers attained the minimum benchmark for the test in Mathematics. Only one of 2,628 teachers with degree passed the test; 10 graduates scored zero. The literacy assessment recorded only 1.2 per cent pass. Source: The Nation, August 30th 2012.

B. Secondary Education: Students’ Poor Performance Records.

The following are the percentages of students who obtained five credits, including English and Mathematics in the May/June WAEC over the last five years: 23% (2008), 26% (2009), 24% (2010), 31% in 2011 and 39% in 2012.

Regarding NECO, failure rates was 98% in 2008, 88% in 2009, 89% in 2010, 92% in 2011, and 68 in 2012.

Percentage of students who scored 200 and above (out of 400 total) in JAMB in the last four years ranged between 36% (2010) and 46% (2009) – overall average of 42%. In 2012, only 3 of 1,503,93 candidates score above 300 and only 5% scored 250 and above.

“The Single biggest problem (in Nigerian universities) is the abysmal quality of the intake; the vast majority of my students barely know their grammar, never mind the poor quality of their knowledge”. Source: Mohammed Haruna, in reference to his part-time teaching experience in a first-generation university (teaching Journalism), The Nation, November 28th 2012.

According to the World Economic Forum’s Global Competitiveness Report Index, 2011 – 2012 Nigeria was ranked 120th out of 144 in secondary school education enrolment.

C. University: Some Specifics on Decline

“The most ridiculous indication of the rot in our universities was the recent reported dismissal of three graduates of the Enugu State University of Science and Technology from the National Youth Service Corp scheme for falling below the standard expected of graduates”. (The university is reported to have declared “an academic emergency”. Source: Punch, Editorial, December 14th 2012.

“... Nigeria’s university system is in crisis of manpower. Instead of having no less than 80% of the academics with Ph.Ds, only 43% are Ph.D holders while the remaining 57% are not. And instead of 75% of the academics to be between Senior Lecturers and Professors, only about 44% are within the bracket while the remaining 56% are not. The staff mix in some universities is alarming ... Kano State University, Wudil (established in 2001) has only one professor and 25 Ph.Ds”. Source: Committee on Needs Assessment of Nigerian Public Universities. Main report (2012).

Almost All the universities are over-staffed with non-teaching staff: in many universities, the number of non-teaching staff doubles, triples or quadruples that of teaching staff, and in some the number of senior administrative staff alone is more than the total number of teaching staff. Source: Committee on Needs Assessment of Nigerian Public Universities.

“There is an average of 4 abandoned projects per university in Nigeria” – with negative consequences of classrooms, laboratories, students’ hostels, and staff accommodation. Poor infrastructure adversely affects teaching, research, learning and students’ health and safety. Source Committee on Needs Assessment of Nigerian Public Universities.

Minister decries lack of Nigerian academic journals (that are cited) abroad. Source: The Nation, September 6th 2012.

There are 75,000 Nigerian students in Ghana who pay not less than N160 billion as tuition alone annually,

compared with the annual budget of N121 billion for the entire federal universities in Nigeria. Source: The Sun, September 20th 2012.

In 2010, Nigerian students spent about N246 billion in tertiary institutions in UK, more than 60% of education sector budget in Nigeria for 2012. Source: Vanguard, June 7th 2012.

In addition to the above sector specified illustrations, broad-gauged evidence of huge decline in all aspect of quality education measures of an African comparative basis is provided in table III below. It is based on the 2012 Mo Ibrahim Good Governance Index, Education Sub-Category of the Human Development Category. (The three other categories of the index are: Safety and Rule of Law; Participation and Human Rights; and Sustainable Economic Opportunity). The six indicators used to calculate the scores recorded in the Table are: education provision and quality, ration of pupils to teachers in primary school, primary school completion, progression from primary to secondary education, tertiary education, and literacy. According to the evidence, education performance in Nigeria declined significantly between 2006 and 2011: score declined from 51% to 47.6% and Nigeria's rank declined from 21st to 30th. It is striking that there was improvement across the continent; from an average of 49.4% score in 2006 to 53.8% in 2011, an increase of 4.4% contrasted with Nigeria's decrease of 3.4%.

Table III: Nigeria's Score and Rank in Education Sub-Category. Mo Ibrahim Good Governance Index, 2006 – 2011.

Year	Nigeria's Score (%)	Africa's Score (%)	Average Nigeria's Rank
2006	51.0	49.4	21st
2007	48.8	50.9	24th
2008	48.2	50.8	25th
2009	48.4	51.8	25th
2010	49.0	53.6	28th
2011	47.6	53.8	30th
Change 2006 – 2011	-3.4	+4.4	-9

Source: Mo Ibrahim Good Governance Index, 2006 – 2011.

Note:

Nigeria's poor performance in the Education sector is typical of the country's performance in respect of all four categories of the Mo Ibrahim Index in 2012: Nigeria dropped into the bottom 10 countries in the overall rankings for the first time: 14th of the 16 countries in West Africa and 43rd out of the 52 countries in the Report – Nigeria was 41st in 2011 and 37th in 2006.

ASUU AND NIGERIA EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Statics from the National Universities Commission (2002) reveal that since 1992, ASUU have embarked on strikes for over 23 times to drive home its demand. 2013 – 1992 = 21 years. ASUU approximately marks every year with a strike.

In 1980, ASUU embarked on an initial industrial action arising from the need to resist the termination of the appointment of six lecturers from university of Lagos, as a result of the report of Justice Belonwu's visitation panel report linked to university action and academic freedom. Subsequently in 1980 and 1981, ASUU embarked on further strikes to demand for funding for the universities, the reversal of the problem of brain drain, poor salaries and conditions of service, including the improvement of the entire university system. In 1983, there was negotiation on the Elongated University Salary Structure (EUSS) and this became an issue of dispute in 1988 because of the lack of implementation of this prior agreement. In 1984, ASUU went on strike to oppose deregulation of the economy and to resist the military regime and its authoritarian decree 16 of 1985 for allowing the National Universities Commission to take over the responsibilities of the senate and allowing the external authorities to regulate programmes in Nigerian universities. In 1986, ASUU went on strike to protest the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) by Ibrahim Babangida's administration. At the same time, the union opposed the killing of some students in Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria by mobile police. In 1987, ASUU went on strike to demand the implementation of Elongated University Salary Scale and to establish a joint negotiation committee between ASUU and the federal government. In 1988 ASUU went on strike against the effects on the recently imposed Structural Adjustment Programme. In 1990, ASUU was de-proscribed. In May and July, 1992, ASUU went on strike due to the failure of negotiation between the Union and the Federal Government over the working conditions in Nigerian universities. In 1993, ASUU was banned again because it refused the order of Industrial Arbitration Panel (IAP) to suspend industrial action and return to negotiation table. In 1994, ASUU embarked again on strike to demand renegotiation of agreement reached in 1992, the reinstatement of over 80 lecturers whose appointments were terminated by Prof. Isa Mohammed, the vice chancellor of the university of Abuja and to resist the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election, widely perceived to have been won by M.K.O Abiola. In 1996, ASUU embarked on a strike due to the dismissal

of the ASUU President Dr. Assisi Asobie in 1999 and 2000. It was salary issue and the issue of government support for the sector. In 2001, ASUU demanded industrial action on issues related to funding of universities including the reinstatement of 49 sacked lecturers at the University of Ilorin for taking part in previous industrial action in 2001. In 2002 because the government of Obasanjo refused to implement the 2001 agreement. In 2003, ASUU embarked on further industrial action due to the non-implementation of previous agreements, poor university funding and disparity in salary, retirement age and non-implementation. Agreement with the federal government was due for re-negotiation in 2004 but by 2005, ASUU's cry out led to a strike action. In 2007, ASUU went on another strike for 3 months. In May, 2008 ASUU had a two one – week “warning strikes” to press on a range of demands. In 2009, ASUU embarked on an indefinite strike over disagreement with the FG on an earlier agreement reached. After three months strike, in October 2009, an MOU was signed and the strike was called off. ASUU has now directed its members to go on strike after 18 months it suspended its industrial action over the non-implementation of some aspects of the 2009 agreement on 1st of July, 2013. Today is 77 days the strike started, no one knows when it will be called off.

The salary of lecturers is not anything to write home when compared with other sectors of the Nigerian economy. Table IV on P. 25 is a clear illustration. On Table V, you are just to imagine the disparity between a lecturer's salary in Nigeria in comparison with five other African countries. What do you think?

TABLE IV: Annual salary of Nigerian Academic versus other Civil Servants as at 2009.

PUBLIC OFFICERS	ANNUAL SALARIES (₦)
Senators	36,677,840.00
Federal House Members	35,932,346.30
Federal High Court Judges	26,875,840.00
Permanent Secretary/Executive Secretary	
Chief Executive of Parastatals	
Vice Chancellor	22,051,154.30
Local Government Chairmen	13,865,895.30
Local Government Sup. Councilor	12,746,875.00
Professor	3,859,078.60

Source: Adopted from ASUU's website; www.asuu.com

Cited in Odiagbe, S.A (2012)

TABLE V: Academic staff salaries in some African countries

	LECTURER (\$)	SENIOR LECTURER (\$)	PROFESSOR (\$)
South Africa	15,000	30,000	55,000
Zimbabwe	12,000	24,000	48,000
Ethiopia	3,600	4,800	6,000
Kenya	3,600	4,500	5,400
Ghana	1,800	3,000	4,800
Nigeria	222	360	439.2

Source: ASUU National Secretariat Publication, 1997

Cited in Oni, B. (2008)

At independence in October 1960, the salary of the Prime Minister or the Federal Minister of the federation of Nigeria was only Eight Hundred Pounds (£800) more than that of the principal (that is the future Vice Chancellor) of the University College, Ibadan. The principal certainly earned more than the Nigerian Army commander and general. The Prime Minister's personal emolument was put at £4,500, while the principal of University College Ibadan was paid £3,750 and the Army Major General and Commissioner £3,580 (Ifeyanyi Onyeononi).

There is no doubt that the value for education has diminished over the year since the era of the military and now politics, and the value for money and power has been on the ascendancy. Infact worship of money that accompanied the military's anti-interlectualism appears to have replaced love for education. Paradoxically, a former military ruler, Ibrahim Babangida, whose tenure was characterized by notable anti-intellectual measures, recently summed up the prevailing value (less) order as follows: “knowledge has not value while money and power has more value” (The Nation, November 25th, 2012). According to Ladipo Adamolekun even those who commit resources to education today appear to be spurred on by love for money, that is, the ever-increasing number of for-profit educational institutions from kindergarten, through primary to secondary and tertiary education. Those whose duty it is to distinguish between the not for profit and for profit institutions are busy compromising their stand and are guilty of cheating, another form of corruption.

By 1966, the university professor was paid £3000. This was higher than the £2,700 paid a federal permanent secretary. A federal cabinet minister took between £2,700 - £3,000. A federal top civil servant of the rank of

permanent secretary received between £2,500-£2,940. An Assistant Lecturer (often first class or second class upper division) was offered £950, while his counterparts who went into federal civil service received £720. (Ifeanyi Onyeononi).

EFFECT OF ASSU STRIKE ON THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

It is obvious that ASUU is on strike because all other avenues of dialoguing and convincing the federal government to give effect to the 2009 agreement are blocked. So ASUU strike's as a way of reminding government to do what is right for the education sector. The socio-economic costs of these strike actions in the system are not quantifiable. There are very many negative effects of these strike actions on the Educational Sector and the Nation. There is the depressing effect on the quality of graduates from Nigerian universities since less time will now be required for students to graduate. As time is a resource that cannot be recouped when lost. Final year students who should have graduated this year may not be able to meet up. Law students and medical students who are supposed to go to law school or go for housemanship will not be able to meet up, the ripple effect is that there is a "standstill" for the children of this nation. The second effect is that the frequent dislocation and disability of our universities gives a very poor public image to our public universities. The third effect is loss of revenue as students will no more pay their fees and other charges during this period and any university depending on collection of fees from students to grease the system will not be able to overhaul the system anymore. Besides many students will find their way to neighbouring African countries like Ghana, Cameroun, Benin and Togo to mention a few, this means millions of scarce foreign exchange will be lost in the process. Fourth, there is financial loss to the universities and the nation because staff will eventually be paid for time not utilized for teaching. The fifth effect is psychological on the part of students and staff who have to stay idle at home. The sixth and most dangerous of all the effects is students will be engaged in anti-social vices, an idle brain then becomes the workshop of the devil. The seventh is the unnecessary induced journeys as students have been known to die either as students are going home during the strike or when returning after strike. The lot that has come to ASUU going through the history of ASUU strikes in this country has come through the "dividend of ASUU strike" it appears that unless there is a strike the authorities don't blink towards ASUU.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Education is not just a commodity for sale. It is a social good. It is the social responsibility of any government to its people. It is the engine of growth, development and transformation of any society. Higher education restores to mankind its humanity. The university is the brain box of the nation. To shut it down is to a nation the equivalent of a stroke to a person. There is a nervous breakdown.

The leadership of the country must be sure of the type of education they want to bequeath to the country. Government should stop under funding public universities. Ghana had a problem with the universities, but their leaders, had a clear head as to what they wanted. Universities in Ghana were closed for between two to three years. They rehabilitated all the facilities and brought the students and the lecturers back. Today according to Nigerian CBN Governor, Mallam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, Nigeria spends about ₦62 billion paying schools for 75,000 Nigerian students in Ghanaian universities.

"Reason abandons a nation in which everyone is right on a disputed issue. Chaos rules a nation in which everyone is aggrieved. The chief enemy of a great future is a self-indulgent present. The state is a moderator and modulator of conflicting social interests, so as to optimize the security of all" (Author Unknown).

According to an Italian theoretical physicist (Eunice Fermi, 1901 – 1954), "it is no good to try to stop knowledge from going forward. Ignorance is never better than knowledge". ASUU's slogan is "if you think education is costly, try ignorance".

The government through the ministries of education, labour and productivity and their parastatals such as the NUC should always be alive to their responsibilities in ensuring that agreements are properly harmonized and implemented. They should also ensure that conditions subsequent are not over looked. ASUU and the ministries and other arms of government be it the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary should not allow the Nigeria project to fail. There should be an Education Think Tank who would always look at issues before it boils over. Membership of this body should be made up of people from all relevant ministries, Nigeria Labour Congress and ASUU. Government should not shy away from its responsibilities. The government should dust all previous agreements with ASUU and ensure that they are carried out to the letter. Where there are encumbrances the issues should be made public.

In line with UNESCO's declaration, government should progressively increase education budget annually to 26 percent. ASUU strikes in this 21st century should not be indefinite anymore. One day to one week is alright so that we will not throw away the baby and the bath water and make the university system go comatose. Recurring strikes in the university does the university system no good. What the public universities need now is a complete rescue.

The FGN should declare a state of emergency in the educational sector, particularly the tertiary education sub-

sector in order to address the rot in the system. When financial crises broke out in 2007 and banks were in trouble, government brought out N3 trillion to bail out the Banks. First government gave the banks N239 billion, another 620 billion and another N1.725 trillion. It was even so when the aviation industry was in distress. Government gave N500 billion and the same government even gave billions of Naira to the Nigeria Nollywood Industry.

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