MINIMIZING CONSISTENT ACADEMIC STAFF UNION OF UNIVERSITIES (ASUU) STRIKE IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATION ON ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMME

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Abstract

The study is on minimizing consistent (ASUU)strike in Nigeria. Implication on Adult Education Programme. ASUU strike is no longer news in Nigeria and a sort of bi-annual occurrence considering the frequency in a decade. The history of ASUU strike actions in Nigeria was identified, including the causes which include poor welfare packages, harsh government policies, hijacking of administrative roles of university system, corruption,platform of payment, autonomy, among others. The consequences and implication on adult educationprogramme included brain drain, prolonged graduation of students, dilapidation of university infrastructure, delayed implementation of Adult education programme and objectives in line with international standards. The paper recommended sustainable financial autonomy for university system, administrative autonomy except salary and recruitment.consistent dialogue with the union before implementing unpopular policies and resolving previous agreement. In conclusion, the paper is of the position that good governance and leadership is the panacea to adjust the lapses in policy implementation that will bring about minimal strikes in the university system.

Key words: **Strike, ASUU, Implication, Adult, Education**

Introduction

Strike is conceived as a partial, total refusal to work or retarding or obstructing work by employees employed by some employer or different employers for the purpose of settling a grievance or dispute of mutual interest (Hassan, 2022). On the other hand, it can also be described as complete withdrawal from work by employees until their demands are met by the employers.

On the other hand, strike can be in reverse; a lockout where the employer closes workplace, temporarily suspends operations or terminate the employment of a group of people who were previously employed. Strike is observed when a group of workers agree to stop work to protest against unfair treatment or injustice concerning their welfare or affecting a member. It is usually used as a last alternative to compel the employer to grant the workers demand (Eyitope, 2022)

In Nigeria, instead of achieving the purpose it had always led to sacking of workers, no work, no pay policies and victimization of employees and non challant attitude and non compliance of government in effecting agreements reached to prevent strikes thereby undermining the purpose of embarking on strike by employees.

There are different reasons why workers embark on strike in Nigeria. It is usually adopted as a last resort after all agreements fail. It is mostly caused by unfair government, socio-economic policies, poor welfare, salary and incentive problems, increment not up to standard mark, wrongful discharge or dismissal of staff, high tax deductions, withdrawal of privileges, hours of work and rest intervals, grants, leave with wages and holidays, poor implementation of the provisions of collective bargaining, government usurping functions of governing councils, struggles against privatization of government owned companies and industries, structural adjustment programme, academic freedom, world bank takeover of universities, Nigeria Universities Innovation Project (NUSIP), Government indebtedness through uninvested loans, undue retrenchment of workers and wages freeze, improved compensation structure and reinstatement of 49 academics who had been sacked years ago.

Nonetheless, other emerging issues included funding of universities for revitalization, Treasury Single Account (TSA), Mode and platform of payment – University Transparency and Accountability System (UTAS) and Integrated Payrol and Personnel Information System (IPPIS), University Autonomy and Re-negotiation of 2009 agreement,

no work no pay policy. These and more are reasons university lecturers go on strike in Nigeria.

The consistency of ASUU strike in Nigeria hasbecome a nightmare to all stakeholders due to provoked agitation by the government, hence the need to seek different strategy that will bring the government to harken to the unions' demandswithout embarking on a long term strike as experienced in 2020 and 2022 academic year.

Students in universities have started seeing education as a dishonest scheme, irrelevant considering that at the end of the education the graduates still remain unemployed and resort to minia jobs or learn skill to survive. Some of the graduates after years of idleness are hired into cyber crime and other forms of criminal activity. Some have reasoned that they could have used all the money paid for their fees and up keep in the university to set-up a business rather than wasting the money and coming back to start life afresh.

Nonetheless, the long sit-at-home due to strike by students invariably affects the quality of education they receive, as some topics are rushed and crashed without properpracticals required in those course outlines as well dis-orientates the students to possible going into crime. On the

other hand, the adult education programme objectives are prolonged in achieving.

Moreso, considering the broken promises and agreements of the government with the union and the policy changes in several leadership changes in Nigeria, it leaves one to ponder possible alternative to strike in Nigeria university system to fulfil failed promises to stop the routine of reminding the government of the mutual agreements.

History of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU)Strike in Nigeria

ASUU is a body of university academic staff which was established in 1978. Prior to the establishment of ASUU, Nigeria Association of University Teachers (NAUT) was established in 1963 made up of 5 universities; university of Ibadan, university of Nigeria, Nsukka, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, university of Ife and the university of Lagos. Currently, virtually all federal and state universities are under ASUU except private universities.

Tracing the ASUU strikes, it was based on academic issues only but later become more concerned with broad national issues, oppression,undemocratic policies, etc in the 1980's, the union actively participated in movements against the military government. The union

embarked on a first strike in 1988 in an effort for reasonable salary and autonomy for universities. In August 7, 1988 the union was prohibited and all their assets seized (Afamefuna, 2017). After another strike, it was permitted to continue in 1990 and in August 23, 1992 it was again outlawed.

On September 3, 1993 several objectives of the union was addressed,subsequently, in 1994 and 1996 additional strikes to protest the military government for sacking employees was organized.

It is on record that ASUU has gone on strike for 16 times from 1999 – 2022, the longest being that of February 2020 to December 2020, an approximate of 9 months coupled with COVID-19 lockdown. Incidence of strikes by ASUU from 1999 to 2022: 1999 - 5months, 2001- 3 months, 2002-2 weeks, 2003-6 months, 2005 - 2 weeks, 2007-3 months, 2008-1 week, 2009 - 4 months, 2010-5 months, 2011-59 days, 2013- 5 months, 2014 - 1 week, 2017 -1 month, 2018 - 3 months, 2020 - 9 months, 2022 - 8 months (Yusif,2020)

The government had always presented a position of lack of funds to meet the demands of ASUU while the ASUU had always asked the government to cut down on its bougous political expenditure to meet up the universal standard of fund allocation to education. Funding of

Education in Nigeria, university education inclusive since independence till date has not met the UNESCO standard and recommendation of 26 percent annual budget of the nation (Nuhu and Muhammad, 2021).

However, annual budgetary reports show a decline in the recommended funding. The trend of federal budget to education has continued to decline from less that 17 percent in 1988 to less than 10 percent from 1995 to 2006, 2007 – 2008 – 0.9 percent, 2014 – 2015 – 10.5 percent, 2012 – 2018 – 0.7 percent, 2019 – 2020, 13.6 percent (CBN, 2020).

The worst is that strike adds cost on the government annually as perishable commodities for practicals spoil as well as chemical expire, the dilapidated facilities and items has to be replaced as well as the inflation rate.

Minimizing ASUU Strikes

The rate of strike due to failed promises and unfair government policies has proven their inability to manage the common wealth of the nation to achieve high academic standard and development in our universities. That the UNESCO standard for funding is not adhered to means that strike cannot be off entirely but minimized.

Dating the history of strike in Nigeria and excuses of the government for not meeting the demands of ASUU is usually lack of fund and ASUU has always asked for autonomy and adhering to UNESCO recommendations to manage their affairs. The different educational reform and political instability has always been part of poor implementation due to unsustainable funding, hence the need for alternative funding (Nwagu, 2010). On the other hand, autonomy might involve the government detaching from funding the universities, therefore the infrastructure needed to achieve the proposals cannot be automatic. Substantial empowerment must be handed over to the administration of the universities to take off if the government cannot meet the international standards. Apart from the universities looking inward to source funding through private sectors' contributions, endowments, research patent sales, cooperate contribution, Alumni Association donations, stakeholders funding, investment in Agriculture, buying of shares in prominent companies like petroleum industries/mining industries, loans from banks, consultancy services, political donations, non-governmental organization, grants from local and international bodies and Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETfund)as sources of internally generated revenue(Madichie et al,

2022). Moreso, the government has to support the universities pending the proper establishment of the model proposals. This is because there can't be autonomy without strong financial backbone.

On that note, the government cannot be seen dishing out oil wells, mineral mines and national economic resources to few well to do individuals for personal aggrandizement rather to university management and agencies that serve the general welfare of the people.

The universities having had strong source of income can cater for their needs and the government will serve to checkmate the proper utilization of the funding through different watch dog agencies of the government.

Moreso, free, fair and transparent election is very necessary to install leaders with good track records that will bring about good governance,accountabilityand the goodwill to implement better policies for the good of the university system and the nation at large. Adopting the methods highly ranked universities abroad manage their system will assist in minimizing strike.

That government have been failing in their promises is a known fact that has culminated to the series of strikes. The consequences are enormous which ranges from infrastructural breakdown, dilapidated structure, expiration of chemicals in the laboratory, discontinuation of

researches, loss of academic years, loss of salary and income, students dropout from school, increased crime, brain drain and much more. The question remains; are there alternative to strike? Apparently in as much as the reasons for embarking on previous strike has not been addressed, obviously, the workers cannot keep quiet in the quest for compliance by the government. Therefore, the government should cut down on their bourgeous expenditure on political appointees and elected members and settle the issues once and for all.

Since the provision for resolving ASUU strike due to reoccurrence is temporary to lack of funds spreading the demands for a period of years will ease the implementation.

Implication for Adult Education

Obidiegwu (2013) defined adult education as all organized and purposeful educational activities designed for adults for the personal and societal fulfillment in or out of the school which enable them adopt to global requirements. Therefore, adult Education is an intervention type of education and has what it takes to groom and produce Nigeria adults and youths that will be able to withstand the challenges of the 21stcentury.Adult Education is aimed at improving or supplementing knowledge, upgrading, retooling and skills of young and mature adults.

It enables adults and youths to develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their needs and those of the society. It is more than a right and a key to the 21st century development and a condition for full participation in the society (UNESCO, 2008). Therefore, strikes in the universities who deliver most of the adult education programmes disrupt the programme and time frame meant to achieve the objectives of adult education in relation to Education for All (EFA).

On the other hand, it is a powerful concept for promoting democracy, justice, sustainable economic development and for building a world in which violence and conflicts is replaced by dialogue and a culture of peace based on justice (Murtala, and Bela, 2015).In line with that, applying the concepts will go a long way in minimizing the strikes. The consequences of strike are enormous and affect all the facets of national development. Considering these facts, it should not even be allowed to occur.Since strike causes many projects, objectives of Adult Education Programmes to be abandoned or prolonged causing a huge loss of finances invested into such programme.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The government should implement earlier made agreements on salary and infrastructure to reflect current issues and reality.
2. Regular engagement, Negotiation, Collective bargaining through amicable discussion and to avoid misunderstanding of policies that could lead to strike.
3. Investment in industries or companies that will generate money for adequate financial autonomy.
4. Tackling corruption and placing experts in rightful positions.

Conclusion

Lack of fund has always been the excuse of government for poor funding of university system, abandoning funding totally will not give a good foundation for the financial autonomy. The paper has recommended financial autonomy of the system to ensure they provide their needs as well as internally generating fund to augment deficiencies. That apart, spreading the demands for a period of time to ensure achievement is necessary. Nonetheless, placing experts in positions they are best suited will ensure the right policies are

implemented. Finally, implementing the recommendations will help to minimize strike irrespective of possible emerging issues.

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CORRECTIONS

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